



“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14–15).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When our Lord introduces the figure of the good shepherd, He does so with imagery that suggests the shepherd’s intimate knowledge of his flock. In calling to his sheep, the shepherd does not utter merely a general cry for all of his lambs to come. Instead, he calls them by name. He has such deep love for and knowledge of his sheep that he calls for them individually. Our Lord is that Good Shepherd and we, His priests, are merely poor delegates of the work which He continues to do in the communities which He has entrusted to us.

Of the three of us (with the exception of Fr Philip), both Fr Bonaventure and I cannot claim that we “know our own and (our) own know (us).” We do hope that in the course of the next few years we will get to know you a little better and you come to know us beyond mere appearances and fleeting encounters.

I was once told by another priest that there are two sins which are to be avoided and yet I do recognise that we often naturally succumb to the temptation of giving in to them. The first sin is on the part of us priests, which is to compare our previous parish with the current one. The second sin is on the part of the people, to compare the current priest with his predecessor. As comparison is an essential part of the learning process, there is no way we can escape this penchant to see the contrast. But let us pray for the grace to look beyond our personal quirks, limitations, and foibles to keep our gaze on the One who remains unchanging and steadfast in His love for us - our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

No one, not even we ourselves, knows us better than Jesus Christ does. And just think of what a marvellous thing that is. Our Lord knows us far better than we know ourselves, including the worst parts of us—and He still loves us. Pray for us your priests that we may have the same selfless love.

Both Fr Bonaventure and I are new to this parish and to its structures, programmes, ministries and to the many volunteers and leaders which ensure that the cogs of the whole parish machinery continue running efficiently despite a change of priests. We will continue to rely on your wisdom, advice and support as we attempt to fit into the roles of your parish pastors knowing that we will not be able to accomplish anything substantial without your assistance. We will be calling for meetings with the various councils, committees, and leaders as soon as we are relatively settled.



We are happy that there is some continuity of pastoral leadership in the person of Fr Philip. He will continue with his important work at the Archdiocesan Health Ministry & Health Care Ministry and assist with Mandarin Masses and other related pastoral work in our neighbouring parish of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Peel Road. The three of us will be discussing to see how we can share responsibilities and collaborate in the priestly work of shepherding, teaching and sanctifying.

Like the rest of the world, members of this community have also been adversely affected by this pandemic which has entered its third year. We can either choose to resign ourselves to it and do nothing or renew our commitment to face the new challenges with the vigour and excitement of a new era. Our Holy Father Pope Francis tells us that the former is never an option. He writes, "The pandemic deeply marked the lives of individuals and the history of the community. In order to honour the suffering of the sick and of so many deceased, above all, the elderly, whose life experience should not be forgotten, we must rebuild our tomorrow: it requires everyone's commitment, strength and dedication."

As we enter into a new year with a new pastoral team of priests, let us recommit ourselves with the grace of God to "rebuild our tomorrow." And we will not be able to do this without "everyone's commitment, strength and dedication." We appeal to all of you to come aboard.

Let us begin this new year with the words of blessing from scripture:

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

Your loving Shepherds,

Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan
Church of the Holy Family
10th January 2022