

7-1998

Statistical Report on the Congregation of the Mission

Emeric Amyot d'Inville C.M.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [History of Christianity Commons](#), [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

d'Inville, Emeric Amyot C.M. (1998) "Statistical Report on the Congregation of the Mission," *Vincentiana*: Vol. 42: No. 4, Article 8.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol42/iss4/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Vincentian Journals and Publications at Digital Commons@DePaul. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vincentiana by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@DePaul. For more information, please contact digitalservices@depaul.edu.

Statistical Report on the Congregation of the Mission

by Emeric Amyot d'Inville, C.M.
Secretary General

As I have been asked to give a statistical report to the Assembly General on the state of the Congregation of the Mission, I will begin by giving the numbers for the past year, then for the past six years, after which I will locate those numbers in the context of the recent history of the Congregation. Then, I will give the numbers of young in formation and, finally, I will give the tendencies for the future which can be drawn from these statistics.

I. Numbers for 1977

1. The numbers by category

According to the statistical report for 1998 on the state of the Congregation of the Mission, drawn from the data sent by the Visitors at the beginning of this year, there were, on 31 December 1997, an overall total of 4,072 members divided thus;

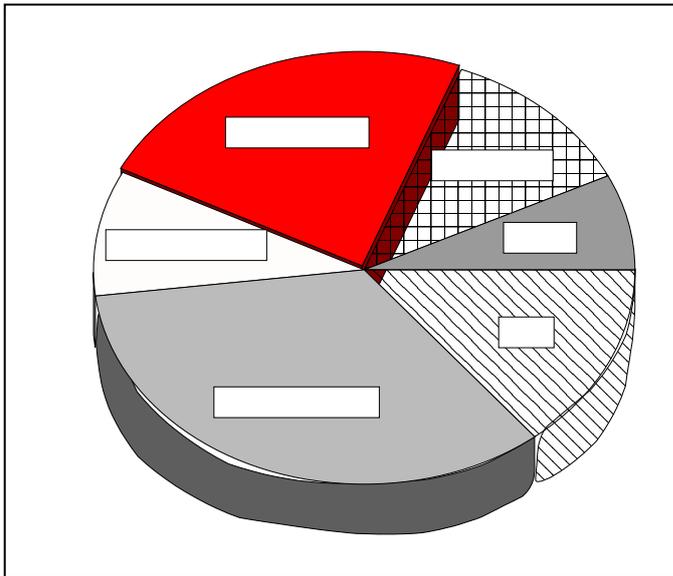
a. 3,557 incorporated members, of whom 30 are bishops, 3,194 priests, 10 permanent deacons, 195 brothers and 128 incorporated students (under vows)

b. 515 admitted members, of whom 481 are seminarists or students for priesthood and 34 are future brothers.

2. Numbers by regions of the world

If we calculate the 'adult members' (bishops, priests, brothers, permanent deacons) and group them by regions of the world, that is, where they live and work (regardless of their province of origin), we get the following results;

	□	Bps	Priest	Brs	Deacons	Total	(%/C.M.)
Africa		4	235	13		252	7.34%
Latin America		15	744	36	1	796	23.21%
Asia/Pacific		3	381	22	4	410	11.95%
Western Europe		4	1,087	74	3	1,168	34.06%
Eastern Europe		4	308	12		324	9.44%
USA (+ Canada)			439	38	2	479	13.96%
TOTAL		30	3,194	195	10	3,429	100%



The C.M. by region in 1997

We can see the present situation on the pie chart given. Let us accept the given numbers which show us the numerical importance of each region in the Congregation. Following that, we will take account of other criteria which will also allow us to evaluate the dynamism of each region.

II. Looking back over the past six years

1. Comparative numbers; 1991/1997

In order to be able to evaluate the numbers by category as given for 31 December 1997, we will compare them firstly, with those drawn up on 31 December 1991, which were the ones available to the last General Assembly.

