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CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS

WORLD POPULATION – CATHOLICS

PERSONS/CATHOLICS PER PRIEST

ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS – MISSION STATIONS

BISHOPS

PRIESTS

PERMANENT DEACONS

RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN, MEMBERS OF SECULAR INSTITUTES

LAY MISSIONARIES, CATECHISTS

MAJOR SEMINARIANS – DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

MINOR SEMINARIANS – DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**CATHOLIC INSTITUTES FOR HEALTHCARE, SOCIAL ASSISTANCE, CHARITY
WORK**

**CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS DEPENDENT ON THE DICASTERY FOR
EVANGELIZATION**

OVERALL WORLD PICTURE

CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS 2023

Vatican City (Fides News Agency) – As every year, in view of World Mission Sunday, which this year celebrates its 97th anniversary on Sunday, October 22, 2023, Fides News Agency offers some statistics chosen to give a panorama of the missionary Church all over the world.

The tables are taken from the latest edition of the «Church's Book of Statistics» published (updated to December 31, 2021) regarding members of the Church, church structures, healthcare, welfare and education. Please note that variations are indicated in brackets, increase (+) or decrease (-) compared to the previous year (31 December 2020), according to the comparison made by Fides News Agency. Finally, the picture of ecclesiastical circumscriptions dependent on the Dicastery for Evangelization is reported.

World Population

To December 31, 2021 the world population was **7.785.769.000**, with an increase of 118.633.000 units compared to the previous year. Population growth was registered, even this year, on every continent except for Europe. Increases were registered above all in Asia (+71.186.000) and in Africa (+40.089.000), followed by America (+7.398.000) and Oceania (+184.000) while a decrease has been registered in Europe (+224,000).

Catholics

On the same date, December 31, 2021, Catholics in the world numbered **1.375.852.000** units with an overall increase of 16.240.000 units compared to the previous year. The increase affects all continents, except Europe (-244.000). As in the past, increases were registered above all in Africa (+8.312.000) and in America (+6.629.000), followed by Asia (+1.488.000) and Oceania (+55.000).

The world percentage of Catholics decreased slightly (-0,06) compared to the previous year reaching **17,67%**. The continents register slight variations.

Persons and Catholics per priest

This year the number of persons per priest in the world increased by units, average **15.556**. There are increases in Africa (+2.017), America (+131), Asia (+496), Europe (+78) and Oceania (+17).

The number of Catholics per priest in the world increased by 59 units, average **3.373**. There are increases in all continents except Asia (-1): Africa (+12), America (+99), Oceania (+6), Europe (+38).

Ecclesiastical circumscriptions and mission stations

The number of ecclesiastical circumscriptions increased by only 3 units compared to the previous year, to **3.030**. New circumscriptions were created only in America (+1) and in Africa (+2) while the number in all other continents remains unvaried.

Mission Stations with a resident priest number **3.241** (- 43). Increases were registered in America (+56) and in Europe (+4). The number in Oceania remains unvaried while there is a decrease in Asia (-101) and Africa (-2). Mission stations without a resident priest decreased by a total of 297 to **130.857** with changes distributed as follows: decreases in America (-251) and Asia (-591), increases in Africa (+540), Europe (+3), and Oceania (+2).

Bishops

The total number of Bishops in the world decreased by 23 units, to **5.340**. The number of diocesan Bishops decreased (-1) and Religious Bishops (-22). Diocesan Bishops number **4.155**, while that of Religious Bishops is **1.185**.

Diocesan Bishops increase in America (+9) and in Europe (+1), while a decrease was registered in America (-6) and in Asia (-2) and in Oceania (-3). Religious Bishops decrease in all continents: Africa (-2), America (-16), Asia (-2), Europe (-3), except in Oceania where there is an increase of one unit.

Priests

The total number of priests in the world decreased to **407.872** (-2.347). The continent which registered a major decrease was again Europe (-3.632) as well as America (-963). Increases were registered in Africa (+1.518), in Asia (+719) and in Oceania (+11).

Diocesan priests in the world decreased by 911 units, reaching a total of **279.610**, with a decrease in Europe (-2.237), in America (-230). Increases were registered in all the other continents: in Oceania (+21), in Asia (+561) and in Africa (+974).

The number of religious priests decreased by 1.436 units, to a total **128.262**. Increases were registered only in Asia (+158) and in Africa (+544), decreases in America (-733), in Europe (-1.395) and Oceania (-10).

