

Local Vietnamese Catholic Community Celebrates Lunar New Year with Historic Tet Festival

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GARDEN GROVE, calif., (Jan. 28, 2016) – The Most Rev. Kevin W. Vann, Bishop of Orange and the Most Rev. Dominic M. Luong, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Orange, will preside over a mass and celebration marking the lunar new year and the traditional Vietnamese Tet holiday at the Vietnamese Catholic Center (1538 N. Century Blvd., Santa Ana), February 8 at 10 a.m. Tet is an abbreviation for *Tet Nguyen Dan* which means the first morning of the first day of the first period. “I am honored to celebrate this Mass and traditional holiday at the center of our Vietnamese-American Catholic community. As we mark the beginning of the Year of the Monkey we honor the Lord and call for more peaceful relationships between all societies and people,” said Bishop Luong. The Orange County celebration is the largest in the United States and features a ceremony and Mass marked by dragon dancing and ceremonial drumming. The entertainment includes well-known Vietnamese performers, a Vietnamese Catholic choir contest and traditional Ao Dai pageant. Thousands of varieties of flowers are displayed throughout the week ending with the New Year Mass celebrated by Bishops Vann and Luong. The Tet festival is not only a new year’s celebration; it is a celebration of the symbiotic relationship between all things and honors the peaceful relationship between the Creator and humans. Families display a *Ngheu* Tree, or *tac*, which is a cone shaped fruit tree with small kumquats. The more fruit on the tree, the luckier the family is said to be. Greeting cards and good luck symbols are hung from this tree. Vietnamese families will also hang a branch from a *Hoa Mai* tree in their home. This tree bears small yellow blossoms signaling spring and a new beginning. The Vietnamese do not keep track of birthdays. Therefore, a baby turns one year-old on Tet no matter when he/she was born that year. Children’s ages are determined by the symbol of the lunar calendar. On the first morning of Tet, adults celebrate birthdays by presenting children with red envelopes that contain “Lucky Money,” or *li xi*.

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