Incorporated members:	1991	1997	change/per year		% over the 6 years	
Bishops	30	30				
Priests			3,267	3,189	-78	-13
					2.38%	-
Permanent deacons	7	10	+3	+0.5		+42.85%
Students under vows	141	128	-13	-2.1		-9.21%
Brothers	236	195	-41	-6.8		-17.37%
Total	3,681	3,552	-129	-21.5		-3.5%

Admitted members (not yet under vows)

Seminarists/students	566	481	-85	-14.1		-15%
Brother candidates	14	34	+20	+3.3		+142%
Total	580	515	-65	-10.8		-11.2%
General Total	4,261	4,067	-199	-33.1		-4.6%

Therefore, we note, over the past six years, a reduction of 78 in the number of priests and 41 in the number of brothers, and of 129 in the total of those incorporated (including the permanent deacons and the students under vows) which is an overall decrease of 3.5% per year. But, before analysing this, we need to look at some other significant numbers from the past six years:

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total
Priestly Ordinations	68	83	84	68	77	71	451
Brothers' Vows	2	1	1		3		7
Deaths	82	72	94	80	83	77	488
Departures	(these can be calculated at 99 over the six years)						
Total (incorporated)	3,668	3,618	3,604	3,567	3,519	3,552	-129

2. Analysis of the decrease in our membership

a. The decrease in membership of the Congregation of the Mission continues. Starting with the 3,681 incorporated members in December 1991, this gives a decrease of 129 members, with an average of almost 21 per year, made up of 13 priests and 7 brothers, during the six-year period.

b. The decrease is due, on the one hand, to the number of deaths which is somewhat higher than the number of new priests and brothers (a deficit of 38 over the six years, which is an average of nearly 6 per year).

c. It is also due to the numbers leaving the Congregation. The number can be estimated at 99, that is an average of 16.5 per year.

Note on those leaving the Congregation. It is difficult to know exactly how many confreres have left the Congregation during the six-year term. If the number confreres leaving, who have received an official and definitive permission, from the Assembly of 1992 until today, is taken as 175, this is seen to be divided thus:

- 1) 69 dispensed from vows by the Superior General: 50 for incardination in a diocese or other religious group and 19 to brothers or students for personal reasons.
- 2) 60 'reductions to the lay state' granted by the Holy See
- 3) 46 dismissals from the Congregation of the Mission: 36 *Ipsa Facto* (for civil marriage, most frequently) and 10 more confirmed by the Holy See.

We must note, however, that a large number of these confreres were already living, in fact, outside the Congregation, sometimes over long periods, and counted as such by the Visitors. In these cases, their departure has simply been officially sanctioned by a dispensation from vows, reduction to the lay state or dismissal during the six-year period.

On the other hand, if one takes the total number of those incorporated on 31 December 1991 (3,681) and adds the number of new priests and brothers for the six years in question (458) and subtracts the number of deaths for this period (488), one can see that there is a deficit of 99, which corresponds with the actual number of confreres who left during that period, which gives an average of 16.5 per year.

d. The decrease is proportionally stronger among the brothers (-41, that is 9.2% over the six-year period) than among the priests (-78, that is 2.3%) whose numbers have tended to stabilise. The decrease is equally notable amongst the students under vows, but this data is relative to the date of the ordinations.

e. There has been a notable, but relative, decrease in the numbers of members admitted (65; or 11.2% over the six years) but that is in part due to the fact that some provinces have held over the period of the Internal Seminary until after Philosophy. This data, therefore, is not significant. It is more important to see the number of young in formation worldwide, which is encouraging.

III. Situating the data for the past six years within the history of the Congregation.

In order to evaluate this decrease in our numbers, it helps to situate it in the history of these past decades. I will take as a point of reference the six-yearly General Assemblies (with the numbers for the end of the preceding year) and with, as a point of departure, the year 1966, when the Congregation experienced its historical numerical high-point.

