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CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS 2026

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CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS 2026

By Luca Mainoldi

Vatican City (Fides News Agency) – As every year, in view of World Mission Sunday, which this year celebrates its 100th anniversary on Sunday, October 18, 2026, on the theme ***"One in Christ, united in mission"***, Fides News Agency offers some statistics chosen to give a panorama of the Church in the world in the last year.

All the data in this dossier, and the subsequent processing of tables, are taken from the latest edition of the «Church's Book of Statistics» and regard members of the Catholic Church, church structures, healthcare, welfare and education.
The data in the volume relating to the total world population and the number of baptized Catholics are updated to December 31, 2024.

Please note that variations are indicated in brackets, increase (+) or decrease (-) compared to the previous year (December 31, 2023), according to the comparison made by Fides News Agency.
Finally, the picture of ecclesiastical circumscriptions dependent on the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches is reported.

World Population

To June 30, 2024 the world population was **7.995.573.000**, with an increase of 80.990.000 units compared to the previous year. The positive trend is confirmed for all continents.

The most significant increase is Africa (+34.659.000). Followed by Asia (+31.370.000), America (+13.878.000), Europe (+134.000) and Oceania (+949.000).

Catholics and percentage

To June 30, 2024, Catholics in the world numbered **1.422.144.000** units with an overall increase of 16.690.000 Catholics compared to the previous year. Even in this case, the increase affects all five continents, including Europe.

As in previous years, increases were registered above all in Africa (+7.580.000), and in America (+6.992.000). Followed by Asia (+968.000), Europe (+911.000) and Oceania (+239.000). The world percentage of Catholics remains unvaried, **17,8%.** The Continents register slight variations.

Persons and Catholics per priest

This year the number of persons per priest in the world increased by 186 units, reaching **16.104** (last year 15.918). There are increases in Oceania (+290), America (+102) and Europe (+77), while there are decreases in Asia (-182) and Africa (-148). There is also an increase in the number of Catholics per priest: **3.491** (+38 units compared to last year). Increases were registered in America (+50), Europe (+36), Oceania (+73) while decreases were registered in the number of persons per priest in Asia (-17) and Africa (-17).

Ecclesiastical circumpscriptions and mission stations

Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions mean Patriarchal, Metropolitan, Archiepiscopal and Episcopal Sees, Territorial Prelatures and Territorial Abbeys, Exarchates and Ordinariates, Military Ordinariates, Apostolic Vicariates, Apostolic Prefectures, Apostolic Administrations, Missions *sui iuris* and Patriarchal Exarchates.
The number of ecclesiastical circumscriptions increased by 5 units compared to the previous year, to **3.047.** New circumscriptions were created in Africa (+3) in America (+2) and in Asia (+1). The number in Oceania (81) and in Europe remain unvaried (759).

There are **111.602 mission stations** in the world (previous year 122.777). **Mission Stations with a resident priest** number **4.187** (+987). An increase was registered in Africa (+181), Asia (+556) America (+183) and Europe (+89), while a decrease was registered in Oceania (-22).
Mission stations without a resident priest decreased compared to the previous year (-12.162 units), reaching **107.415.** A decrease is registered in all continents, except Europe (+78). A significant decrease of mission stations was registered in America (-1.560) in Africa (-4.337) in Asia (-6.262) and Oceania (-81).

Bishops

The total number of Bishops in the world increased by 95 units compared to the previous year, reaching **5.525.** The number of diocesan Bishops increased (+107) and Religious Bishops decreased (-12). Diocesan Bishops number **4.365**, while that of Religious Bishops is **1.160**. Diocesan Bishops increase in all continents: Africa (+22), in America (+25) in Asia (+36) in Europe (+21) and in Oceania (+3). Religious Bishops decrease in all continents except America (+2): Africa (-2), Asia (-8), Europe (-3) and Oceania (-1).

Priests

For the first time in five years, there is an increase in the total number of priests in the world. From **406.996** the number reaches **407.421** this year, an increase of **425** units (-734 in the last year). Once again, it is Europe that shows a consistent decrease (-2483) and Oceania (-32). Like last year, significant increase were registered in Africa (+1.676) and in Asia (+1.065) followed by America (+199).

Compared to last year, **diocesan priests** in the world increased by 496 units, reaching **279.238.** The number of diocesan priests increased in Africa (+1.778) in Asia (+541) and in America (+430). A decrease continues in Oceania (-22) and above all in Europe (-1631).

