

8/01/2025

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I am writing to recommend Pema (Acacea Sherman-Lewis) for scholarship funding to support her three-year retreat as part of her ordination path as a nun. In the time I've known her, I've witnessed Pema's dedication to her spiritual practice, which is defined by discipline, humility, and a deep commitment to transformation.

Pema's decision to enter retreat comes after more than a decade of spiritual study and self-reflection. Despite external success, she realized that the conventional path didn't offer lasting peace or meaning. As she put it, "After 15 years of building up the life I wanted to live, it all fell apart like a crescendo that made no sound." This isn't despair but the clarity of someone who has seen through the illusions of worldly achievement and now seeks to dedicate herself fully to a path that benefits all beings. This resonated deeply with me.

When we first met, I was feeling stuck in my own spiritual journey, and her presence felt like a prayer answered. Pema helped me recognize the synchronicity of our meeting and, from the very beginning, she has challenged me to step beyond my comfort zone and deepen my faith.

I'm also inspired by her approach to her study of Buddhism. She doesn't view the teachings as dogma, but as a living system to be explored with curiosity and tested through direct experience. As she has shared, "Buddha asks us to test and challenge the teachings, not just take it all verbatim." This openness and intellectual curiosity, combined with her emotional resilience, make her someone I deeply admire. I am confident that these qualities will allow her to thrive in her retreat.

Her motivation for retreat is deeply rooted in a desire to purify her mind, break down the ego, and live in service to others. Even though her family had a hard time understanding why she wanted to become a Buddhist nun, she remains steadfast in her commitment, demonstrating both spiritual maturity and unwavering clarity of purpose.

I'd like to share an example of Pema's selflessness that I witnessed. She cared for an elderly community member at Ser Cho Ling suffering from a severe staph infection. She took on the responsibility of ensuring their well-being, preventing the spread of infection, taking them to doctor's appointments, and monitoring their condition day and night. This dedication reflects the compassion and responsibility Pema brings to everyone she encounters.

Her dedication has reinforced my belief in the power of living with purpose and devotion. I am confident that her commitment will make her an asset to the retreat, and your support will allow her to fully embrace this transformative journey. Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Warmest regards,  
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