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CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS 2021

Città del Vaticano (Agenzia Fides) – As every year, in view of World Mission Day, which this year celebrates its 95th anniversary on Sunday, October 24, 2021, Fides News Service 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 31 December 2019) 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 (2018), according to the comparison made by Fides News Service.

Finally, the picture of ecclesiastical circumscriptions dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is reported.

World Population

To December 31, 2019 the world population was **7.577.777.000**, with an increase of 81.383.000 units compared to the previous year. Population growth was registered on every continent, including Europe. Increases were registered above all in Asia (+40.434.000) and in Africa (+33.360.000), followed by America (+6.973.000), Europe (+157.000) and Oceania (+459.000).

Catholics

On the same date, December 31, 2019, Catholics in the world numbered **1.344.403.000** units with an overall increase of 15.410.000 units compared to the previous year. The increase affects all continents, except Europe (-292.000). As in the past, increases were registered above all in Africa (+8.302.000) and in America (+5.373.000), followed by Asia (+1.909.000) and Oceania (+118.000).

The world percentage of Catholics increased compared to the previous year, to **17,74%**. With regards to the continents, a slight increase was registered in Africa (+0,14), Asia (+0,02) and America (+0,09), decrease in Europe (-0,05) and Oceania (26,34%) remains unvaried.

Persons and Catholics per priest

This year the number of persons per priest in the world increased by 215 units, average **14.853**. There are increases in America (+96), Oceania (+231) and Europe (+172). A decrease in Asia (-765) and Africa (-202).

The number of Catholics per priest in the world increased by 35 units, almost the same as the previous year (+42), average **3.245**. There are increases in America (+74), Europe (+25), Oceania (+60). The number of Catholics per priest in the world decreased in Asia (-34) and Africa (-2).

Ecclesiastical circumscriptions and mission stations

The number of ecclesiastical circumscriptions remains more or less unvaried, there is only an increase of 1 unit compared to the previous year, to **3.026**. New circumscriptions were created in Africa (+2), Asia (+1), Europe (+1), while the number in Oceania (81) remains unvaried, a decrease of 3 units in America.

Mission Stations with a resident priest number **3.217** (+301). Increases were registered in all continents, especially in Africa (+138), in Asia (+88) and in America (+56).

Mission Stations without a resident priest decreased by 5.836 units, reaching a total 131.407 with variations in all continents: decrease in Africa (-4.382), in Asia (-358), in Europe (-58), America (-1.113), the only increase in Oceania (+75).

Bishops

The total number of Bishops in the world decreased by 13 units, to **5.364**. Diocesan Bishops increased (+12) and Religious Bishops decreased (-25). Diocesan Bishops number **4.134**, while Religious Bishops number **1.230**.

Diocesan Bishops increase in Africa (+11), Asia (+5), Europa (+4) ed Oceania (+2), while the only decrease is registered in America (-10). Religious Bishops decrease in all continents: Africa (-6), America (-7), Asia (-5), Europe (-4) ed Oceania (-3).

Priests

The total number of priests in the world increased this year, to **414.336** (+271). The continent which registered a major decrease was again Europe (-2.608) as well as America (-690) and Oceania (-69). Increases were registered in Africa (+1.649) and in Asia (+1.989).

Diocesan priests in the world increased by 262 units, reaching a total of **282.136**, with a decrease again in Europe (-1.436) and in Oceania (-30). Increases were registered in Africa (+1.061), Asia (+569), America (+98).

The number of Religious priests increased by 9 units, to a total **132.200**. Increases were registered in Africa (+588), in Asia (+1.420) whereas numbers dropped in Oceania (-39), in Europe (-1.172) and in America (-788).

Permanent Deacons

Permanent deacons in the world continue to increase, this year reaching 734 units, to **48.238**. The highest increase was registered again in America (+562), followed by Europe (+177), Oceania (+5), Africa (+1), decrease only in Asia (-11).

Permanent diocesan deacons in the world are **47.603**, with an overall increase of 790 units. Even this year there was an overall increase: in Asia (+18), Europe (+207), America (+554), Oceania (+7), Africa (+4).

Religious permanent deacons number **635**, with a decrease by 56 units compared to the previous year. Decreases in Europe (-30), Africa (-3) and Oceania (-2), Asia (-29), the only increase in America (+8).