1. Changes in membership per six-year terms of office and by categories since 1966

Incorporated member	1966	1967	1973	1979	1985	1991	1997
Bishops	25	26	27	29	31	30	30
Priests					4,399	4,395	3,995
		3,652	3,433	3,267	3,189		
Permanent Deacons				3	8	7	10
Students in vows	881	821	676	101	94	141	128
Brothers	537	527	472	344	288	236	195
Total	5,842	5,769	5,107	4,129	3,854	3,681	3,552

2. Changes in the numbers of priests and brothers since 1966

From all these numbers, those that are really important for us are those for **priests** and **brothers**, because students used to take vows a good deal earlier in their formation in

the past than they do now, and were, therefore, more numerous. Therefore, one cannot really compare those numbers. As for the bishops (the only vocation in the Congregation where the numbers are increasing!) and the permanent deacons (a vocation which is developing only slowly), they make up only a small number and will not be included in the reckoning here, in order not to complicate matters.

Table 1

	1967-1973		1973-1979		1979-1985		1985-1991		1991-1997		1967-1997	
	total	per year	total	per year								
Priests	-400	-66.7	-343	-57.1	-219	-36.5	-166	-27.6	-78	-13	-1206	-40.2
Brothers	-145	-24.3	-55	-9.2	-56	-9.3	-52	-8.7	-41	-6.8	-349	-11.6
Total	-545	-90.8	-398	-66.3	-275	-45.8	-218	-36.3	-199	-19.8	-1555	-51.8

From these numbers, we can make the following comments;

- a. Since 1966, the Congregation of the Mission has 1,555 lost priests and brothers, that is an average of 51.8 per year. That gives an overall decrease of 31.5% in membership. (Had the students in vows been included that would have given a decrease of 2,290 for that period, or 39.19%)
- b. Over all the six-year terms, we have moved from an average decrease of 75 per year, through 66, 45, 36 and, currently, about 20 per year. It seems clear then that the rate of decrease is slowing down and, therefore, our numbers are stabilising.
- c. Since 1966, the number of **priests** has decreased by 1,206 (27.41%.) The **brothers** have paid a still higher price since their numbers decreased by 349, that is 64.99% of their overall number.
- d. If the decrease in the number of **priests** has lessened in the course of the last six-years (2,38%) for the **brothers** it remains quite strong (17.37%)

Since a picture paints a thousand words, there is a graph (# 1 in the appendix) which shows, year by year, since 1955, the statistical curves for the priests and brothers. We note that:

- 1) There was a very rapid increase in the numbers of priests throughout the 1950s and up to 1964 (those were the days when we still built large seminaries!) and this was probably the time that the Congregation knew the most rapid growth in its history;
- 2) following that, there were some 'stagnant' years, from 1965 to 1968, with the historic high-point in 1966

3) then, we note the very rapid decline of the 1970s, which slowed down during the 1980s and has, overall, slowed yet more in the 1990s, perhaps veering even towards stabilising.

If we look at another graphic which shows the statistical curve of priests and brothers (# 2 in the appendix) for the period for which we have regular statistics, that is since the regular publication on the Catalogue, which began in 1853:

- 1) We note the marked regular increase in **priests** until 1966, then the decrease which we have analysed. We are presently at the level of 1940.
- 2) As for the **brothers**, having increased regularly until 1900, when their numbers totalled 805, they have decreased constantly since this time and lost 75.77% of their number.

Conclusion: In the last 30 years, we have gone through a very serious crisis in our numbers, which the priests have tended to overcome over the past few years, but which continues to seriously affect the brothers.

3. Changes in the membership by region since 1966.

The different regions of the world have been affected very differently by the crisis, due to historical, cultural and ecclesial effects.

