

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

- 1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
- 2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
- 3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
- 4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about papacy and clergy

牧

Putonghua pronunciation: *mu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *muk6*

Meanings: shepherd, herding, rule, take charge of

牧 (radical 牛 *niu2*, cow/ox) means 放牧 (*fang4 mu4* = release-herd = herding/grazing), 牧養 (*mu4 yang4* = herding-raising) sheep/cattle/horses/camels etc. 遊牧民族 (*you2 mu4 min2 zu2* = roam-herd-people-race) = nomadic tribe. 牧童 (*mu4 tong2* = herd-child) = little shepherd/cowherd. In ancient China, 州牧 (*mu4* = province~shepherd/governor) = governor of a province.

Jesus was 牧羊人 (*mu4 yang2 ren2* = herd~sheep~person = shepherd) tending 羊群 (*yang2 qun2* = sheep~group = flock), hence emblematic 牧杖 (*mu4 zhang4* = shepherd's-rod = shepherd/pastoral staff = crozier) is carried by Pope, 紅衣主教 (*hong2 yi1 zhu3 jiao4* = red-cloak~principal-religion = cardinal), 主教 (*zhu3 jiao4* = principal-religion = bishop).

牧師 (*mu4 shi1* = shepherd-master) is Chinese term for Protestant pastor/vicar.