

SCRIPTURE QUOTE
TO MEMORISE:

You will stand up in the presence of grey hair, you will honour the person of the aged and fear your God. I am Yahweh.

(Leviticus 19:32)

SCRIPTURE
of the DAY

Isaiah 49: 3, 5-6;

Psalms 39: 2, 4, 7-10;

1 Corinthians 1: 1-3;

John 1: 29-34.



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INTERNAL CIRCULATION ONLY

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When we reunite with family members who are not Christians, we should live out the love of Christ and let them feel that Christians value and embrace the spirit of the Chinese traditions in order to spread the Gospel of Christ. In this way we are true to Jesus' command to be salt of the earth and light of the world; testifying to the beauty of the Lord and the Christian faith.

The important message on the first day of the Lunar New Year is Renewal. It is the rejuvenation of the earth, on the first day of the New Year, Catholics gather in Church to celebrate the Eucharist in Thanksgiving. In offering the gifts, we pray, "Lord, accept our offering on this day of the New Year; bless all the members of our families that we be united in the peace and joy that You give us." In the Preface of the Mass, we continue, "through the changing of seasons, You inspire us to renew ourselves in Christ, so that together with Him, we journey towards the Kingdom of Heaven."

After the Mass, there is the special ceremony of the rite of commemorating the ancestors to fulfill our filial piety and pay respect for our ancestors. As early as the 16th century, in China, this was adapted and modified from the traditional Chinese culture and customs of respecting Confucius and offering the rite of commemorating the ancestors. This was integrated into our liturgical culture. It was also recognized by the Qing Dynasty, so Catholicism was able to develop rapidly in China. Later, due to disputes over etiquettes, this was banned. In 1939 Pope Pius XII revoked the ban saying, "The Liturgical ceremony of bowing in respect to the photographs or the tablets of our ancestors is both reasonable as well as permissible." Then, at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a new ecclesiology was formulated, which began to emphasize localization, re-examining the relationship between the Gospel and culture, and the realization of faith and culture with new reflections and teachings. It was only through mutual integration that the Catholic rituals and customs of respecting ancestors were officially recognized and became part of the Church practice.

When Catholics explain the Chinese New Year rite of commemorating the ancestors to others who do not understand Chinese culture and family members who are not Christians, we must let them understand that traditional culture and beliefs are not in conflict. **Respecting ancestors is a virtue of the gospel teachings. The combination of traditional culture and belief further highlights the lofty meaning and strengthens our belief.** We burn incense, present flowers, and toast to our ancestors according to the tradition, which is to express our respect for them and not to worship idols. Our faith is in God. It is a way of integrating the Chinese culture into the local Church as they complement each other. However we should avoid practices and rituals related to folk sacrifices, such as receiving the God of Wealth.

In this New Year we should show Christians who opposed the celebration of the Lunar New Year and certain cultural practices/activities, that the Lunar New Year is the best time to exchange blessings, give thanks, and perform filial piety. ❀

15 JANUARY 2023

Newtbec

NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

SALT OF THE EARTH AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION

MONTHLY FOCUS: EDUCATION

FAMILY AND CULTURE at the Lunar New Year 2023

The first day of the Lunar New Year in 2023 falls on January 22. It's even more meaningful as it falls on a Sunday when Catholic celebrates the Eucharist. The Chinese make efforts to return to their hometown or gather with their families for the reunion dinner on the eve. This reunion dinner is the most significant event for Chinese families and every effort is made to get home and more so for Catholics.

The reunion dinner or New Year's Eve dinner is the most sumptuous meal of the year for Chinese. It is a time for the whole family to eat together, to chat, and there is much laughter together. It means that every family member is home safely and able to come to the dining table. Catholics at the reunion dinner, hope to use the New Year to reconcile with families, taking advantage of the reunion to let go of our knots and make peace with each other.

In Scripture, we can find that there is the idea of a meaningful "reunion dinner". It is the Passover meal established when the Lord rescued the Israelites out of Egypt. After this meal, the people of God enjoyed peace; they leave the life of slavery and welcome a new life of freedom. (Exodus 12)

In the New Testament, Jesus instituted the Eucharist by sharing the Passover meal with his disciples. Jesus died on the cross for our salvation, washing our sins with his blood. At Mass we receive the Holy Eucharist of Jesus; we are free from sin and defeat the power of Satan, gaining freedom for soul. This is the moment when we are "reunited" with Jesus, returning to the family of God's love, we become one family in Christ with all brothers and sisters. We also look forward to reuniting with all believers and with Jesus in the eternal heavenly kingdom. Therefore, at the reunion dinner table, we Christians should also commemorate the love and sacrifice of Jesus.

