



## COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

# Asian Catholics can celebrate Year of Sheep with clear conscience

*Archbishop's dispensation allows Lunar New Year celebrations on Ash Wednesday*

VANCOUVER (Feb. 13, 2015) – Good news: Asian Catholics can celebrate the Year of the Sheep with a clear conscience.

Ash Wednesday is normally one of the most solemn days on the Christian calendar. But this year it falls on the eve of the Lunar New Year, one of the most joyous days of the year for Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Malaysian and other Asian communities.

That creates a dilemma for Asian Catholics who want to ring in the Year of the Sheep: how to do so on a day Catholics are fasting, abstaining from meat and having ashes pressed on their foreheads.

The solution has come in the form of a dispensation from Archbishop J. Michael Miller. In a letter to Vancouver Catholics, Miller said he was pleased to dispense the faithful from the obligations of Ash Wednesday so they can celebrate the Chinese New Year. The dispensation applies to all Catholics present in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, as well as any Vancouver faithful who may be travelling elsewhere next Wednesday.

They don't get a complete pass, however. The archbishop added that since Ash Wednesday is the start of Lent, a penitential time of preparation for the liturgical celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, anyone who makes use of the Ash Wednesday dispensation must observe a different day of fast and abstinence on some other day at the beginning of Lent, such as Wednesday, February 25, 2015, or Friday, February 27, 2015.

The archbishop closed his greeting to the faithful with his prayers that they and their loved ones "will be richly blessed by God and guided by the Holy Spirit over the coming year. May you enjoy good health, happiness and the abundant blessings of Jesus Christ."

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