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## STATISTICAL YEARBOOK OF THE CHURCH

The Vatican Publishing House has recently released a new edition of the Statistical Yearbook of the Church, comprising information on the main aspects of Catholic Church activity in various countries for the period 2000 - 2008.

Over these nine years, the Catholic presence in the world has grown from 1,045 million in 2000 to 1,166 million in 2008, an increase of 11.54 percent. Considering the statistics in detail, numbers in Africa grew by 33 percent, in Europe they remained generally stable (an increase of 1.17 percent), while in Asia they increased by 15.61 percent, in Oceania by 11.39 percent and in America by 10.93 percent. As a percentage of the total population, European Catholics represented 26.8 percent in 2000 and 24.31 percent in 2008. In America and Oceania they have remained stable, and increased slightly in Asia.

The number of bishops in the world went up from 4541 in 2000 to 5002 in 2008, an increase of 10.15 percent.

The number of priests also increased slightly over this nine-year period, passing from 405,178 in 2000 to 409,166 in 2008, an overall rise of 0.98 percent. In Africa and Asia their numbers increased (respectively, by 33.1 percent and 23.8 percent), in the Americas they remained stable, while they fell by 7 percent in Europe and 4 percent in Oceania.

The number of diocesan priests increased by 3.1 percent, going from 265,781 in 2000 to 274,007 in 2008. By contrast, the number of regular priests showed a constant decline, down by 3.04 percent to 135,159 in 2008. Of the continents, only Europe showed a clear reduction in priests: in 2000 they represented 51 percent of the world total, in 2008 just 47 percent.

On the other hand, Asia and Africa together represented 17.5 percent of the world total in 2000 and 21.9 percent in 2008. The Americas slightly increased its percentage to around 30 percent of the total.

Non-ordained religious numbered 55,057 in the year 2000 and 54,641 in 2008. Comparing this data by continent, Europe showed a strong decline (down by 16.57 percent), as did Oceania (22.06 percent), the Americas remained stable, while Asia and Africa grew (respectively, by 32 percent and 10.47 percent).

Female religious are almost double the number of priests, and 14 times that of non-ordained male religious, but their numbers are falling, from 800,000 in 2000 to 740,000 in 2008. As for their geographical distribution, 41 percent reside in Europe, 27.47 percent in America, 21.77 percent in Asia and 1.28 percent in Oceania. The number of female religious has increased in the most dynamic continents: Africa (up by 21 percent) and Asia (up by 16 percent).

The Statistical Yearbook of the Church also includes information on the number of students of philosophy and theology in diocesan and religious seminaries. In global terms, their numbers increased from 110.583 in 2000 to more than 117.024 in 2008. In Africa and Asia their numbers went up, whereas Europe saw a reduction.

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