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More departures than baptisms, a first for Germany

by Niels Sorrells by Religion News Service

BERLIN (RNS) -- For the first time since membership records have been kept, more Germans departed the Roman Catholic Church than were baptized into it in 2010, according to new data from Germany's Catholic Conference of Bishops.

The new statistics, which were released with little analysis or comment, showed 170,339 baptisms for the year, and 181,193 departures from the church. However, 3,576 new members, and more than 7,400 returning Catholics, joined the church last year.

Nevertheless, the long-term prognosis does not look good, with overall church membership shrinking, year-on-year, from 24.9 million in 2009 to 24.6 million. Church attendance figures also dipped slightly.

Catholic church leaders across the country reported officiating at 252,965 funerals and 48,524 weddings.

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