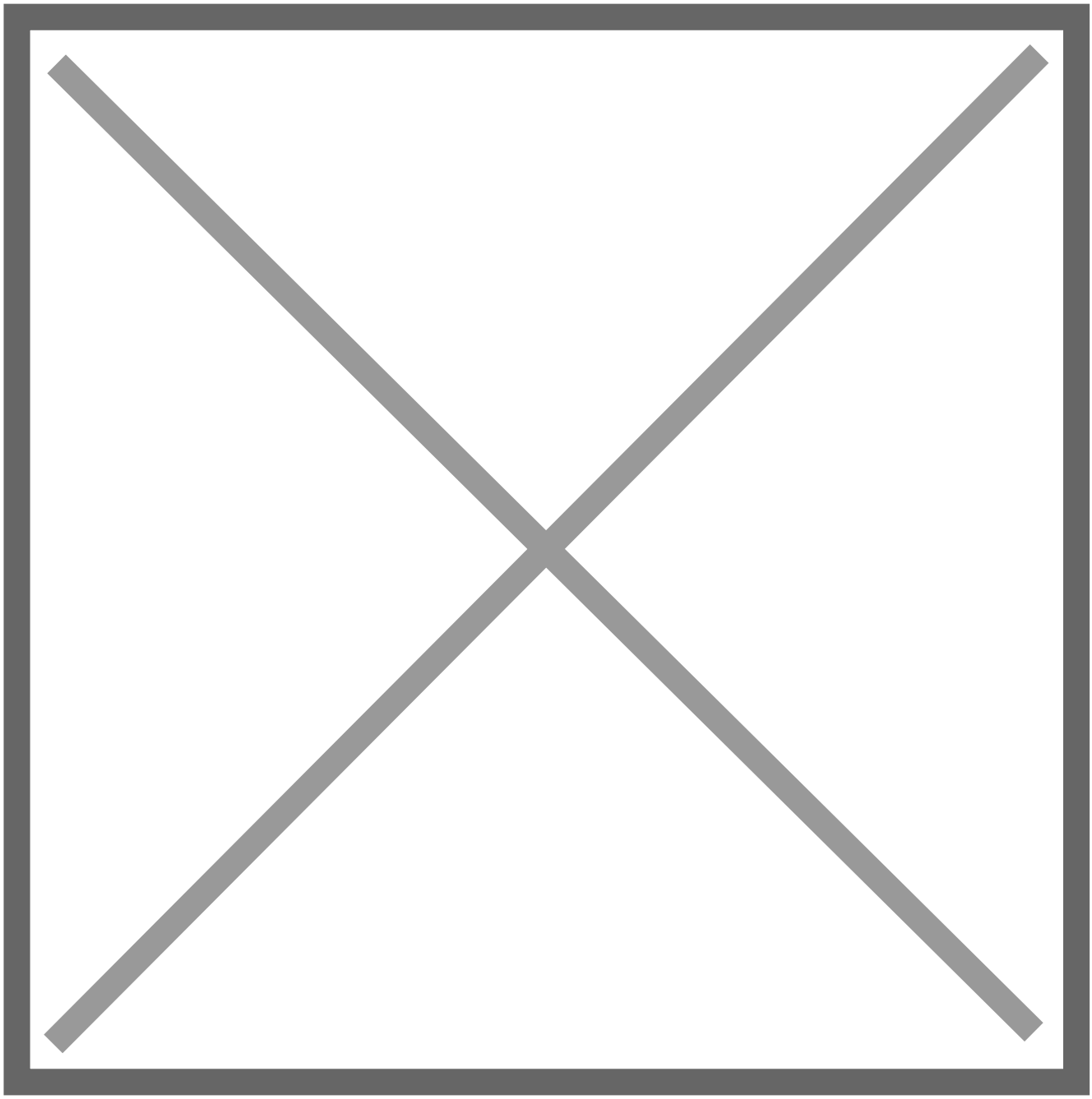
Vatican
News



Deacon Rachid Murad offers the chalice to a communicant during his ordination to the diaconate at St. Joseph Co-Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., May 25, 2019. The number of Catholics and of permanent deacons in the world has risen, while the number of religious men and women decreased, according to Vatican statistics. (CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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Vatican City — March 26, 2021
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The number of Catholics and permanent deacons in the world has shown steady growth, while the number of religious men and women continued to decrease, according to Vatican statistics.

At the end of 2019, the worldwide Catholic population exceeded 1.34 billion, which continued to be about 17.7% of the world's population, said an article published March 26 in the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano.

It marked an increase of 16 million Catholics — a 1.12% increase compared to 2018 while the world's population grew by 1.08%.

The article contained a handful of the statistics in the Statistical Yearbook of the Church, which reported worldwide church figures as of Dec. 31, 2019. It also announced the publication of the 2021 "Annuario Pontificio," a volume containing information about every Vatican office, as well as every diocese and religious order in the world.

According to the statistical yearbook, the number of Catholics increased in every continent except Europe.

At the end of 2019, 48.1% of the world's Catholics were living in the Americas, followed by Europe with 21.2%, Africa with 18.7%, about 11% in Asia (all figures for Asia exclude China) and 0.8 percent in Oceania.

The yearbook showed the number of bishops in the world — 5,364 — dipped slightly with 13 fewer bishops than in 2018.

The total number of priests — diocesan and religious order — around the world slightly increased from 414,065 in 2018 to 414,336 in 2019.

The largest increases were seen in Africa and Asia, with a growth of 3.45% and 2.91%, respectively, followed by Europe with a 1.5% increase and the Americas with about 0.5% more.

At the end of 2019, 40.6% of the world's priests were serving in Europe, while 28% of priests were in Africa and Asia.

The number of candidates for the priesthood — both diocesan seminarians and members of religious orders — showed a continued slight decline worldwide, decreasing from 115,880 at the end of 2018 to 114,058 in 2019, a change of -1.6%.

The number of permanent deacons reported — 48,238 — was up 1.5% over the previous year. The vast majority — 97% — of the world's permanent deacons live in the Americas and in Europe.

The number of brothers in religious orders continued its small yet steady decline worldwide from 50,941 in 2018 to 50,295 in 2019.

The number of women in religious orders showed an ongoing downward trend with a 1.8% decrease, going from 641,661 women in 2018 to 630,099 in 2019.

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