



**Third Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year B)
Lunar New Year**

Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Sunday 21 January, 2024
Vietnamese Catholic Community, Balga**

All across the world, and not only in Asia, people are gathering to celebrate the Lunar New Year - this year, the year of the Rabbit. And, of course, not only in Vietnam but in other countries in Asia it is a major celebration. It is a time for families to get together, to enjoy each other's company, to express their gratitude for all the many blessings they have received, and to express their hopes for a successful, happy and prosperous year ahead.

It is good to do this each year. We know deep down that we need each other, and that family and friends, but perhaps family most of all, are such a precious and important part of our lives. Families, after all, are where we first learn to love, where we first learn to give, and where we first learn to forgive. They are the places where we first learn what it means to be truly human and what it means to live lives of integrity, of generosity and of love.

One of the reasons why I am so grateful to Father Son, and to all of you, for the invitation to be with you this evening as we celebrate the Lunar New Year, is because my family is the Catholic community here in our Archdiocese and I need you all to help me to be a man of integrity, of generosity and of love. So, thank you for letting me share this joyful celebration with you.

As Christians, of course, there is a deeper meaning to the celebration of the New Year. We are people of faith, and we know that all the good things we enjoy come to us as precious gifts from God. They are concrete signs of how much God loves us, and it is important that while we certainly do want to thank our families and friends for all that we receive from them, we also want, and need, to thank God for all that He gives us. It is through God's goodness that we receive everything good in our lives. Sadly, we often forget this - but each year, as we celebrate the New Year, God gives us an opportunity to remember, and to be grateful to God, for the beauty which fills our lives.

The best gift God gives us is, of course, His Son Jesus. He is the one who can help us to make sense of our lives. He is the one who supports us in our difficulties, who strengthens us in our weakness, who lifts us up when we stumble and fall, who heals us when we are broken, who



comforts us when we are sad, who forgives us when we fail, and who loves us no matter what. He really is, as He told us himself, our way and our truth and our life.

Of course, we don't always experience Him in this way. Sometimes He seems very distant, and we can go for days, or weeks, or even longer, and never give Him a thought. We can allow the pressures of our daily lives - our family and work commitments, the financial problems we sometimes face, the constant demands that people place on us - to overwhelm us and we somehow push Jesus out of our minds and hearts.

This is not a good way to live our lives, of course. The less room we have for the Lord in our lives the less likely we are to know how to deal properly with all the challenges we face. Through his Holy Spirit within us, the Lord guides us and helps us to make wise decisions, to understand the deeper meaning of our lives, and to find the courage to stand up for what is right.

As we know from our own experience it is not always easy to live this way. But the beautiful thing about our Christian faith is that no matter how often we forget God, or neglect God, or live our lives as if God doesn't matter, God does not forget us, or neglect us, or act as if we do not matter. Jesus promised us that He would be with us always - and Jesus always keeps His promises. He is always holding out His hand and inviting us to take His hand and walk with Him. We just have to find the courage to say *yes*.

In a sense this is what the Church is for. It is why we have the sacraments, why we have our bishops, priests and deacons, why we have our religious sisters and brothers, why we have beautiful places and beautiful communities like this Vietnamese Centre, and why we celebrate in a religious way events like the Lunar New Year, when so many other people see it just as an excuse for a party or a holiday. All of these different dimensions of our experience as Catholics are the Lord's way of saying to us, through His Church: I love you, I care about you, I want to help and heal you, I want to see you happy. I have given you the gift of life and the gift of faith: please receive these gifts with joy and use them well.

I hope and pray that the celebration on the Lunar New Year this year is a joyful, peace-filled and hopeful time for you and all those you love, and that you experience the presence and love of the Lord in your lives as you open your hearts to him tonight and as the year unfolds. I will pray for you all and for your families. Please also pray for me.