



Lunar New Year Mass with the Chinese Catholic Community

**By the Most Rev Don Sproxton
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Holy Family Catholic Church, Como
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I want to begin today by wishing everyone the very best of the Lord's blessings for the New Year.

We are celebrating this Mass together in the special time of a Jubilee Year, the Holy Year of Mercy. The Holy Year has been inspired in the heart of Pope Francis, as he puts it himself, 'At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy, so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives'. He believes that such a time has arrived again.

On the first day of the year, the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis gives us a message based on his reflections on the situation of the world and the need for Christians to continue to work for peace and justice in a new year.

The growing number of conflicts in the world have saddened Francis and many Christians. He sadly states the comment that we are seeing a 'Third World War being fought piecemeal' is gaining more and more acceptance as war and terrorism, kidnapping, ethnic and religious persecution, and the misuse of power escalated last year.

But Pope Francis sees reasons for hope. While there have been awful signs of threats to peace around the world, he mentions how his hopefulness has been sustained by the gathering of world leaders, COP21, who sought to find new ways to confront climate change, and the Addis Ababa Summit for funding sustainable development of the nations, especially, to ensure a more dignified standard of living for the poor. The growing acceptance that we need to all care for our common home and to keep the needs of the poor in view show compassion and mercy in the hearts of world leaders.

So, he is seeking to have the Church as well remember the eminent place of mercy in the Christian Faith through the activities of the Holy Year, and pray that we will cultivate humble and compassionate hearts, capable of proclaiming and witnessing to mercy.

The gift of Francis is that he speaks plainly to ordinary people. In the Holy Year, he has shone a light on the growing problem of indifference. The Pope has identified that indifference to the plight of our brothers and sisters eventually leads to cutting out the heart of our humanity. He says that our first vocation is to be brothers and sisters, and to live together in solidarity. Indifference can have no place in the heart of a disciple of Jesus.

My hope and prayer today is that we use this special time in the Holy Year, and the beginning of the Lunar Year, to reflect on the ways that God has shown his mercy to humanity, and to each of us in our journey of life. We can come to understand the mercy of the Father by going back to Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospels. He is the face of mercy of the Father. What Jesus said



and did truly reflected the love and compassion for you and me. Let us recover the word of hope that lies at the heart of the Gospels.

I pray for myself that I have a humble and compassionate heart that remains sensitive to the pain of others, is not overwhelmed by the wave of information that comes to us daily through traditional and social media, nor turns away from the needs of the poor, but wants to keep the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in view so that I might make a response.

Allowing Jesus to touch our hearts, will allow us to feel compassion for others, even when their pain does not touch us directly. If anything has to be cut out, let our efforts be to eradicate indifference. May the Holy Year of Mercy produce new hearts in us all, as we contemplate the mercy of the Father in the face of Christ.

The Year of the Monkey promises excitement and vitality. As Catholics, may that excitement result from our renewal through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us be the agents of change for a world that is becoming hard and unforgiving, helping the way of Christ to be seen again through our compassion and kindness. Our living of the way of Jesus, I know, is the way of new life and revitalises the world.