

**Last Sunday was World Mission Sunday. Catholic News Agency (CNA) filed the following report.**

## **World Mission Sunday: number of Catholics continues to rise worldwide**

Vatican City, Oct 16, 2020 ([CNA](#)).- The number of Catholics worldwide increased by almost 16 million in a year to 1.33 billion, according to statistics highlighted by the Vatican ahead of the 2020 World Mission Sunday.

The [figures](#), shared by the Fides News Service Oct. 16, showed that there were 15,716,000 more Catholics at the end of 2018 -- the most recent year where numbers are available -- compared to 2017.

This took the overall number of Catholics to 1,328,993,000, compared to 1,313,278,000 the year before.

The growth was spread across all inhabited continents, with an increase of 94,000 in Europe, 9.2 million in Africa, 4.5 million in the Americas, 1.8 million in Asia, and 177,000 in Oceania.

Fides noted that this was the third successive year that the number of Catholics in Europe had risen.

But the percentage of Catholics in the world population remained unchanged at 17.73%, meaning that the number of Catholics is increasing in line with broader global population growth.

Fides, the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies since 1927, presents the statistics annually ahead of World Mission Sunday, which takes place this Sunday, Oct. 18. The figures are taken from the *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae*, or Statistical Yearbook of the Church, which was [published](#) March 25.

The figures indicated that the number of priests worldwide fell in 2018 to 414,065, with Europe registering the largest decrease, followed by the Americas. Africa, Asia, and Oceania all reported higher numbers of priests.

Overall, there was a modest increase in the number of diocesan priests and a drop in the number of religious priests. The number of Catholics per priest increased slightly, with a global average of 3,210.

Meanwhile, the number of bishops in the world fell year on year to 5,377. Permanent deacons continued to increase, reaching a total of 47,504, with the biggest rises recorded in America and Europe.

The number of male religious decreased marginally to 50,941, while the number of female religious fell by 7,249 to 641,661.

The number of young men attending a minor seminary decreased for the third consecutive year, to 100,164. But the number attending major seminaries rose to 115,880.

Fides also reported that the Catholic Church worldwide runs 73,164 kindergartens, 103,146 primary schools, and 49,541 secondary schools.

The Church oversees 5,192 hospitals, 15,481 dispensaries, 577 centers for people with Hansen's disease (also known as leprosy), 9,295 orphanages, and 15,423 homes for the elderly, the chronically ill, and people with a disability.