Compared to last year there is also a decrease of **religious priests**, reaching **128.183** (-71). There is an increase in Africa (+498) and in Asia (+524). Religious priests decrease in America (-231) in Europe (-852) and in Oceania (-10).

Permanent deacons

Permanent deacons in the world continue to increase (+669), reaching **52.102.** The increase was registered in America (+424), in Africa (+23) and above all in Europe (+236). A slight decrease was registered in Asia (-13) and Oceania (-1).

Men and women religious

The number of non-religious priests decreased by 237 units compared to the previous year, reaching **48.511**. A decrease was registered in Europe (-346) in America (-137) and in Oceania (-59) while an increase was registered in Africa (+97) and Asia (+208).

Even this year there is an overall decrease in the number of women religious, reaching **580.131** (-9.292)**.** An increase was registered, once again, in Africa (+2.190), while a decrease was registered in Asia (-320), in Europe (-6.473), America (-4.432) and Oceania (-257).

Secular Institutes

Members of male institutes remain unvaried and number **600**. A decrease was registered in Africa (-11). There is a slight increase in Europe (+6), in America (+1) and in Asia (+4), while the situation remains unvaried in Oceania.

Members of female institutes also decreased this year: -349 units, a total of **17.917**. An increase was registered in Africa (+32), unvaried in Oceania, while a decrease is registered in Asia (-32), in Europe (-268), and in America (-81).

Lay missionaries and Catechists

The number of lay missionaries in the world is **463.079**, with a global increase of 18.473 units. An increase was registered in America (+20.492), in Africa (+578) and Oceania (+60), while the number decreases in Europe (-88) and above all in Asia (-2569).

Catechists in the world increased by 22.370 units, reaching **2.889.336**. A decrease was registered in Africa (-206) and in Europe (-7.603). Numbers increased in particular in Asia (+13.616) and in America (+16.515) and Oceania (+48).

Major seminarians

The number of major seminarians, diocesan and religious decreased this year, they are globally **103.604** (they were 106.495 in the previous year). A significant increase was registered only in Africa (+786), while a decrease was registered in America (-227), in Asia (-2.733) in Europe (-701) and also in Oceania (-16).

Major diocesan seminarians decrease and number **63.856** (-207) as well as religious seminarians reaching **39.743** (-2.684). Major diocesan seminarians increased, like last year, only in Africa (+658) and Oceania (+6), while a decrease was registered in America (-316), in Europe (-355) and in Asia (-200).

Religious major seminarians increased in Africa (+128) and in America (+89), while a decrease was registered in Asia (-2.533) in Europe (-346) and in Oceania (-22).

Minor seminarians

The total number of minor seminarians, diocesan and religious decreased by **94.041** (-980). In detail, the trend in Africa has reversed, moving from the decrease recorded in the previous annual statistics (-90) to the increase recorded in the latest statistics (+132) and also an increase in Oceania (+20). A decrease was registered in Europe (-872) in Asia (-182) and in America (-78)

Minor diocesan seminarians decrease and number **71.934** (-720) while religious seminarians number **22.107** (-260)

The number of diocesan seminarians decrease in all continents except Asia (+233) and Oceania (+1), while there is a decrease in Europe (-575), Africa (-376) and America (-3).

Religious minor seminarians increased only in Africa (+508) and Oceania (+19), while decrease in Europe (-297), in Asia (-415) and America (-75).

Catholic schools and education

In the field of education, the Catholic Church runs 75.448 kindergartens with 7.480.373 pupils **(**it should be noted that compared to the previous year, the kindergartens run by the Church have increased by 898 units, but pupils have decreased by 158,678 units); 103.666 primary schools with 36.314.935 pupils (the previous year there were 102,455 primary schools with 36.199.844 pupils)*;* 51.810 secondary schools with 20.340.808 pupils (in the previous year there were 52,085 institutes of this educational level for a total of 20.724.361 pupils). Furthermore, 2.685.027 pupils study in secondary schools and 4.091.087 in university institutes affiliated with the Catholic Church.

Catholic charity and healthcare centers

Charity and healthcare centres run in the world by the Church are **101.110** and include: 5.397 hospitals and 13.646 dispensaries, mainly in Africa (1.651 hospitals and 4.839 dispensaries) and in America (1.340 hospitals e 3.451 dispensaries); 468 Care Homes for people with Leprosy, mainly in Asia (253) and Africa (167); 16.263 Homes for the elderly or the chronically ill or people with a disability, mainly in Europe (9.205); 8.138 orphanages, mainly in Asia (2.822) and Europe (2.194)*;* 10.352 creches; 10.624 marriage counselling centres, mainly in Europe (5.221) and America (2.865); 3.194 social rehabilitation centers, mainly in America (1.493) and 33.028 other kinds of institutes, mainly in America (15.515) and in Europe (12.927).

