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## Coronavirus in China. Father Zhang (Xinde Press): “Proximity to the victims like the Good Samaritan”



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. founder of Xinde press and Jinde Charities, from Shijiazhuang City, capital of Hebei Province, southwest of Beijing, speaking via Skype connection with SIR. Jinde has been carrying out relief efforts for over 20 years, although there is no official Caritas centre in China. The charity network is currently engaged in ensuring local assistance with the support of Caritas Germany, especially in the distribution of medical supplies and protection to help those "on the front line" against the epidemic. According to the latest figures updated to 25 February, China has confirmed 406 new cases. Altogether there are 78,064 confirmed cases and 2,715 deaths in China. With the spread of the epidemic throughout the country, hundreds of thousands of face masks and protective clothing are used daily. Stocks run out easily and although production has never ceased, even during the Chinese New Year holidays, China is struggling to meet demands, driving medical staff - including many religious men and women - to work without adequate protection and in dangerous conditions. Jinde is currently acting as a service platform, processing requests and offering relief efforts. "Almost all the families and all parishes of the Chinese Catholic Church have done their best to make donations aimed at helping the medical staff and patients in the affected areas." In essence," the priest said, the attempt is to offer, along with the whole of society, a " response of love" following the example of the Good Samaritan indicated by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke." The Church in China is experiencing a difficult situation. There is shortage of face masks and protective clothing, attending to the sick is becoming dangerous for doctors and health workers. Jinde Charities launches a cry for help: **"We hope that the Pope and the universal Church will once again join the clergy and faithful of the Chinese Catholic Church, walking hand in hand with the Chinese people and bearing witness to the Good News."** Many stories are intertwined here in Jinde: assistance is given also in remote and isolated locations. On February 11, ten boxes of N95 medical face masks were delivered to the

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most affected areas, including a church-run hospital in northern China where the nuns work, resembling "a battlefield". On February 17, Bishop He Zeqing of the Wanzhou Diocese of Chongqing City sent a letter to Father Zhang: **"The epidemic is very serious; we lack disinfection fluid, face masks, blankets and pillows, please help us as soon as possible!"**



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"This shows that the Covid-19 epidemic has not only affected our nation, in fact it is a calamity for humanity as a whole. My message to our friends, brothers and sisters, in Italy is: be careful. Take Covid-19 seriously, take care of yourself and learn from the Chinese experience. The Coronavirus is terrible."

**The episodes of racism and discrimination against Chinese people living in Italy, "are shameful,"**

said the priest. "Those words and actions must not be allowed to happen and are totally unacceptable. By comparison, just imagine what could unexpectedly happen in our families if one of its members is attacked or injured. In such difficult times, we need solidarity, consolation, encouragement, help. Therefore, in the face of such a serious emergency, all of us - the clergy and faithful of the Chinese Catholic Church as well as my fellow citizens - need prayer, compassion, understanding and support." Father Zhang also said that confronted with these serious man-made health crises, China is questioning its measures. In the early stages of the epidemic in Wuhan, there was no awareness of the extent of the new coronary pneumonia. " We are now in the process of undertaking in-depth self-criticism to understand the root causes of such an incident. As a proverb goes, sufferings are blessings hidden by God: let us pray then and hope that we will emerge wiser, stronger, better and with stronger bonds of friendship between us and with the rest of the world."

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