Permanent Deacons

Permanent deacons in the world continue to increase, this year reaching 541 units, to **49.176**. The highest increase was registered in all the continents: Africa (+59), America (+147), Asia (+58), Europe (+268) and in Oceania (+9).

Permanent diocesan deacons in the world are **48.575**, with an overall increase of 316 units. There is an increase in all continents except for Asia (-13): Africa (+31), America (+139), Europe (+150), Oceania (+9).

Religious permanent deacons number **601**, with a increase of 225 units compared to the previous year. There are increases in Europe (+118), Africa (+28), Asia (+71), America (+8), the number remains unvaried in Oceania.

Men and women religious

The number of non-religious priests decreased by 795 units, to **49.774**. Decreases were registered in America (-311), in Europe (-599) and in Oceania (-115). Increases in Africa (+205), and in Asia (+25).

Even this year there is an overall decrease in the number of women religious by 10.588 units, to a total **608.958**. Increases were registered, once again, in Africa (+2.275) and in Asia (+366), decrease in Europe (-7.804), America (-5.185) and Oceania (-240).

Secular Institutes

Members of male institutes number **593** (+10). A decrease only in America (-3), in Asia (-2), and in Europe (-6), the only increase in Africa (+21) while unvaried in Oceania.

Members of female institutes also decreased this year, by 278 units, to a total of **19.688** members. Increase in Africa (+59), and in Oceania (+25) while decreases were registered in America (-53) in Asia (-3) and in Europe (-306).

Lay missionaries and Catechists

The number of lay missionaries in the world is **410.449**, with an overall decrease of 3.112 units, broken down as follows: Europe (+113), America (-3.905), Asia (+668), Oceania (-19), and Africa (+31).

Catechists in the world decreased by 5.397 units, to a total **2.877.652**. Decreases were registered in America (-9.469), in Europe (-2.394) and in Oceania (-793). Increases are registered in Africa (+4.574) and in Asia (+2685).

Major seminarians

The number of major seminarians, diocesan and religious decreased this year, they are globally 1.960 units, reaching a total **109.895**. Increases were registered only in Africa (+187), decreases in America (-744), Asia (-514), Europe (-888) and Oceania (-1).

Major diocesan seminarians number **66.553** (-1.434), and Religious major seminarians number **43.342** (-526). Major diocesan seminarians increased in Africa (+36) and Oceania (+3), while decreases were registered in Europe (-689), in America (-588), and Asia (-196).

Religious major seminarians decreased by 526 units to a total of **43,342**: increasing only in Africa (+151), while decreasing in Europe (-199), America (-156), Asia (-318) and Oceania (-4).

Minor seminarians

The total number of minor seminarians, diocesan and religious this year increase by 316 units to **95.714**. Decreases were registered in America (-372), Asia (-1.216), Europe (-144) and in Oceania (-5) while a major increase was registered in Africa (+2.053).

Minor diocesan seminarians number **72.801** (-442) and religious seminarians number **22.913** (+141). The number of diocesan minor seminarians decreased in all continents except for Africa (+1.585), America (-512), Asia (-1.417), Europe (-87) and Oceania (-11).

Religious minor seminarians decreased only in Europe (-57) while increases were registered in Africa (+468), America (+140), Asia (+201) and Oceania (+6).

Catholic schools and education

In the field of education, the Catholic Church runs 74.368 kindergartens with 7.565.095 pupils; 100.939 primary schools with 34.699.835 pupils; 49.868 secondary schools with 19.485.023 pupils. The Church also cares 2.483.406 high school pupils and 3.925.325 university students.

Catholic charity and healthcare centres

Charity and healthcare centres run in the world by the Church include: 5.405 hospitals, 14.205 dispensaries, mainly in Africa (5.061) and in America (3.523); 567 Care Homes for people with Leprosy, mainly in Asia (290) and Africa (215); 15.276 Homes for the elderly or the chronically ill or people with a disability, mainly in Europe (8.149); 9.703 orphanages, mainly in Asia (3.230); 10.567 creches, 10.604 marriage counselling centres, mainly in Europe (5.390) and America (2.609); 3.287 social rehabilitation centres; 3.287 social rehabilitation centres mainly in America (1.421) and 35,529 other kinds of institutes, mainly in America (13.697) and Europe (16.841).

Ecclesiastical circumscriptions dependent on the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches.

The Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions dependent on the Dicastery for Evangelization are **1.121**. Most of the ecclesiastical circumscriptions entrusted to the Dicastery are in Africa (523) and in Asia (481), followed by America (71) and Oceania (46).

STATISTICS

*Source: "Church's Yearly Book of Statistics latest edition" elaborated by Fides News Agency.
In brackets variations compared to the previous year: increase (+) decrease (-)*

WORLD POPULATION – CATHOLICS

Continent	Population	Catholics	Percentage
Africa	1.368.512.000 (+40.089.000)	265.152.000 (+8.312.000)	19,38% (+0,05)
America	1.030.365.000 (+7.398.000)	660.297.000 (+6.629.000)	64,08% (+0,18)
Asia	4.621.713.000 (+71.186.000)	153.355.000 (+1.488.000)	3,32% (-0,02)
Europe	722.832.000 (-224.000)	286.063.000 (-244.000)	39,58% (-0,02)
Oceania	42.347.000 (+184.000)	10.985.000 (+55.000)	25,94% (+0,02)
Total	7.785.769.000 (+118.633.000)	1.375.852.000 (+16.240.000)	17,67% (-0,06)

PERSONS/CATHOLICS PER PRIEST

Continent	Persons per priest	Catholics per priest
Africa	26.326 (+2.017)	5.101 (+12)
America	8.636 (+131)	5.534 (+99)
Asia	44.376 (+496)	2.137 (-1)
Europe	4.488 (+78)	1.784 (+38)
Oceania	9.395 (+17)	2.437 (+6)
Total	15.556 (+608)	3.373 (+59)

ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS – MISSION STATIONS

Continent	Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions	Mission Stations with resident priest	Mission Stations without resident priest
Africa	545 (+2)	598 (-2)	73.487 (+540)
America	1.098 (+1)	1.168 (+56)	20.025 (-251)
Asia	545 (=)	992 (-101)	36.039 (-591)
Europe	761 (=)	395 (+4)	464 (+3)

Oceania	81 (=)	88 (=)	842 (+2)
Total	3.030 (+3)	3.241 (-43)	130.857 (-297)

BISHOPS

Continent	Total Bishops	Diocesan Bishops	Religious Bishops
Africa	725 (+7)	525 (+9)	200 (-2)
America	2.000 (-22)	1.472 (-6)	528 (-16)
Asia	806 (-4)	633 (-2)	173 (-2)
Europe	1.676 (-2)	1.441 (+1)	235 (-3)
Oceania	133 (-2)	84 (-3)	49 (+1)
Total	5.340 (-23)	4.155 (-1)	1.185 (-22)

PRIESTS

Continent	Total Priests	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests
Africa	51.983 (+1.518)	36.535 (+974)	15.448 (+544)
America	119.309 (-963)	84.822 (-230)	34.487 (-733)
Asia	71.751 (+719)	40.791 (+561)	30.960 (+158)
Europe	160.322 (-3.632)	114.752 (-2.237)	45.570 (-1.395)
Oceania	4.507 (+11)	2.710 (+21)	1.797 (-10)
Total	407.872 (-2.347)	279.610 (-911)	128.262 (-1.436)

PERMANENT DEACONS

Continent	Total Permanent Deacons	Diocesan Permanent Deacons	Religious Permanent Deacons
Africa	498 (+59)	457 (+31)	41 (+28)
America	32.373 (+147)	32.214 (+139)	159 (+8)
Asia	339 (+58)	239 (-13)	100 (+71)
Europe	15.438 (+268)	15.142 (+150)	296 (+118)

Oceania	528 (+9)	523 (+9)	5 (=)
Total	49.176 (+541)	48.575 (+316)	601 (+225)

MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Continent	Men Religious	Women Religious
Africa	9.393 (+205)	81.832 (+2.275)
America	12.887 (-311)	145.206 (-5.185)
Asia	12.629 (+25)	175.494 (+366)
Europe	13.867 (-599)	200.190 (-7.804)
Oceania	998 (-115)	6.236 (-240)
Total	49.774 (-795)	608.958 (-10.588)

MEMBERS OF SECULAR INSTITUTES

Continent	Members of Secular Institutes Male	Members of Secular Institutes Female
Africa	79 (+21)	1.321 (+59)
America	178 (-3)	4.991 (-53)
Asia	45 (-2)	1.838 (-3)
Europe	290 (-6)	11.483 (-306)
Oceania	1 (=)	55 (+25)
Total	593 (+10)	19.688 (-278)

