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Pontifical Yearbook 2016 and the Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae 2014: dynamics of a Church in transformation

Vatican City, 5 March 2016 – The Pontifical Yearbook 2016 and the Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae 2014, compiled by the Central Office of Church Statistics and edited by the Vatican Typography, will be released in bookshops in the forthcoming days.

The information provided in these two volumes shows some changes regarding the life of the Catholic Church in the world from February 2015 to the 31 December of the same year.

During the period indicated, one metropolitan eparchy was elevated, and three new episcopal sees, three eparchies, two apostolic exarchates were erected. One apostolic exarchate was elevated to the status of eparchy.

The statistical information, which refers to the year 2014, shows the dynamics of the Catholic Church in the 2,998 ecclesiastical circumscriptions around the globe. The number of Catholics in the world increased during the nine years between 2005 and 2014 from 1,115 million to 1,272 million, 17.8 per cent of the world population compared to 17.3 per cent.

The number of Catholics increased in Africa (41 per cent), where there has been a population growth of 23.8 per cent. In the continent of Asia there was also an increase in the number of Catholics greater than that of the overall population increase (20 compared to 9.6 per cent), and the same occurred in America (11.7 compared to 9.6 per cent). In Europe there was a growth in the number of Catholics slightly higher (2 per cent) than that of the overall population. In Oceania population growth (18.2 per cent) was greater than the increase in the number of Catholics (15.9 per cent). In 2014 the total of baptised Catholics was distributed by continent as follows: Africa (17 per cent), America (48 per cent, remaining the continent with the greatest number of Catholics), Asia (10.9 per cent), Europe (22.6 per cent) and Oceania (0.8 per cent).

From 2005 to 2014 the number of bishops increased by 8.2 per cent from 4,841 to 5,237. This increase was noted primarily in Asia (+ 14.3 per cent) and in Africa (+ 12.9 per cent), whereas in America (+6.9 per cent) and Oceania (+ 4 per cent) the growth was slightly lower than the world average.

The number of priests, diocesan and religious, from 2005 to 2014 increased by 9.381 from 406,411 to 415,792. However, this increase was not homogeneous. In Africa and Asia there was an increase of 32.6 per cent and 27.1 per cent respectively, whereas in Europe the number declined by 8 per cent, and in Oceania by 1.7 per cent.

Permanent deacons continued to increase in number, from 33,000 in 2005 to 44,566 in 2014, an increase of 33.5 per cent. They are present in North America and Europe in particular, where 97.5 per cent of the total are found, while their presence is limited (1.7 per cent) in Africa and Asia.

The number of non-ordained male religious declined slightly, from 54,708 in 2005 to 54,559 in 2014. They reduced in number in America (- 5 per cent), Europe (-14.2 per cent) and Oceania (-6.8 per cent), and increased in Africa (+10.2 per cent) and in Asia (+30 per cent).

There was a decrease in female religious of 10.2 per cent overall between 2005 and 2014. Women religious in Europe and America declined from 70.8 per cent to 63.5 per cent, while in Africa and Asia there was an increase from 27.8 to 35.3 per cent.

Candidates for the priesthood, diocesan and religious, passed from 114,439 in 2005 to 116,939 in 2014, although in 2011 there were 120,616. The decrease in the last three years affected all continents with the exception of Africa, where there was an increase of 3.8 per cent in the number of seminarians. However, considering the entire nine-year period, clear territorial differences may be observed. Africa, Asia and Oceania demonstrate a lively evolutionary dynamic, with a growth rate of 21, 14 and 7.2 per cent respectively, while in Europe a decline of 17.5 per cent may be seen and in America, especially due to a negative tendency in the southern region, there is a decrease of 7.9 per cent.

5%. In 2011 there were 120,616 registered. The strongest increase in seminarians was in Africa (+30.9%), and Asia (+29.4%), while Europe and the Americas registered a decrease in their numbers of 21.7% and 1.9% respectively.
