
Zero cases in China. Father JB Zhang: “Life will go back to normal, but with caution”

China breathes a sigh of relief and is already working out ways to slowly return to normal, from the reopening of schools, perhaps already in April, to the (urgent) restart of small and large economic enterprises. But the future is planned with great caution. The data are positive: two months after the quarantine of 60 million people, Hubei Province and its capital Wuhan reported no new infections in five days in a row. The country as a whole has reported no new domestic cases of coronavirus. Yet “imported infections” are of concern. “The peak of the epidemic is progressively decreasing”, confirmed **Father John Baptist Zhang** of Jinde Charities, from Shijizhuang City, capital of Hebei Province, southwest of Beijing. “But it has not completely disappeared. The number of cases imported from abroad is increasing, and this must not be disregarded. Many people are still at home and subjected to preventive and control measures.” As far as the Church is concerned, Masses and religious activities are all still suspended, while priests, religious and catechism teachers guide parishes through the Internet offering prayers, Bible reading, spiritual sharing. **How will China recover after the dramatic ordeal of the Covid-19 Coronavirus?** “It cannot be denied that many days, indeed months, have passed since the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the Chinese economy will have to deal with great difficulties. *Families will also face a drop in income; the poor, the homeless need care and help from society.*”



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As the level of epidemic alert decreases, life will return to normal, work will resume and schools will reopen. Of course, for some time, we will avoid crowded meetings, focus on health precautions, until an effective vaccine or medicine is available. When will schools reopen? What about economic activity? Schools have not yet reopened and online courses have been activated. However, some provinces have already communicated local opening dates, due to gradually start as of next April. Most shopping centres and supermarkets resumed their normal activity, but the flow of buyers and consumers is still limited. Large companies are back in business while many small and medium enterprises are still in the process of reopening. Has the Chinese Government decided to take certain preventive measures to return to normal? Naturally, the government will examine the whole picture with two primary objectives in mind: to ensure the recovery of GDP growth while ensuring people's health; it is therefore a question of gradually returning to a normal lifestyle, taking into account all aspects of social life on a case-by-case approach. Italy is still in the tunnel of contagion and death. Any suggestions? On the basis of the Chinese prevention and control experience, Covid-19 is highly contagious, so it's extremely important to forbid all kinds of meetings; wear masks; wash your hands frequently and keep a safe distance when encountering people. If someone is already infected, they must be isolated to prevent transmission to others. Chinese Catholics are concerned and saddened by the fact that more

than 30 priests in Italy have died of the infection and that many nuns have tested positive. I therefore call upon the clergy and religious in particular to keep their distance and not make physical contact with people to avoid being infected.

Everyone must be alert and never underestimate prevention guidelines.

A very successful slogan in Italy was: "everything will be fine". But right now it's hard to believe. Based on your experience in China, when and how will these words become reality? As long as strong measures are taken at all government levels in Italy and as long as people cooperate with national authorities to actively prevent the spread of the epidemic, the contagion is likely to be halted. It should be noted that the peak of the crisis in China lasted two months and the most serious period occurred after a month. As I said, as long as people act in the right way, as long as the government, society and the Church work together to combat the epidemic,

the darkness will pass and the dawn will soon return.

As Catholics we must believe this: it helps us place our trust in God's goodness. In Him, our hope, our victory even over panic and anxiety.

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