

To Unione Buddhista Italiana – U.B.I.

Vicolo dei Serpenti 4/A

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ITALY

I am very pleased to provide a character reference for Mario, Giuseppe, Proscia, who, during his ordination as a Buddhist monk, adopted the name Thānavaro Bhikkhu. I first met him in October 1977 while attending a 10-day Vipassana retreat at the Oaken Halt Buddhist Center near Oxford, England, alongside Ajahn Sumedho. This meeting marked the beginning of his journey into Theravada Buddhism, a path he has dedicatedly followed up to the present day.

I was present when Thānavaro was ordained as an Anagarika by our teacher, Ajahn Sumedho, at the Hampstead Vihara in London on 14th October 1977. He became a novice on Wesak day, the 22nd of May 1978. Subsequently, at his higher ordination in London on 27th October 1979, with the late Venerable Dr. Saddhatissa Maha Thera as his preceptor.

Thānavaro initially trained as a bhikkhu at Cittaviveka, the Chithurst Buddhist Monastery in West Sussex, and at Aruna Ratanagiri our branch monastery in the North of England (also known as Harnham Buddhist Monastery), in 1985, he accompanied me to New Zealand to assist in establishing a new branch monastery near Wellington. This challenging assignment showcased Thānavaro's excellence; he worked diligently, supporting both me and the lay community.

In 1990, he was invited back to his native Italy to play a crucial role in establishing another branch monastery. Supported by Mr. Vincenzo Piga and the then Sri Lankan Ambassador, Thānavaro worked tirelessly to set up Santacittarama, originally located in Sezze, not far from Rome. He served as the monastery's abbot for the first six years until his disrobal with me in Amaravati on 8th March 1996.

Throughout his career, Thānavaro demonstrated exemplary conduct. He responded well to training, wholeheartedly applying himself to any task given to him. His particular strength lay in providing capable and sensitive support to all his seniors. Thānavaro consistently displayed a keen interest in teachings and meditation, proving himself a competent Dhamma and meditation teacher. He continues to maintain good standing with the Sangha in both the UK and in Italy.

We have also stayed in contact all these years, and I was very happy to meet him for the second time in Italy during my visit to Santacittarama in June 2023, along with our teacher Luang Por Sumedho on the occasion of the official opening of the Temple at Santacittarama. It was again an amazing moment to be together on such an auspicious occasion. We expressed our gratitude for the teachings received from all our teachers, for Santacittarama, and for the support it has received over the years. It was a moment of spiritual union and strengthening the bond in the Dhamma. I have no hesitation in recommending him and wish him every success and moral support in his future endeavors with the Maha Bodhi Association. If further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ajahn Viradhammo

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Tisarana Buddhist Monastery
28 March 2025