In the following tables the detail of each Continent

CATHOLIC CHURCH STATISTICS – TABLES 2026

In brackets variations compared to the previous year: increase (+) decrease (-)

World population/Catholics

	Population	Catholics	Percentage
Africa	1.451.890.000 (+34.659.000)	288.312.000 (+7.580.000)	19,9% (+0,1%)
America	1.060.484.000 (+13.878.000)	678.869.000 (+6.992.000)	64.0% (-0,2%)
Asia	4.714.572.000 (+31.370.000)	156.166.000 (+968.000)	3,3% (0)
Europe	723.957.000 (+134.000)	287.240.000 (+911.000)	39.7 % (+0,1%)
Oceania	44.670.000 (+949.000)	11.557.000 (+239.000)	25,9% (0)
TOTAL	**7.995.573.000 (+80.990.000)**	**1.422.144.000 (+16.690.000)**	**17,8% (+0,1)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to June 30, 2024)*

Persons/Catholics per priest

	Persons per priest	Catholics per priest
Africa	25.568 (-148)	5.077 (-17)
America	8.946 (+102)	5.727 (+50)
Asia	43.667 (-182)	2079 (-17)
Europe	4.744 (+77)	1.882 (+36)
Oceania	10.240 (+290)	2.649 (+73)
TOTAL	**16.104 (+186)**	**3.491 (+38)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Ecclesiastical Circumspritions/Mission Stations

	Ecclesiastical Circumscripition	Mission Stations with resident priest	Mission Stations without resident priest
Africa	557 (+3)	1.271 (+181)	66.861 (-4.337)
America	1104 (+2)	737 (+183)	14.328 (-1.560)
Asia	546 (+1)	1.736 (+556)	25.076 (-6.262)
Europe	759 (=)	386 (+89)	507 (+78)
Oceania	81 (=)	57 (-22)	643 (-81)
TOTAL	**3.047 (+6)**	**4.187 (+987)**	**107.415 (-12.162)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Bishops

	Total Bishops	Diocesan Bishops	Religious Bishops
Africa	790 (+20)	586 (+22)	204 (-2)
America	2.041 (+27)	1.529 (+25)	512 (+2)
Asia	869 (+28)	698 (+36)	171 (-8)
Europe	1.693 (+18)	1.467 (+21)	226 (-3)
Oceania	132 (+2)	85 (+3)	47 (-1)
TOTAL	**5.525 (+95)**	**4.365 (+107)**	**1.160 (-12)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Priests

	Total Priests	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests
Africa	(+1.676)	39.748	17.038 (+498)
America	(+199)	84.943 (+430)	33.601 (-231)
Asia	(+1.065)	42.421 (+541)	32.700 (+524)
Europe	(-2483)	109.507 (-1631)	43.101 (-852)
Oceania	(-32)	2.619 (-22)	1.743 (-10)
TOTAL	407.421 (+425)	279.238 (+496)	128.183 (-71)

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Permanent Deacons

	Total Deacons	Diocesan Permanent Deacons	Religious Permanent Deacons
Africa	519 (+23)	488 (+17)	31 (+6)
America	34.746 (+424)	34.615 (+436)	131 (-12)
Asia	340 (-13)	245 (-17)	95 (+4)
Europe	15.914 (+236)	15.623 (+245)	291 (-9)
Oceania	583 (-1)	578 (=)	5 (-1)
TOTAL	**52.102 (+669)**	**51.549 (+681)**	**553 (-12)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Men and Women Religious

	Men Religious	Women Religious
Africa	9.368 (+97)	87.184 (+2.190)
America	12.484 (-137)	132.783 (-4.432)
Asia	12.962 (+208)	175.294 (-320)
Europe	12.831 (-346)	179.367 (-6.473)
Oceania	866 (-59)	5.503 (–257)
TOTAL	**48.511 (-237)**	**580.131 (-9.292)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Members of Secular Institutes

