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## **Austria: statistics about the Catholic Church. Number of devotees is steady, number of priests and nuns decreasing. Deacons on the rise**

In Austria, the number of Catholics is basically steady, despite a slight decrease (-1.35%): as of 31st December 2019, there were 4.98 million Catholics in the country versus 5.05 in 2018. These are the official statistic figures of the Austrian Bishops' Conference, published today and showing the statistics of the nation and of each diocese. In 2019, 67,583 people left the Catholic Church (14.9% more than the previous year); they were 58,807 in 2018. This is a substantial increase, even compared with the previous nine years, except for 2010, when 85,960 people left the Church, "largely due to news of church abuse cases". However, there were also 4,564 people who asked to be taken back into the Church in 2019 (13.3% less than in 2018, less even than in the previous years). Another thing that dropped was the number of priests working in Austria: down from 3,857 (in 2017) to 3,783 in 2019. They include 1,897 diocesan priests, 475 foreign priests and 1,411 religious priests. The number does not include the 151 Austrian diocesan priests who serve in other parts of the world. The number of permanent deacons has risen, instead: 750 in 2018 (712 in 2017). Priests are decreasing (1,814 in 2018 versus 1,920 in 2017), and so are nuns (3,453 nuns in 2018 versus 3,600 in 2017; in 2012, they were over 4,300). In Austria, 1,436 women and men working in the pastoral service of the Church, 883 women and 553 men.

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