



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chinese New Year, just like Christmas, is often more popularly known by its visible accoutrements than it is by its essentials. The ubiquitous festive colour red, the ang pow packets, the fireworks are often the most apparent markers of this traditional Chinese celebration, but all these are perhaps distractions from what is at the heart of this celebration - family and the renewal and strengthening of bonds. From reunion dinners, to visits made to the homes of relatives and even the veneration of ancestors, the customs surrounding this cultural celebration ultimately points to how kindred ties and relationships, even with those who have passed on, are paramount in a world which has often gotten lost in the pursuit of success and material wealth.

Chinese New Year, the spring festival, is a time of homecoming, the thawing of relationships that have grown cold over the winter of separation and isolation.

For us, as a parish of the Holy Family, this cultural festival is also a call to all to come home, a time for reunion with the Lord who has prepared the Feast of His Body and Blood for us, a time when the Heavenly Father is finally reunited with the long lost son and daughter.

Many argue that this pandemic and the lockdowns we've experienced for the past two years, have redefined our faith and the meaning of Church attendance. We used to make a distinction between lapsed Catholics and practising Catholics, and church attendance would be used as the sole benchmark or barometer to determine whether one fell into the first or the second category.

Today, the pandemic's pivot to online Masses and other virtual church activities have resulted in a fresh category - virtual Catholics. Not watching live-stream Masses has become a new category of sin to be confessed precisely because online Masses have, for many, become sufficient and adequate substitute for in-person attendance at Masses.

Yes, the battle against this pandemic is not over and only God knows what other new variant after Omicron will emerge to haunt us, but the winter of pandemic lockdowns is technically ended, and it is time to replant, rebuild, reinvigorate our spiritual lives in a new spiritual springtime of grace. The time of exile is over. It is time to come home.

So, on this first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, we the priests would like to make this fervent appeal to all members of the Church of the Holy Family - come home!



Yes, we do recognise that some have serious underlying medical conditions, and some have not been vaccinated and are therefore unable to join us physically, for reasons beyond their control. Please be assured that you are still a part of our family and that you are not alone. You have not been abandoned. God, with the tender loving heart of a Father, sees, hears and is aware what you, His people, are living through, and your sadness, anguish and cries do not go unnoticed. For this is what the Lord has promised: “I have indeed seen the misery of my people ... I have heard them crying for help ... Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings” (Exodus 3:7).

But for those who have returned or are beginning to return to some normalcy, after having received your vaccination shots or booster, remember that the doors of our church and chapels are reopened to welcome you home. Never forget the words of Hebrews:

“Do not absent yourself from your own assemblies, as some do, but encourage each other; the more so as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb 10:25)

恭贺各位兄弟姐妹及你们全家：虎年蒙恩蒙福、身心灵安康及喜乐!

(Brothers and Sisters, wishing all of you and your families: a grace-filled Year of the Tiger with abundant blessings; May your body, mind and spirit be filled with peace, health and joy)

Your loving shepherds,
Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan and Brother Jonathan Rao
First Day of the Lunar New Year
1st February 2022