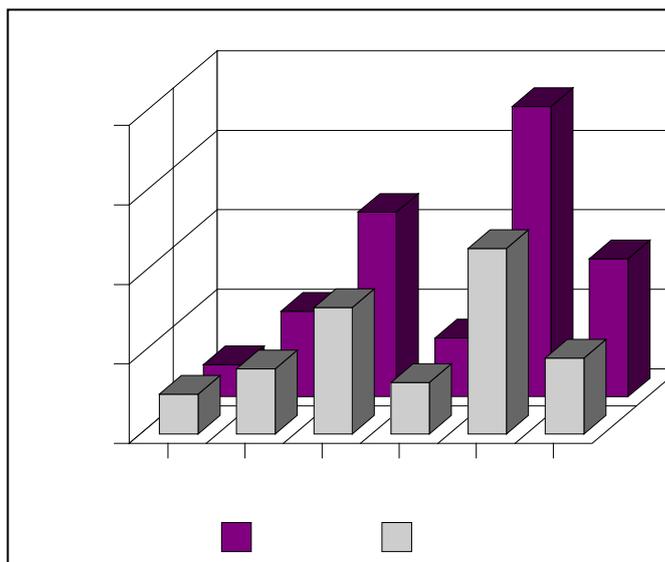
Table 2

Incorporated	1966		1997		Overall	
	Number	% of CM	Number	% of CM	Number	% of CM
Africa	201	4.05	252	7.34	+51	+25.37
Asia/Pacific	537	10.82	410	11.95	-127	-23.64
Latin America	1,161	23.4	796	23.21	-365	-31.43
Eastern Europe	369	7.43	324	9.45	-45	-12.19
Western Europe	1,825	36.78	1,168	34.06	-657	-36.00
USA	868	17.49	479	13.96	-389	-44.81
TOTAL	4,961	100	3,429	100	-1,532	-30.88

From the above numbers, which can be seen in the graphic following, we can make the following observations:

"ADULT" MEMBERS

- 1) In this turbulent period which the Congregation has undergone in the course of the past 30 years, it has lost 31% of its membership;
- 2) Only Africa has increased (+25.37%) since 1966. It did, however, undergo a slight decrease during the 1970s, due to the crisis experienced in the European provinces which send out missionaries. But, as indigenous vocations started to arrive, it has experienced a rapid increase.
- 3) The United States (-44.81%), Western Europe (-36%) and Latin America (-31.43%) are the regions which have lost the most members, having had many departures. But the two first-named (USA and Europe) have not experienced the dynamism of new vocations and continue to decline, while Latin America actually has a lot of vocations and, since 1991, has started to increase slightly.
- 4) Asia/Pacific (-23.64%) has decreased because it has lost contact with continental China. Moreover, there has been the continual departures of a number of western missionaries who were working in the various provinces. But, the number of vocations ensures that this region has experienced a constant and strong increase over the past few years, even if the situation does vary from province to province.
- 5) Eastern Europe (-12.19%) has suffered a great deal from Communism, although in different ways in different countries. But, despite all this, it has shown a certain vitality with numerous vocations.



IV. Statistics on the young in formation at the end of 1997

One can claim that the vitality of a province and a region depends, in large part, on the number of young in formation there, which will ensure its future and the development of its apostolates. In the numbers which we will give now, we have included all the young, regardless of their level of formation: for the

priests before ordination and before vows for the brothers (Internal Seminary, philosophy, theology, formation of the brothers, pastoral experience)

Taking the numbers of young in formation by province, the following data result (taking only the first seven provinces)

1. Philippines: 119 in formation
2. Colombia: 85
3. Almost ex aequo with Colombia... guess... Paris, with 83!
4. Indonesia: 67
5. Poland: 58
6. With almost the same numbers:... guess again.... Ireland, with 55.
Equally, ex aequo with Ireland, India (north and south united)

In reality, most of the students of the Paris province are from the Cameroon and Vietnam and are in formation in their countries, and all the students of the Irish province are from Nigeria, which has since been set up as a vice-province.

