

Catholics – By the Numbers

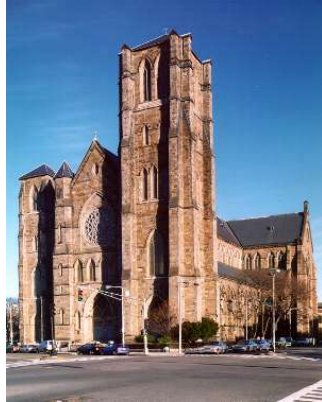
Overview

Did you know that Christianity is the largest religion in the world? Did you also no know that Catholics make up the largest portion of these Christians. If you live in the Bible belt you may not believe this!

What are the world religions?

It is important for Catholics to understand who these other religions since we now live in a smaller world – thanks to the media.

There are approximately 6.6 Billion people on this planet and the vast majority belongs to one of the “Big-5” religions.



The statistics are as follows as I have obtained them from www.adherents.com:

1. **Christianity** – 2.1 Billion/31.8%
 - a. Catholic – 1.14 Billion/17.3%
 - b. Protestant - 0.63 Billion/9.5%
 - c. Orthodox – 0.25 Billion/3.8%
 2. **Islam** – 1.5 Billion/22.7%
 3. **Non-religious** – 1.1 Billion/16.7%
 4. **Hinduism** – 0.9 Billion/13.6%
 5. **Chinese** – 0.4 Billion/6%
- Total Big % - 6.0 Billion/90.9%

The remaining 600 Million/9% belong to about another 20 or so other religions including Judaism, Buddhism, Scientology and many others which most of us have never heard of.

I bet you were surprised to learn that the 3rd largest amount of people fit in the category of non-religious. They make up the secularized non believer people, agnostics, and atheists and continue to grow every year as this society turns it's back on God.

Where are the Catholics?

Jesus told His disciples to go forth and preach the Good News to all four corners of the world. In general we could say that in the past 2000 years that this has been the case – although not everyone has heard the word. There are some countries such as in the Middle East and China where Christianity is illegal.

Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia have a very high growth rate but the percentages are still small. Most of the Catholics in the world can be found in 5 countries - Brazil, Mexico, The Philippines, United States and Italy (in that order). The USA is the 4th largest of these with about 68 Million members or about 22% of the USA population.

Is the church growing?

Growth of the church has generally been able to keep up with the increase in population but some parts of the world have phenomenal growth. For example 100 years ago there were only 2 million Catholics in Africa. Currently there are about 165 million of them accounting for 17% of the population. Other counties such as India and South America have had similar growths. In fact some of these countries are exporting their priests to fill in the gap here in the United States! Since the mid 60's the ratio of USA priests to members has dropped dramatically so we need to pray for vocations.

So what does it mean?

Simply stated these numbers tell us that we all have work to do and that each us has a responsibility to share our faith. Outreach and other programs such as RCIA bring new members to the Church every day. In our own lives as we act as the “People of the Way” we can make a difference – especially to that non-religious group of people.