Men and Women religious

The number of non-religious priests decreased for the seventh consecutive year, by 646 units, to **50.295**. A decrease was registered in Europe (-236), America (-390), Oceania (-86) and Asia (-23). An increase only in Africa (+89).

Even this year there is an overall decrease in the number of women religious, by 11.562 units, to a total **630.099**. An increase, once again was registered in Africa (+835) and in Asia (+599), decrease in Europe (-7.400), America (-5.315) and Oceania (-281).

Members of secular institutes, male and female

Members of male institutes number **582**, and decrease (-32) everywhere: in Europe (-2), America (-13), Asia (-10), Africa (-7), while also this year the number remains unvaried in Oceania (only 1 member).

Members of female institutes also decreased this year, by 553 units, to a total of **20.913** members. Increase only in Africa (+30), while a decrease was registered in Europe (-365), America (-110), Asia (-104) and in Oceania (-4).

Lay missionaries and Catechists

The number of lay missionaries in the world is **410.440**, with an overall increase of 34.252 units, in Europe (+277), America (+33.930), Oceania (+29) and Africa (+566). Decrease in Asia (-550).

Catechists in the world decreased by 2.590 units, to a total **3.074.034**. Decreases were registered in America (-15.651), Europe (-5.658), Oceania (-485), increases were registered in Africa (+6.808) and in Asia (+12.396).

Major seminarians

The number of major seminarians, diocesan and religious decreased this year, they are globally 1822 units, reaching a total of **114.058**. Increases were registered only in Africa (+509), decreases in Asia (-898), Oceania (-53), Europe (-630) and America (-750).

Major diocesan seminarians number **68.609** (-1350 compared to the previous year) and Religious major seminarians **45.449** (-427). Major diocesan seminarians increased only in Africa (+224), while decreases were registered in Europe (-688), America (-784), Asia (-102) and unvaried in Oceania.

Religious major seminarians increase in Africa (+285), in Europe (+58), in America (+34), while a decrease was registered in Asia (-796) and Oceania (-53).

Minor seminarians

The total number of minor seminarians, diocesan and religious this year decrease for the fourth consecutive year by 3.174 units to **96.990**. Overall decrease in all continents except Oceania (+22): in America (-914), Africa (-1.519), Europe (-743) and in Asia (-20).

Minor diocesan seminarians number **74.976** (-2.539) and religious seminarians number **22.014** (-635). The number of diocesan minor seminarians increased only in Oceania (+22). Decrease in Africa (-1.305), America (-790), Europe (-214) and Asia (-252).

Religious minor seminarians decreased in Europe (-529), Africa (-214) and America (-124), while an increase was registered in Asia (+232). The number remains unvaried in Oceania.

Catholic schools and education

In the field of education, the Catholic Church runs 72.667 kindergartens with 7.532.992 pupils; 98.925 primary schools with 35.188.771 pupils; 49.552 secondary schools with 19.370.763 pupils. The Church also cares 2.395.540 high school pupils and 3.833.012 university students.

Catholic charity and healthcare centres

Charity and healthcare centres run in the world by the Church include: 5.245 hospitals, most of them in Africa (1.418) and in America (1.362); 14.963 dispensaries, mainly in Africa (5.307), America (4.043); 532 Care Homes for people with Leprosy, mainly in Asia (269) and Africa (201); 15.429 Homes for the elderly, or the chronically ill or people with a disability, mainly in Europe (8.031) and in America (3.642); 9.374 orphanages, mainly in Asia (3.233) and in Europe (2.247); 10.723 creches, mainly in Asia (2.973) and in America (2.957); 12.308 marriage counselling centres, mainly in Europe (5.504) and America (4.289); 3.198 social rehabilitation centres and 33.840 other kinds of institutes.

Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

The ecclesiastical Circumscriptions dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Cep) are **1.117**. Most of the ecclesiastical circumscriptions entrusted to Propaganda Fide are in Africa (517) and in Asia (483), followed by America (71) and Oceania (46).

