

2013 Lunar New Year Ancestral Veneration speech

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In the 1983 Taiwanese movie, "Papa, can you hear me sing", there was a very touching theme song, "酒干倘賣無", which means, "Do you have (used) wine bottles for sale". The theme song was performed by singer Su Rui. The lyric of this song quite match the theme of today's ceremony of Ancestral veneration.

HERE IS AN EXCERPT OF THE LYRIC IN "酒干倘賣無":

"Those familiar voices accompanied me for many days and night, sunny or rain. I never have to try remembering them, nor will I forget the voice. If there was no sky, then there was no earth. If there was no earth, there would be no place for home. If there was no home, then there would not be you. If you did not exist, then there would not be me. If you did not foster me, did not give me a life of warmth and if you did not protect me, how would my life turn out? You were the one who raised me; you were the one who taught me how to speak; you were the one who gave me a family, so, please own this family with me. Although you could not speak, you understood how to distinguish between black and white, true and wrong in our lives. Although you didn't know how to express your love, you showed your enthusiasm in life. When your voice was heard from afar, it reminds me your kind heart. When will you come back to my side, and let's sing this song together!"

American author Alexander Henry once said, "The world is composed of three different bodies. The first one is the real body that would talk and would eat. The second is the past, our ancestors. The third is our future, our descendants who are not yet born. These three bodies are connected and are obliged to each other." This philosophical quote has a very deep meaning that we should know – we should not assume the present is what we have in our lives. Our lives today are the fruits of our ancestors. If our ancestors did not work hard in the past, we would not exist today. And, our future is the result of the present. If we don't work our best now, and live our lives in fullness, we will then not be able to provide a better future and lives for our descendants. If someone cannot provide a value to the others, his or her lives are just meaningless.

The 2212nd entry in the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us the importance of human relationship. It says, "*The fourth commandment illuminates other relationships in society. In our brothers and sisters we see the children of our parents; in our cousins, the descendants of our ancestors; in our fellow citizens, the children of our country; in the baptized, the children of our mother the Church; in every human person, a son or daughter of the One who wants to be called "our Father."*"

A passer-by once saw an old man who was planting seeding in the backyard.

The passer-by asked the old man, "How long it would take for the tree to fully grown?"

The old man replied, "It would take 50 to 60 years."

The passer-by was puzzled. He asked the old man, "Are you expected to live another 50 to 60 years?"

The old man said, "Of course not. I might be dead in a few years. But I have seen the fruits in this orchard, which were from the trees that my grandfather and my father planted before I was born. And now, I am planting this tree for my children and their children."

The real ownership does not come from the ownership of your own, but from your ability to share with the others. The Mother Church has dedicated this year to be the "Year of Faith."

What is Faith? "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews, 11-1) We can say that the present is the bridge that connects the past and the future. In today's ceremony, if we ignore the effort our ancestors made, and we ignore the assumption of our future, and enjoying the moments of present, as Japanese author, (Tanba Fumio 1904-2005) has suggested, "A person who takes things for granted will not have a sense of gratitude."

A Chinese proverb once suggested, "Our ancestor planted the land with heart, and the descendants will plow on the farm land in the future." This proverb wants to remind us we should have a positive outlook in our lives. We should always have a grateful heart – be grateful to what our ancestors have done, and the blessing from them.

At the end, I wish you all have a Happy Chinese New Year. God Bless.