

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.

This week: Words about Christmas

誕

Pronunciation: *dan* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *daan* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: birth, give birth to, birthday

誕下 (*dan xia* = born~down) = give birth to baby. 誕辰 (*dan chen* = born~hour) means birthday. 聖誕節 (*sheng dan jie* = holy~birth~festival = Christmas) celebrates 基督 (*Ji Du* = “Christus”/“Christ”-transliterated) 誕生 (*dan sheng* = born~live).

Christians attend 聖誕彌撒 (*sheng dan mi sa* = holy~birth~“misa”/“mass”-transliterated = Christmas Mass), 唱聖誕歌 (*chang sheng dan ge* = sing~holy~birth~songs/carols = go caroling). Children decorate 聖誕樹 (*sheng dan shu* = holy~birth~tree = Christmas trees), ask 聖誕老人 (*sheng dan lao ren* = holy~birth~old~man = Father Christmas/Santa Claus) for 禮物 (*li wu* = ritual/politeness~things = presents).

Buddhists observe 觀音華誕 (*Guan Yin hua dan* = Guan-yin~grand~birthday = festival celebrating the birthday of Guanyin, Goddess of Mercy).

by Diana Yue