LAY MISSIONARIES, CATECHISTS

Continent	Lay Missionaries	Catechists
Africa	8.592 (+31)	458.559 (+4.574)
America	348.492 (-3.905)	1.550.303 (-9.469)
Asia	46.352 (+668)	374.868 (+2.685)

Europe	6.882 (+113)	481.302 (-2.394)
Oceania	131 (-19)	12.620 (-793)
Total	410.449 (-3.112)	2.877.652 (-5.397)

MAJOR SEMINARIANS – DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

Continent	Total Major Seminarrians	Diocesan Major Seminarrians	Religious Major Seminarrians
Africa	33.815 (+187)	22.241 (+36)	11.574 (+151)
America	28.659 (-744)	20.008 (-588)	8.651 (-156)
Asia	32.139 (-514)	15.536 (-196)	16.603 (-318)
Europe	14.320 (-888)	8.165 (-689)	6.155 (-199)
Oceania	962 (-1)	603 (+3)	359 (-4)
Total	109.895 (-1.960)	66.553 (-1.434)	43.342 (-526)

MINOR SEMINARIANS – DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

Continent	Total Minor Seminarrians	Diocesan Minor Seminarrians	Religious Minor Seminarrians
Africa	54.464 (+2.053)	47.116 (+1.585)	7.348 (+468)
America	9.771 (-372)	6.777 (-512)	2.994 (+140)
Asia	23.526 (-1.216)	13.773 (-1.417)	9.753 (+201)
Europe	7.758 (-144)	4.971 (-87)	2.787 (-57)
Oceania	195 (-5)	164 (-11)	31 (+6)
Total	95.714 (+316)	72.801 (-442)	22.913 (+758)

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND PUPILS

	INFANT Schools	INFANT Pupils	PRIMARY Schools	PRIMARY Pupils	SECONDARY Schools	SECONDARY Pupils	HIGH SCHOOL Pupils	UNIVERSIT. Students
Africa	20.223	2.421.485	43.455	19.488.169	16.182	5.790.754	205.033	252.943
America	16.279	1.172.748	21.014	5.517.798	12.070	3.495.694	683.275	2.389.826
Asia	13.817	1.924.238	16.261	5.773.212	11.607	5.829.858	1.302.184	422.437
Europe	22.580	1.967.080	15.934	3.109.327	9.262	3.858.806	284.244	818.933
Oceania	1.469	79.544	4.275	811.329	747	509.911	8.670	41.186
Total	74.368	7.565.095	100.939	34.699.835	49.868	19.485.023	2.483.406	3.925.325

HOSPITAL/CLINICS, CHARITY WORK, WELFARE

Continent	Hospital	Dispensar.	Leprosy centres	Homes for the elderly, chronically ill, disabled	Orphanages	Nursery schools	Marriage Counsel. Centres	Catholic schools	Other institutes
Africa	1.497	5.061	215	702	1.686	2.174	1.375	396	1.401
America	1.405	3.523	41	3.411	2.317	2.775	2.609	1.421	13.697
Asia	1.193	2.570	290	2.665	3.230	2.747	970	535	3.228
Europe	1.054	2.506	20	8.149	2.373	2.696	5.390	840	16.841
Oceania	256	545	1	349	97	175	260	95	362
Total	5.405	14.205	567	15.276	9.703	10.567	10.604	3.287	35.529

ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS DEPENDENT ON THE DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION, SECTION FOR FIRST EVANGELIZATION AND THE NEW PARTICULAR CHURCHES

Total dependent circumscriptions: 1,121
(updated to the latest change)

Continent	MA	AD	D	TA	AV	AP	MsJ	TP	AA	MO	TOTAL
Africa	94	3	401	-	18	3	1	-	-	3	523
America	5		22	-	40	1	2	1	-	-	71
Asia	78	1	342	1	17	33	3	-	4	2	481
Oceania	11		31	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	46
TOTAL	188	4	796	1	75	38	8	1	4	6	1.121

Key: **MA** Metropolitan Arcidiocese, **AD** Arcidiocese, **D** Diocese, **TA** Territorial Abbeys, **AV** Apostolic Vicariate, **AP** Apostolic Prefecture, **MsI** Missio sui Juris, **TP** Territorial Prelature, **AA** Apostolic Administration, **MO** Military Ordinariate.

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