STATISTICS

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

WORLD POPULATION– CATHOLICS

Continent	Population	Catholics	Percentage
Africa	1.290.579.000 (+33.360.000)	251.550.000 (+8.302.000)	19,49% (+0,14)
America	1.014.407.000 (+6.973.000)	647.205.000 (+5.373.000)	63,80% (+0,09)
Asia	4.510.857.000 (+40.434.000)	149.136.000 (+1.909.000)	3,31% (+0,02)
Europe	720.399.000 (+157.000)	285.573.000 (-292.000)	39,64% (-0,05)
Oceania	41.535.000 (+459.000)	10.939.000 (+118.000)	26,34% (=)
Total	7.577.777.000 (+81.383.000)	1.344.403.000 (+15.410.000)	17,74% (+0.01)

PERSONS/CATHOLICS PER PRIEST

Continent	Persons per priest	Catholics per priest
Africa	26.093 (-202)	5.086 (-2)
America	8.328 (+96)	5.318 (+74)
Asia	43.958 (-765)	2.123 (-34)
Europe	4.280 (+172)	1.697 (+25)
Oceania	9.029 (+231)	2.378 (+60)
Total	14.853 (+215)	3.245 (+35)

ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS – MISSION STATIONS

Continent	Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions	Mission Stations with resident priest	Mission Stations without resident priest
Africa	543 (+2)	619 (+138)	72.698 (-4.382)

America	1.095 (-3)	963 (+56)	20.398 (-1.113)
Asia	546 (+1)	1.159 (+88)	37.013 (-358)
Europe	761 (+1)	394 (+6)	462 (-58)
Oceania	81 (=)	82 (+13)	836 (+75)
Total	3.026 (+1)	3.217 (+301)	131.407 (-5.836)

BISHOPS

Continent	Total Bishops	Diocesan Bishops	Religious Bishops
Africa	720 (+5)	516 (+11)	204 (-6)
America	2.006 (-17)	1.453 (-10)	553 (-7)
Asia	815 (=)	633 (+5)	182 (-5)
Europe	1.687 (=)	1.444 (+4)	243 (-4)
Oceania	136 (-1)	88 (+2)	48 (-3)
Total	5.364 (-13)	4.134 (+12)	1.230 (-25)

PRIESTS

Continent	Total Priests	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests
Africa	49.461 (+1.649)	34.445 (+1.061)	15.016 (+588)
America	121.693 (-690)	85.416 (+98)	36.277 (-788)
Asia	70.254 (+1.989)	39.677 (+569)	30.577 (+1.420)
Europe	168.328 (-2.608)	119.869 (-1.436)	48.459 (-1.172)
Oceania	4.600 (-69)	2.729 (-30)	1.871 (-39)
Total	414.336 (+271)	282.136 (+262)	132.200 (+9)

PERMANENT DEACONS

Continent	Total Permanent Deacons	Diocesan Permanent Deacons	Religious Permanent Deacons
Africa	479 (+1)	437 (+4)	42 (-3)

America	31.668 (+562)	31.471 (+554)	197 (+8)
Asia	343 (-11)	235 (+18)	108 (-29)
Europe	15.267 (+177)	14.982 (+207)	285 (-30)
Oceania	481 (+5)	478 (+7)	3 (-2)
Total	48.238 (+734)	47.603 (+790)	635 (-56)

MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Continent	Men Religious	Women Religious
Africa	9.085 (+89)	77.054 (+835)
America	13.735 (-390)	154.717 (-5.315)
Asia	12.257 (-23)	174.764 (+599)
Europe	14.038 (-236)	216.846 (-7.400)
Oceania	1.180 (-86)	6.718 (-281)
Total	50.295 (-646)	630.099 (-11.562)

MEMBERS OF SECULAR INSTITUTES

Continent	Members of Secular Institutes Male	Members of Secular Institutes Female
Africa	72 (-7)	1.202 (+30)
America	170 (-13)	5.125 (-110)
Asia	43 (-10)	1.843 (-104)
Europe	296 (-2)	12.713 (-365)
Oceania	1 (=)	30 (-4)
Total	582 (-32)	20.913 (-553)

LAY MISSIONARIES, CATECHISTS

Continent	Lay Missionaries	Catechists
Africa	8.002 (+566)	439.219 (+6.808)
America	348.862 (+33.930)	1.721.782 (-15.651)
Asia	41.570 (-550)	390.465 (+12.396)
Europe	11.833 (+277)	508.650 (-5.658)
Oceania	173 (+29)	13.918 (-485)
Total	410.440 (+34.252)	3.074.034 (-2.590)

MAJOR SEMINARIANS– DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

Continent	Total Major Seminarians	Diocesan Major Seminarians	Religious Major Seminarians
Africa	32.721 (+509)	21.700 (+224)	11.021 (+285)
America	30.664 (-750)	21.120 (-784)	9.544 (+34)
Asia	33.821 (-898)	15.847 (-102)	17.974 (-796)
Europe	15.888 (-630)	9.351 (-688)	6.537 (+58)
Oceania	964 (-53)	591 (=)	373 (-53)
Total	114.058 (-1.822)	68.609 (-1.350)	45.449 (-472)