This shows us that this way of calculating can be deceptive. In fact, it is more interesting to calculate by region, including Vietnam in Asia and the Cameroon and Nigeria in Africa. This way of calculating shows us the lines of action for the future. This gives us:

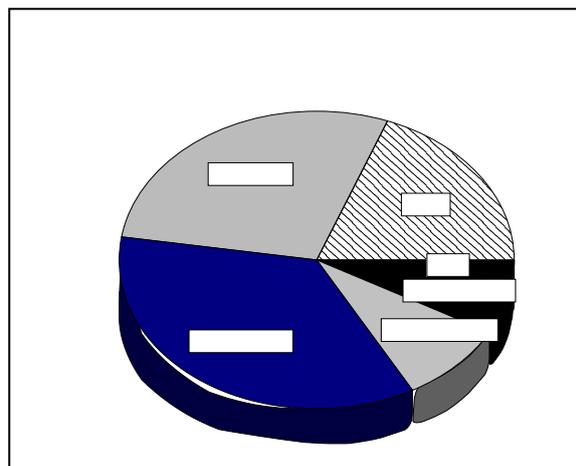
Africa:	212
Asia/Pacific:	311
Latin America:	390
Eastern Europe:	70
Western Europe:	95
USA:	17
TOTAL:	1,095

We can see clearly an important phenomenon emerging: the regions of the world which today constitute a smaller proportion of the Congregation of the Mission (Africa and Asia/Pacific) are very important in terms of our young in formation, and the inverse holds for the regions which have more members today (Western Europe and USA). We will take these numbers for the last stage of our reflection where we will attempt to deduce some tendencies for the future.

V. Tendencies for the future

The probabilities for the development, or decline, of the Congregation in the different parts of the world depend, on the one hand, on the abundance, or lack, of young people in formation and, on the other, on the average age of the senior members of these regions. We are going to study each of these factors in turn.

1. **Relationship between 'senior members' and those in initial formation at the end of 1997**

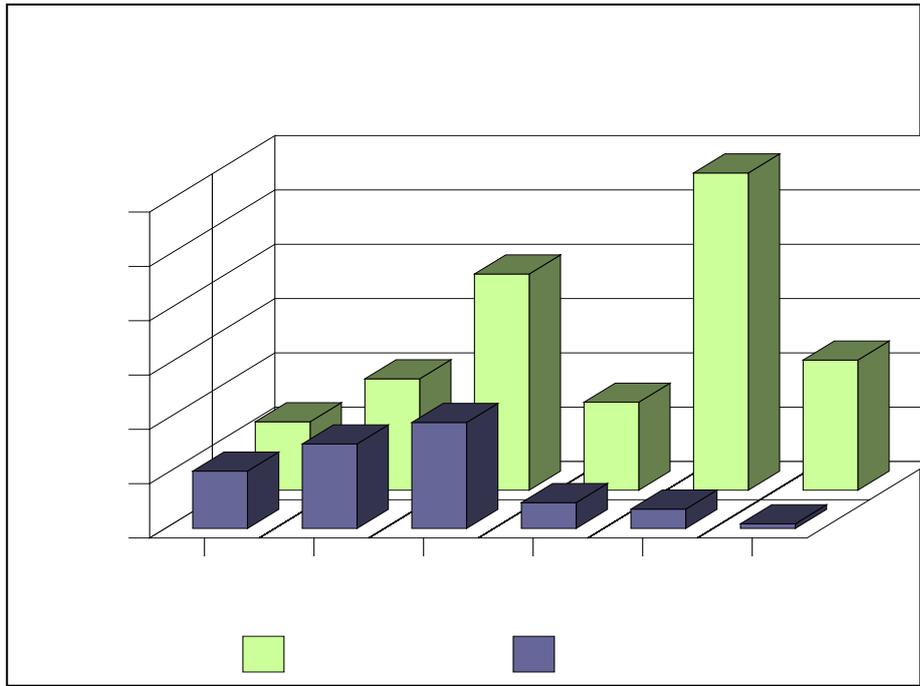


If we put side by side the numbers of senior members (Bishops, priests and brothers) and the numbers of those in initial formation, and by region, we get the following results:

