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 qün2 = 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 yí1 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.

by Diana Yue