
Lunar New Year. Charetto Yan (Shanghai): "We hope for a new world of fraternity and peace"



Immagine non disponibile

[. a member of the Focolare Movement, Research Fellow at the Sophia University Institute in Loppiano \(Italy\), author of several books, including "The Gospel beyond the Great Wall." **How are people in China celebrating the Lunar New Year and with which spirit?** Millions of people make long journeys home before New Year's Eve. The eve is an important aspect in addition to the big family dinner. It is an occasion for families to spend the night together to cast off illness and disaster. For the elderly it means leaving the old year behind and embracing the new year with light. For young people it means wishing their parents a long life. The custom of setting off firecrackers and fireworks enhances the festive atmosphere and augurs happiness in the family. Messages of good wishes are exchanged and homes are decorated with Spring Festival Couplets, such as the ideogram 'fu' \(blessing\) posted upside down, symbolising the wish to receive a blessing from above. *Although the COVID-19 epidemic has been under control in China for several months, with few reported cases, the government is being very cautious and people are celebrating in their home towns, avoiding long journeys. China is one of the world's largest countries. Could you tell us, to the best of your knowledge, at what stage is the fight against the virus?* I would say that the situation is under control. Whenever a case is identified, all possible efforts are made to limit and contain it. I think that in China, and generally in this part of the world, the pandemic has been more successfully handled, partly because of cultural reasons, as we have a greater awareness of community value and individual sacrifice for the greater good of society. **Were you surprised by Pope Francis' message?** *I was moved, and I remembered that the Pope had sent us a special greeting also last year. I am touched by his heartfelt affection. The Pope appreciates our culture, he knows us, he accompanies us, he loves us with tenderness, and he always has us close to his heart! In last year's greeting Francis highlighted the family and educational values, together with the virtues of hospitality.*](#)

wisdom, respect and harmony. These values are what have helped us cope more effectively with the pandemic crisis. This year, however, the Pope has placed the emphasis on fraternity, social relations, and giving preferential option for the poorest and weakest among us. We feel encouraged by his words. For us Catholics in China, they shed light on our journey. **To what extent are the relations between China and the Holy See and the role of Pope Francis critical to the process of "dialogue" between China and the rest of the world, at a time of difficult and conflicting relations on multiple fronts?** Reflecting on the challenges of the pandemic, Pope Francis expressed the wish that the new year may bear the fruit of fraternity. As the Pope said, people do not come out of a crisis like this the same as before: we either emerge better or we come out worse. We are therefore facing an epochal transformation. *We are witnessing an ever-increasing shift in the global balance and sphere of influence, be it economic, scientific or political, towards Asia. We live in a multilateral world. Given the numerous tensions and conflicting interests today, China is emerging as an indispensable dialogue partner.* Even President Xi Jinping has frequently referred to the need to "build a human community with a common future." The Holy Father, and the Church, have a very important role to play as catalysers of values and dialogue. In Asia there are many values - such as harmony, beauty, unity - that the world is yearning for. With its message of love, agape and fraternity, Christianity is grafted into this fertile soil and sheds light on these positive, cultural values Asia possesses. **What is your wish for the New Year?** In his address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps a few days ago, the Pope made reference to the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and China, saying that the agreement is essentially pastoral in nature. Francis also said that the pandemic led to a crisis, for it shed light on the consequences inherent in a way of life dominated by selfishness and a culture of waste. The Holy Father expressed the hope that our world may undertake a new journey of human fraternity and peace. As a Chinese Catholic, I yearn to do my part to bear witness to Gospel life, mutual love, the unity of the Church in China, being a good Christian and a good citizen. The hope is that the journey undertaken in China-Church relations will continue to bear fruit and thus contribute to the progress towards a new world.

M. Chiara Biagioni