	'Seniors'	Students	Relationship
Africa	252	211	83.73%
Asia/Pacific	410	311	75.85%
Latin America	796	390	48.99%
Eastern Europe	324	95	29.32%
Western Europe	1,168	71	6.07%
USA/Canada	479	17	3.55%
TOTAL	3,429	1,095	31.93%

End of 1997	Senior members		In initial formation		Ratio
	Number	% of CM	Number	% of CM	Seniors/Juniors
Africa	252	7.34%	211	19.26%	83.73%
Asia/Pacific	410	11.95%	311	27.39%	75.85%
Latin America	796	23.13%	390	35.6%	48.99%
Eastern Europe	324	9.44%	95	8.67%	29.32%
Western Europe	1,168	34.06%	71	6.48%	6.07%
USA	479	13.96%	17	1.55%	3.55%
TOTAL	3,429	100%	1,095	100%	31.93%

From this data, we can draw the following observations, which we have already noted in looking at the preceding graph:



1. The Congregation, which has, proportionally, a very large number in initial formation in **Africa** (83.73% in relation to its senior members) and in **Asia/Pacific** (75.85%) is, logically, called on to develop rapidly in these regions.

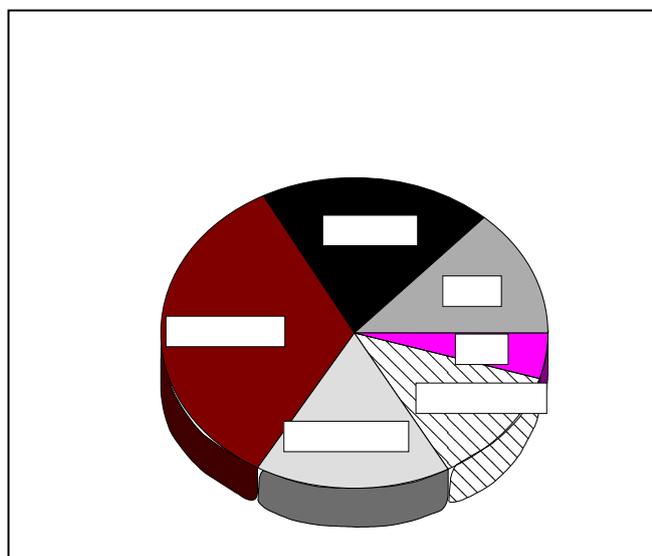
2. **Latin America**, where those in initial formation represent 49% of its senior members, also has very good numbers, although proportionally less. Therefore, it is also logical that there are good possibilities for the future.

3. The Congregation should be able to maintain its numbers in **Eastern Europe**, with a ratio of 29.32%, but it does not have enough people in formation to develop.

4. As for **Western Europe** (6.07%) and the **USA** (3.55%); these regions have very few in formation and must, logically, continue to decline.

As one might expect, there are also a number of new priests and brothers over the past six years. From 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1997, we have the following numbers;

- Africa: 62 new priests or



brothers; that is 13.53% of the CM

- Asia/Pacific: 89; that is 19.43%
- Latin America: 154 (40 of them in Colombia!); that is, 33.62%
- Eastern Europe: 75 (53 of them in Poland alone!); that is 16.37%
- Western Europe: 56; that is 12.22%
- USA: 21; that is 4.58%

2. Average age and number of deaths of confreres by region.

Simply by consulting the pages of this year's Catalogue, we note that;

- the provinces of **Africa** vary between averages of 41 and 50 years of age.
- those of **Asia/Pacific** vary between 42 and 50 years of age, with the exception of Australia (56) and China (63)
- those of **Latin America** between 47 and 63.
- those of **Eastern Europe** between 46 and 54 - except Hungary (71)
- those of **Western Europe** between 54 and 66 - except Holland (71)
- those of the **USA** between 56 and 65.

