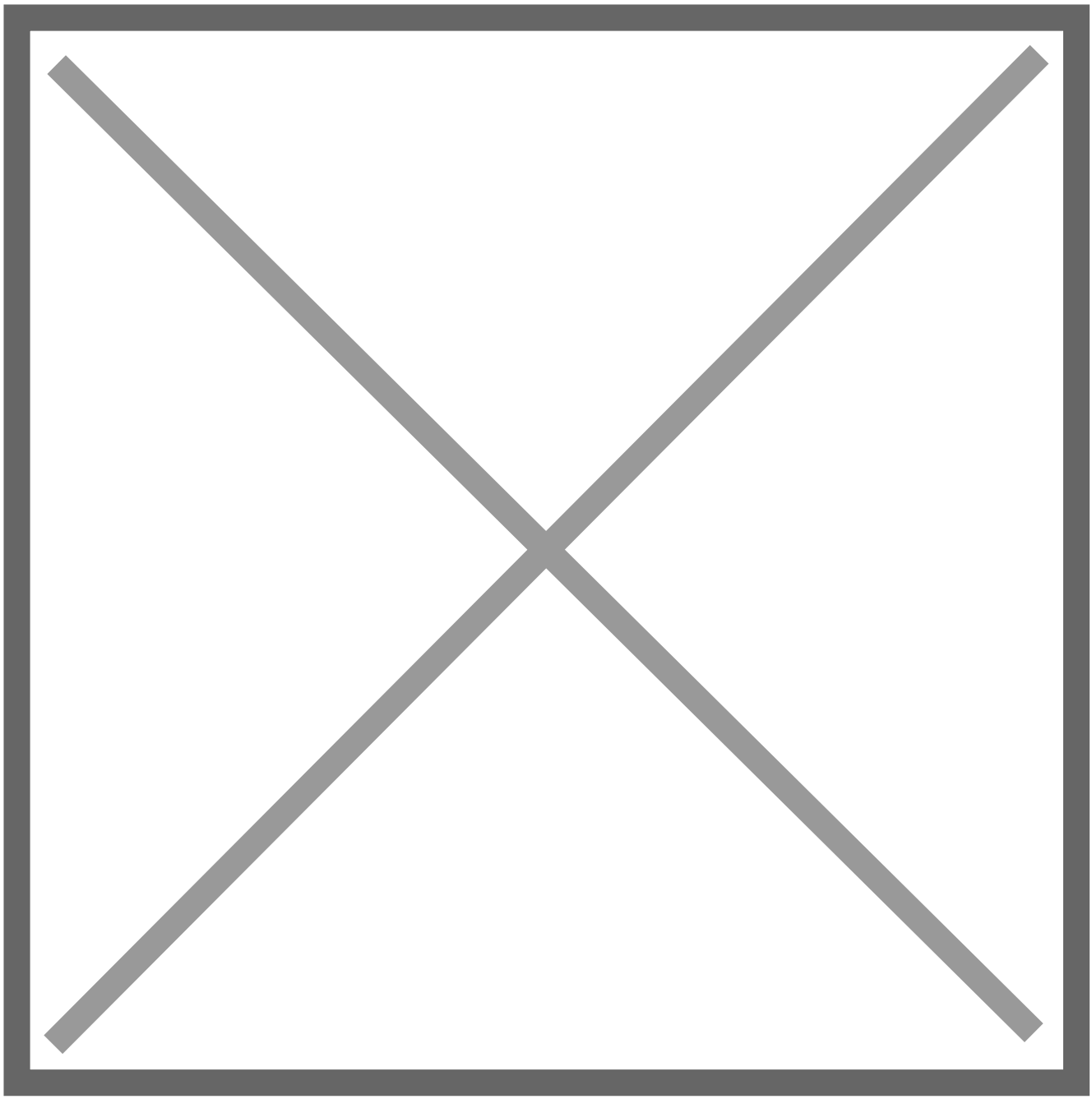
News



Pope Francis celebrates Mass in St. Peter's Square for the opening of the Synod of Bishops on Oct. 4. (NCR photo/Rhina Guidos)

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Vatican City — October 18, 2024

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The number of Catholics and permanent deacons in the world rose in 2022, while the number of seminarians, priests, men and women in religious orders, and baptisms declined, according to Vatican statistics.

At the end of 2022, the number of Catholics in the world reached 1.389 billion, up 0.79% from 1.378 billion Catholics at the end of 2021, according to the Vatican's Central Office of Church Statistics.

By contrast, the United Nations estimated the world's population increased by 0.83% over the same period to a total of just over 8 billion people at the end of 2022, marking the first time it passed that milestone.

The Vatican agency, Fides, published a brief overview of the global numbers Oct. 17.

The Vatican's statistical yearbook cautioned that its numbers were based on the information it received back from its surveys and that not all jurisdictions sent information. Mainland China, for example, had missing data throughout the yearbook. The number of Catholics "does not include those in countries that because of their present situation have not been included in the survey," it said, adding that it estimated that number to be about an additional 5 million Catholics.

While Catholics remained about 17.7% of the global population, their numbers grew in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania, said the summary, which was based on numbers reported Dec. 31, 2022. Only Europe saw a drop with 474,000 fewer Catholics.

Catholics make up 64% of the total population in the Americas followed by Europe and Oceania in which 39.5% and 26% of the population are baptized Catholic respectively. In Africa 19.7% of the population is Catholic and in Asia 3.3% of the population is Catholic.

While the number of Catholics is increasing, the administration of the sacrament of baptism has decreased worldwide. It fell from 17,932,891 baptisms administered in 1998 to 13,327,037 in 2022, according to Fides' summary report. A peak was reported during the Holy Year 2000 when 18,408,076 baptisms were administered worldwide.

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The Catholic Church had 5,353 bishops at the end of 2022, a slight increase of 13 bishops at the end of 2021. The majority of them are serving in the Americas and Europe.

The total number of diocesan and religious order priests decreased slightly by 142 men to a total of 407,730, the Vatican office said. The bulk of the decrease was in Europe with 2,745 fewer priests, which could not be offset even by the increases in Africa and Asia. However, while the number of diocesan priests decreased globally, the number of religious-order priests increased by 297 men.

The number of Catholics per priest increased slightly to 3,408 Catholics per priest.

The number of religious brothers decreased in 2022 from 49,774 to 49,414 with the only places of growth being in Asia and the Americas.

The total number of religious women, it said, was 599,228 at the end of 2022 — a decrease of 9,730 women or 1.59% from 608,958 at the end of 2021.

The number of permanent deacons — 50,159 — saw a 1.99% increase over the previous year, with the most growth in Europe.

The number of seminarians decreased globally by 1.28% to 108,481 from 109,895 at the end of 2021, with the only significant growth in Africa.

The number of Catholic weddings celebrated around the world in 2022 was up from more than 1.8 million in 2021 to 1.97 million in 2022; of those, only 9.6% involved

a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic.

The yearbook for 1991 reported more than 3.8 million Catholic weddings with 8.9% of them involving a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic.

In 2022, the yearbook said, 8.68 million people received their first Communion, up from 8.5 million people the previous year, and 7.4 million people were confirmed, up from 7.3 million people in 2021.