
New infections in China: diocese of Beijing closes parish churches



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[, of Jinde Charities, gave SIR an update on the situation from Shijizhuang City, capital of Hebei Province. "For more than 50 consecutive days - he said - Beijing reported no new cases of Covid 19. But from June 11 to 15, over 100 new cases were unfortunately diagnosed in the city, all related to the new local vegetable market in Fengtai District. Currently, six large wholesale markets are closed or partially closed, including the Beijing Xinfadi market." **The new outbreaks had an immediate impact:** authorities in the Chinese capital closed schools and universities at once and suspended indoor sports activities and cultural events. Drastic measures were taken to contain what is likely to be a second wave of infection. The priest also reported cancelled flights and - at the moment - a 15-day wait to return to Beijing. Cases of infection were also reported in other provinces, such as three cases in Hebei province, located southwest of Beijing, one case in Liaoning, northeast of the capital, and one case in Sichuan province. "At present, Huaxiang Street, Fengtai District in Beijing, has been declared a high-risk area," said Father Zhang. It is forbidden to leave Beijing and those who have left the city must promptly notify the local district where they are located. *"The high-risk level will be reassessed only in the coming days on the basis of the number of confirmed cases."* **The new infections have clearly affected also the life of the churches.** The diocese of Beijing had reopened its parishes on 10 June and some churches had finally been able to celebrate a solemn ceremony. But unfortunately, due to confirmed cases in Fengtai, the diocese had to close the churches on June 13. In June, China gradually reopened public places and places of worship, owing to the fact that after months of deadly outbreak, the epidemic was successfully contained. Here, too, the reopening of churches was subject to strict safety regulations: use of masks, measurement of body temperature, keeping health and reservation codes, keeping social distance of at least one metre; orderly access into churches to avoid overcrowding. For the moment - said Father Zhang -, the following churches are open: Anthony's Church, Baoan Church, Longgang Church in Shenzhen; Wenzhou Churches in Zhejiang Province; Fuxin, Jinzhou, Huludao in Liaoning; Xi'an Cathedral in](#)

Shaanxi; Baoding Cathedral. However, in parishes located in the villages and mountainous areas with no confirmed cases, the situation is different from churches in cities city with a high population density. **Italy - in the process of cautiously lifting the lockdown - is looking at China with concern.** "Congratulations to our Italian friends! The epidemic has been brought under control and the situation has improved", Father Zhang exclaimed. "We followed the efforts made by the Italian government, the church, and the whole population, on media outlets. In particular, I was deeply moved by the hard work, mutual assistance and dedication of the medical staff and people in the front line of the fight against the epidemic." Indeed, China today becomes a testing ground for all. Father Zhang is serious: *"The new outbreak in Beijing's Fengtai district is a warning to everyone: no one should underestimate the Covid-19 virus. It must be rigorously prevented and controlled."* Thus even though the epidemic situation has gradually stabilised, we must not let our guard down. "The coronavirus has not yet found the source of infection: it's extremely insidious - the priest said -, it has a long incubation period, it's highly infectious and changes constantly." He concluded: "there are still potential dangers: if people are not careful and lower their guard, infections will bounce back."

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