If one looks at the numbers of deceased confreres by region, from 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1997, one notes the following;

- Africa:	7 deaths	
- Asia/Pacific:	33 deaths	
- Latin America:	82 deaths	
- Eastern Europe:	60 deaths	
- Western Europe:	226 deaths	
- USA:	82 deaths	
	TOTAL:	490

3. Relocation of the Congregation of the Mission from the North-West towards the South-East

When we compare the numbers of deaths and the numbers of new priests and brothers by region, the following graph results, which says a great deal.

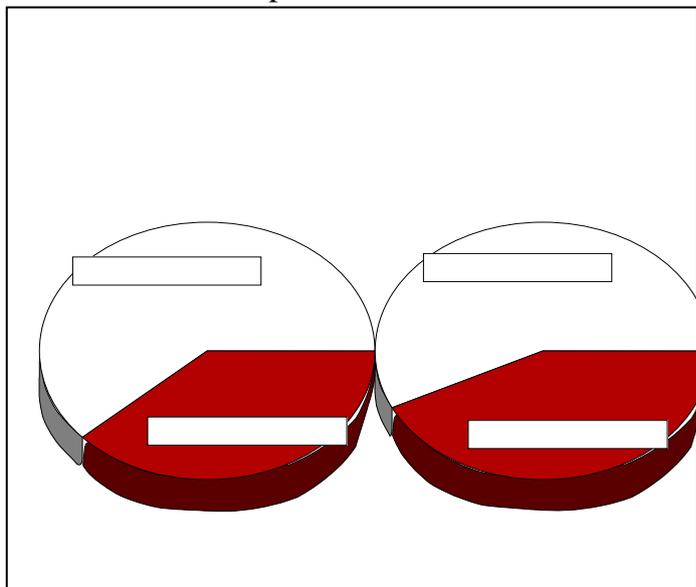
Moreover, if one links this data with what we have already seen with regard to the average age and the ratio of senior members/those in initial formation by region, one can make the following observations about the future:

1) **Africa and Asia/Pacific:** which are the regions with, proportionately, the largest number in initial formation, are also those with the lowest average ages per province, and with the fewest deaths. These factors together, and all things considered, assure a good development of these regions even if, at the moment, they are still proportionately small in the Congregation overall.

2) **Latin America:** has, at least in some measure, the same characteristics. Also, although it felt the brunt of the crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, during which its numbers decreased a great deal, currently it has good possibilities for recovery.

3) **Eastern Europe:** which has fairly low average ages, has a sufficient number of people in initial formation in order to assure a stability of numbers permanently.

4) **USA and Western Europe:** are the regions with the fewest in initial formation, and thus the fewest new priests and brothers, and, at the same time, the highest average ages and, thus, the highest death rate. It should be observed also that many missionaries, originally from these provinces, who have spent all of their lives on mission in southeastern regions, are returning to their home provinces for retirement. The possibility of decreasing numbers through death are most significant in these regions, without sufficient numbers of new members to replace them. Logically, these regions must continue to diminish in future years.

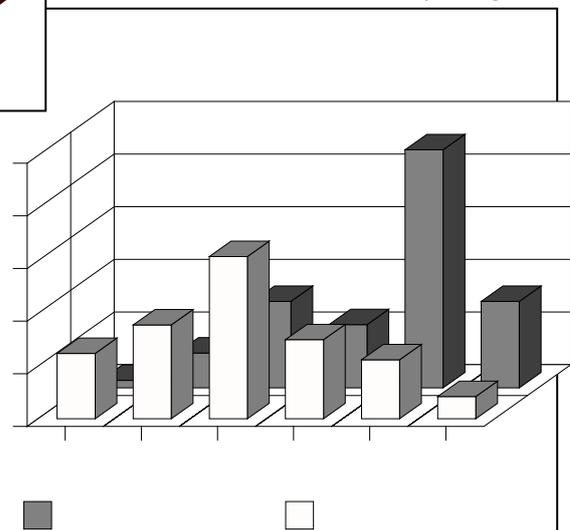


If one looks at the total number of new priests and brothers by region and the total number of deaths by region,

one sees that it is those regions with the highest death rate that have the lowest rate of entry and that the converse also applies.