	Members of Secular Institutes Male	Members of Secular Institutes Female
Africa	79 (-11)	1.350 (+32)
America	167 (+1)	4.647 (-81)
Asia	56 (+4)	1.828 (-32)
Europe	297 (+6)	10.064 (-268)
Oceania	1 (=)	28 (=)
TOTAL	**600 (0)**	**17.917 (-349)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Lay Missionaries and Catechists

	Lay Missionaries	Catechists
Africa	8.860 (+578)	466.852 (-206)
America	402.037 (+20.492)	1.581.475 (+16.515)
Asia	45.875 (-2.569)	386.149 (+13.616)
Europe	6.033 (-88)	441.985 (-7.603)
Oceania	274 (+60)	12.875 (+48)
TOTAL	**463.079** **(+18.473)**	**2.889.336** **(+22.370)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Major Seminarians – Diocesan and Religious

	Major Seminarians	Diocesan Major Seminarians	Religious Major Seminarians
Africa	35.710 (+786)	23.480 (+658)	12.230 (+128)
America	27.149 (-227)	18.222 (-316)	8.927 (+89)
Asia	27.703 (-2.733)	14.803 (-200)	12.900 (-2.533)
Europe	12.099 (-701)	6.735 (-355)	5.364 (-346)
Oceania	943 (-16)	616 (+6)	327 (-22)
TOTAL	**103.604** **(-2.891)**	**63.856** **(-207)**	**39.748** **(-2.684)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Minor Seminarians – Diocesan and Religious

	Minor Seminarians	Diocesan Minor Seminarians	Religious Minor Seminarians
Africa	55.571 (+132)	47.989 (-376)	7.582 (+508)
America	9.245 (-78)	6.407 (-3)	2.838 (-75)
Asia	22.489 (-182)	13.290 (+233)	9.199 (-415)
Europe	6.564 (-872)	4.112 (-575)	2.452 (-297)
Oceania	172 (+20)	136 (+1)	36 (+19)
TOTAL	**94.041 (-980)**	**71.934 (-720)**	**22.107 (-260)**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Catholic Schools and Pupils

	INFANT Schools	INFANT Pupils	PRIMARY Schools	PRIMARY Pupils	SECONDARY Schools	SECONDARY Pupils	HIGH SCHOOL Pupils	UNIVERSIT. Students
Africa	22.340	2.962.853	45.528	21.292.853	18.087	6.798.319	208.127	316.376
America	15.620	1.238.655	21.546	5.556.345	11.800	3.448.105	782.940	2.296.810
Asia	13.507	1.470.757	16.596	5.589.828	11.570	5.781.081	1.330.813	507.893
Europe	22.531	1.724.005	15.929	3.007.255	9.576	3.765.615	355.052	932.953
Oceania	1.450	84.103	4.067	868.654	777	547.688	8.095	37.055
TOTAL	**75.448**	**7.480.373**	**103.666**	**36.314.935**	**51.810**	**20.340.808**	**2.685.027**	**4.091.087**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Hospital/clinics, charity work, welfare

	Hospitals	Dispensaries	Leprosy centers	Homes for the elderly/ chronically ill, disabled	Orphanages	Kindergartens	Marriage counsel centers	Catholic schools	Other institutes
Africa	1.651	4.839	167	616	1.129	2.124	1.401	242	996
America	1.340	3.451	36	3.403	1.848	2.584	2.865	1.493	15.515
Asia	1.158	2.365	253	2.659	2.822	2.581	919	428	2.924
Europe	1.012	2.375	12	9.205	2.194	2.901	5.221	942	12.927
Oceania	236	616	-	380	145	162	218	89	666
TOTAL	**5.397**	**13.646**	**468**	**16.263**	**8.138**	**10.352**	**10.624**	**3.194**	**33.028**

**Data «Church's Book of Statistics» (updated to December 31, 2024)*

Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions dependent on the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches (updated to the latest change)

	M	AD	D	AT	VA	PA	MSI	PT	AA	OM	TOT
Africa	95	3	407	-	18	3	1	-	-	3	530
America	5	-	22	-	40	1	2	1	-	-	71
Asia	80	1	342	1	17	33	3	-	4	2	483
Oceania	11	-	31	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	46
TOTAL	191	4	802	1	75	38	8	1	4	6	1130

Key

M *Metropolitan Arcidiocese*
AD *Arcidiocese*
D *Diocese*
AT *Territorial Abbeys*
VA *Apostolic Vicariates*
PA *Apostolic Prefecture*
MSI *Missio sui iuris*
PT *Territorial Prelature*
AA *Apostolic Administration*
OM *Military Ordinariate*

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