MINOR SEMINARIANS– DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS

Continent	Total Minor Seminarians	Diocesan Minor Seminarians	Religious Minor Seminarians
Africa	52.036 (-1.519)	45.884 (-1.305)	6.152 (-214)
America	11.192 (-914)	8.092 (-790)	3.100 (-124)
Asia	25.386 (-20)	15.638 (-252)	9.748 (+232)
Europe	8.177 (-743)	5.180 (-214)	2.997 (-529)
Oceania	199 (+22)	182 (+22)	17 (=)

Total	96.990 (-3.174)	74.976 (-2.539)	22.014 (-635)
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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND PUPILS

	INFANT Schools	INFANT Pupils	PRIMARY schools	PRIMARY pupils	SECONDARY schools	SECONDARY pupils	High school pupils	UNIVERSIT. students
Africa	19.098	2.286.485	41.124	19.238.587	15.622	5.448.254	150.930	197.887
America	16.394	1.248.287	21.716	6.086.596	12.224	3.549.668	702.386	2.286.716
Asia	14.119	2.048.546	16.501	5.969.690	11.636	6.125.508	1.200.700	544.833
Europe	21.567	1.869.403	15.739	3.081.171	9.341	3.750.141	332.318	756.759
Oceania	1.489	80.271	3.845	812.727	729	497.192	9.206	46.817
Total	72.667	7.532.992	98.925	35.188.771	49.552	19.370.763	2.395.540	3.833.012

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	1.418	5.307	201	659	1.646	2.149	1.433	249	1.192
America	1.362	4.043	41	3.642	2.133	2.957	4.289	1.630	13.092
Asia	1.180	2.775	269	2.674	3.233	2.973	864	490	2.764
Europe	1.014	2.313	19	8.031	2.247	2.491	5.504	725	16.503
Oceania	271	525	2	423	115	153	218	104	289
Total	5.245	14.963	532	15.429	9.374	10.723	12.308	3.198	33.840

ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS DEPENDENT ON THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

Vatic City (Agenzia Fides) – The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is at the service of the Holy Father the Pope as the “central body for promoting, directing and co-ordinating” the activity of evangelisation of peoples and missionary cooperation throughout the world (cfr, Ad gentes, 29; Pastor bonus, 85),

The Church down through the centuries, in obedience to the command received from Christ, has always proclaimed the Gospel to all peoples. In order to fulfil her missionary duty, in the face of growing demand for evangelisation in the 16th century, the Church set up special structures. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV instituted the “Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide”, with the task of “preaching and proclaiming the Gospel and Catholic doctrine in all missions”, giving the Congregation decision making powers to guarantee rapidity and effectiveness. In 1627 Pope Urban VIII founded the Urban College of Propaganda Fide for the formation of secular clergy for the mission and the Tipografia Poliglotta (Printing Press) to print documents and books in many different languages.

With the apostolic Constitution Pastor bonus, Pope John Paul II confirmed the general principle of jurisdiction laid down by the Second Vatican Council (cfr. Ad gentes, 29), which states: “The Congregation has the task of directing and co-ordinating activity for the evangelisation of peoples and for missionary cooperation” (85).

The main duties of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples include: ensure fair distribution of missionaries; formation for local secular clergy and catechists; involve Religious Institutes, Mission Societies, and local Churches in the task of evangelising mission territories.

The Cep is responsible for a total of 1.117 Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions (updated to the latest change)

Continent	MA	AD	D	TA	AV	AP	MsJ	TP	AA	OM	TOTAL
Africa	94	3	394	-	19	3	1	-	-	3	517
America	5		22	-	40	1	2	1	-	-	71
Asia	78	1	343	1	17	34	3	-	4	2	483
Oceania	11		31	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	46
TOTAL	188	4	790	1	76	39	8	1	4	6	1.117

Key: Metropolitan Arcidiocese (MA), Arcidiocese (AD), Diocese (D), Territorial Abbacy (TA), Apostolic Vicariate (AV), Apostolic Prefecture (AP), Missioni sui juris (MsJ), Territorial Prelature (TP), Apostolic Administration (AA), Military Ordinariate (OM).

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