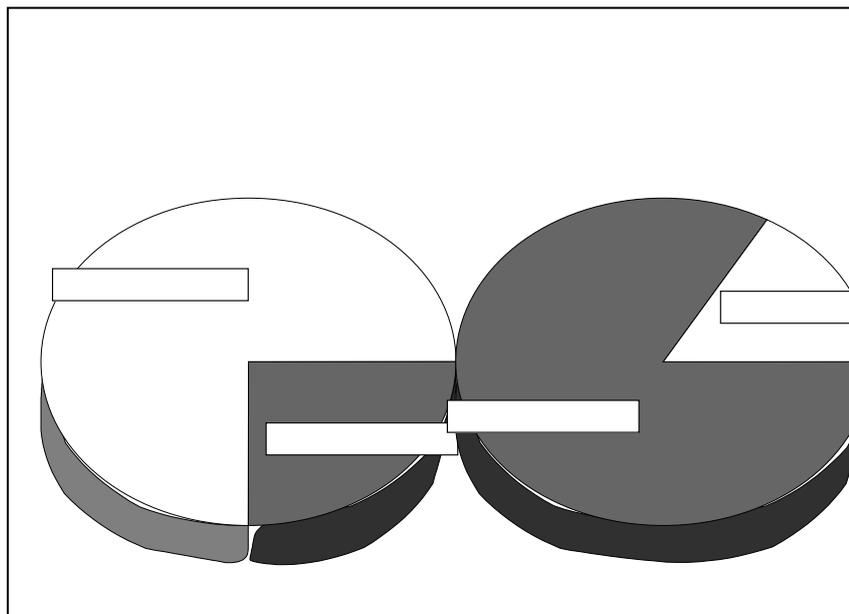
one sees that it is those regions with the highest death rate that have the lowest rate of entry and that the converse also applies.

In conclusion, one can state, overall, that the Congregation is tending to develop in the Southern and Eastern regions of the world (Africa, Asia/Pacific and Latin



America) and to decline in the regions of the North and West (Europe and USA) where it had first developed. Eastern Europe presently experiences a certain stability. This links into an observation that can be made about the Church generally.

However, by reason of the lack of numbers which it still has in Africa and Asia, and of the significant losses it has experienced in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, this is not yet a noticeably marked tendency in the present numbers of adult members, as can be seen in the adjoining graph. The North-West (Europe and USA) has gone from 3,062 confreres (that is 61.73% of the CM) in 1966 to 1,971 confreres (57.48%) in 1997; and the South-East (Africa, Asia/Pacific and Latin America) from 1,899 confreres (38.27%) in 1966 to 1,458 confreres (42.51%) in 1977. While both have decreased in overall numbers, the North-West has decreased proportionally more. But, above all, the South-East has, for many years, experienced the vitality of numerous vocations. In fact, as can be seen in the adjoining graphs, more than 75% of the deaths in the Congregation of the Mission (368) during the past six years have been in the regions of the North and West, which have only 16.71% of those in initial formation (183). In contrast, only about 25% of the deaths in the Congregation of the Mission have been in the regions of the South and East (122), while they total 83.29% of those in formation (912). This double phenomenon should lead to a rapid acceleration in growth in the Southern-Eastern regions, while those of the North-West, with few vocations and a lot more deaths, continue to decline in the coming years, that is, unless they experience a serious influx of vocations, which is always possible, although it does not show signs of happening at this moment.



If this state of affairs continues like this for a long time, we will have a Congregation which will be firmly rooted for the most part in the Southern and

Eastern regions of the world, that is, essentially, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, while it will have little foothold in the Northern and Western regions of the world, especially in Western Europe and the USA.

But we are not yet there. And we must always take account of other renewals in history which, while unforeseen, were, nevertheless, rapid. In the end, whoever lives long enough will see how all this unfolds.

(Translated by Eugene Curran, CM)