



**2017 Chinese New Year Thanksgiving Mass
(5th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A)
Homily**

**By the Most Rev Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

Holy Family Church, Como Parish
Sunday 5 February, 2017

Every time that we gather as a community to celebrate the New Year, there is the overall spirit of joy and gratitude, mixed with the sense of expectation as we look ahead and wonder what the year will be like.

The joy in our hearts is for being granted a new year and the promise of further blessings of God for our lives. We are grateful for the past good things that God has put into our lives and the proof that these blessings are that he loves us and is faithful to us.

We look forward, not knowing everything that lies ahead, but we ask for the strength that comes from faith to put everything into the hands of God. New Year can be a time of excitement and renewed movement of our lives with Jesus.

The life of a Christian is meant to be dynamic, 'on the go' and never stationary. There are times though when we become settled and comfortable. These are dangerous times for it is easy just to go through the motions, doing what the law demands and that is all. The spirit of Christ that lives in us is very different.

In the Sermon on the Mount, he revealed what it means to be a Christian. It means to go beyond the demands of the law, which are never more than the minimum requirement.

There is an old saying: if you keep the law, the law will keep you. This wise proverb speaks solely about the welfare of the individual who wants to be certain and on safe ground. This is good. But this thinking risks the person only looking out for themselves and their own peaceful existence.

During Mass last Sunday, we heard the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus. Today, his words in the Gospel describe the Christian as being like the city that is built on a hill or the light in a house that has to be lifted high to do its job and illuminate the room.

Jesus looks to the Christian to be dynamic and be something in the world. Of course our lives have the private and personal aspects, but they are lived as well in the midst of others. We realise that we are not self-sufficient and that we need others for our lives to flourish. Our family and friends add much to our lives, and help us to grow and mature. Life is dynamic, ever changing: we never really stand still.



Our life in Christ naturally reinforces this experience. We grow and change at all levels within. For this, Jesus shares with us his powerful spirit and grace increases our capacity to live well, and to face difficulties of all kinds. With this, we can experience the gift of peacefulness, even during the hardest of trials. This is good and is needed for us to connect faith with our lives.

However, the Christian life is more than this. The faith is not just for me, for my own peace of mind and to form the solid foundation for me to live with hope.

Jesus wants to have us understand that being a Christian, having been gifted with many blessings, involves giving back. He is most interested in seeing how we will be fruitful. Can we be the city on the hill, easily seen and noticed? The Christian is meant to be a light, raised up and giving light for others.

This is the Year of the Rooster, the Fire Rooster. Among the qualities of the rooster are that he is hardworking, resourceful, courageous and talented. These are qualities that should be found in any Christian. They make us noticed for who we are and what we stand for.

Sometimes, you can be surprised when someone comes to you and asks you for your opinion on a very serious and personal matter that they are wrestling with in their life. You might ask: why are you asking me? Then they say: you're a Catholic aren't you? How do you know that, you might ask? They could say: Oh it's because I have noticed how you go about your work, you're honest and you look out for other people. I saw how you stood up for that one who was being picked on and bullied. You seem to have another way of looking at things. That's why I guess you're a Christian.

Many young Catholics have told me of having had this conversation with workmates.

The fruits that appear in our lives when we allow the spirit of Jesus to work can become the way that he can touch the hearts of the others around us. Some may even want to have the same strength of spirit for themselves. Every year, I receive a number of Chinese catechumens at the Rite of Election in the Cathedral before their baptism at Easter because they have come to know a Catholic.

Yes, the qualities that we are celebrating in this Year of the Rooster: diligence, resourcefulness, courage and giftedness are also the fruits that may be seen in us that open other hearts to the Spirit of God.

In this year, may we allow ourselves more time for quietness and turn back some of the rush of our lives, to be silent in the presence of Christ. In those quiet moments we can have our awareness of Jesus presence reawakened. We will find again the sources of our strength to know who we are called to be in the places that we are sent. May our lives lived with faith become a light for others.