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Presentation of the Pontifical Yearbook 2019 and the *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2017

The Pontifical Yearbook 2019 and the *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2017, compiled by the Central Office of Church Statistics, published by the Vatican Press, are currently being distributed in bookstores.

From the data reported in the Pontifical Yearbook we can draw information on the life of the Catholic Church in the world, starting from 2018.

During this period, four new Episcopal sees were erected, one diocese was elevated to a metropolitan see, four apostolic exarchates to eparchies and one apostolic administration to a diocese.

The statistical data of the *Annuarium Statisticum*, referring to the year 2017, allow us to update some of the main numerical aspects of the Catholic Church in a global context.

Out of a world population of 7,408 million, 1,313 million or 17.7% are baptized Catholics, distributed by continent: 48.5% in America, 21.8% in Europe, 17.8% in Africa, 11.1% in Asia and 0.8% in Oceania. In the relationship between 2017 and 2016, positive indexes of the growth rate of Catholics characterize all the territorial divisions: compared to the world figure of 1.1%, the rates of variation of Africa and of Asia reach respectively +2.5 % and + 1.5%; Europe is the only continent to have an almost zero trend (+ 0.1%) while for America the growth rate (+ 0.96%) is below the world level. The reading of the data by continent of the relative number of Catholics compared to the population shows in 2017, but those of the previous year are substantially similar, as the presence of Catholics is differentiated in the various geographical areas: from 63.8% Catholics in the American population 39.7% in Europe, 19.2% in Africa, up to 3.3% in Asia. It is of some importance to underline how the American area is in itself very differentiated: whereas in North America the percentage of Catholics is only 24.7%, in the continental centre and Antilles (84.6%) and in the South (86.6%) the presence of Catholics appears much more conspicuous.

By the end of 2017, the total apostolate amounted to 4,666,073 units, an increase of 0.5% compared to 2016. The breakdown between the various components is quite different from continent to continent. In the world average, the percentage ratio between the total number of clerics and the total of pastoral workers is 10.4% at the end of 2017, with lower values in Africa (6.4%) and America (8.4%)) while with higher values in Europe

(19.3%) and in Oceania (18.2%). In Asia the percentage is close to the world average. From the comparison with the numerical situation of 2016, the number of priests has decreased from 414,969 in 2016 to 414,582 in 2017; this change is conspicuous since it is the first time it has occurred since 2010. Instead, bishops, permanent deacons, missionaries lay people and catechists have increased

The number of candidates to the priesthood worldwide has decreased from 116,160 in 2016 to 115,328 in 2017, a drop of 0.7 percent. The picture of continental flows appears satisfactory in the African and Asian Church, while in Europe and America the decrease appears very evident. The distribution of major seminarians by continent has remained substantially stable over the last two years. With reference to the year 2017 it is observed that Europe contributes 14.9% to the world total, America 27.3%, Asia 29.8% and Africa 27.1%.
