

**THE 1995 CM STATISTICS,  
ASSESSMENT OF A CRISIS  
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

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I would like to present the 1995 statistics and propose a reflection on the numbers. I will do this on three successive levels: 1) incorporated members, 2) the young men in formation, and 3) the aspirants. I will look at the relationship among the different levels and use the statistics of past years as a basis for understanding the tendencies that have swept the Congregation of the Mission from the 60's to the present, on the one hand and, on the other hand, for looking at the perspectives for the future.

**I. Incorporated members**

a. First of all, I will present the global figures for the year 1995 (up to 31 December) comparing them to those for the years 1966 (when the C.M. attained its highest number), 1980 et 1990 (on 31 December), in order to see the tendencies which can be drawn from them:

	<b>1966</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>
Bishops:	24	32	31	29
priests:	4510	3612	3280	3195
permanent deacons:			4	10
brothers:	556	340	252	207
incorp. students:	766	110	131	126
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>5856</b>	<b>4094</b>	<b>3698</b>	<b>3567</b>

If we add **the admitted members only**, which, in 1995, numbered **438** (these are those who have entered the Internal Seminary, but have not made vows; they can be students of philosophy or theology), we arrive thus at **a global figure of 4005 members in the Congregation of the Mission for the year 1995**. (For the record year 1966, there were 497 "admitted" members, which gave a total figure of 6353 members.)

b. **Evolution of our "adult" enrollment from 1966 to 1995**. In order to compare things which are comparable, I eliminated the students with vows because, in the figures for 1966, are included those who made triennial vows (these disappeared in 1969), which were usually pronounced at the beginning of formation. This explains the large number. Moreover, since 1980, the number of incorporated students is rather stable. The comparison will be made on the "adult" members; that is, on the bishops, priests, deacons, and brothers.

	1966_1980		1980_1990		1990_1995		1966_1995	
	number	by year						
Bishops	+8		-1		-2		+5	
Priests	-898	-64	-332	-33	-85	-17	-1315	-45
Deacons			+4		+6		+10	
Brothers	-216	-15	-88	-8,8	-45	-9	-349	-12
TOTAL	-1106	-79	-417	-42	-126	-25	-1649	-56

### c. Evolution of the decrease of "adults" since 1966.

The numbers which essentially interest us are those of the priests and brothers who are the two principal components of the C.M. (the bishops represent a very small number of confreres, as do the deacons, four of which are from Vietnam awaiting government permission to be ordained priests). Let us look at the decline in percentage:

	Priests		Brothers		"Adult" members	
	% for the period	% by year	% for the period	% by year	% for the period	% by year
1966_1980	-19,9 %	-1,4 %	-38,8 %	-2,8 %	-21,7 %	-1,5 %
1980_1990	-9,19 %	-0,9 %	-25,8 %	-2,6 %	-10,6 %	-1 %
1990_1995	-2,6 %	-0,52 %	-17,8 %	-3,5 %	-3,5 %	-0,7 %
1966_1995	-24,5 %	-0,84 %	-62,7 %	-2,16 %	-32,4 %	-1,11 %

One can make three observations on this table:

1) The C.M. has decreased by almost one-third of its "adult" members since 1966, its peak. The numbers would be much higher if we took into account the students with vows.

2) The decrease in the number of priests has been slowing as the years pass. Their numbers were reduced by almost a quarter in 29 years.

3) The number of brothers has, on the one hand, declined proportionally much more than the priests since they have lost more than half their number. On the other hand, their decline has also increased proportionally in the course of the last 5 years. This phenomenon is explained essentially by the fact that there are very few vocations to the brothers presently and their numbers are not being replaced.

### d. Analysis of the decrease in incorporated members from 1980 to 1995

We have had a decrease of 527 incorporated members in 15 years, a decrease which, as we have seen, tends to lessen over the course of the years. From where does it come?

**1. Its components.** It comes in part from the fact that **there are more confreres who die** (1162 from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995, or an average of 77,4 each year) **than confreres who are incorporated by vows** (1006 from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995, or an average of 67 each year). This makes for a deficit of 156 confreres for the period under consideration. But **the greatest deficit comes from the departures from the C.M.** Actually, a certain number of members leave the Congregation each year (371 from 1980 to 1995, or an average of 24,7 each year): having obtained a dispensation from Vows (often to serve in a diocese), having returned to the lay state, having been dismissed (in most cases, it is an ipso facto dismissal because of civil marriage), or having left illegally. We can thus summarize the situation:

**Entrances and departures from the C.M. from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995**

newly incorporated: 1006, or 67 each year  
 deaths: 1162, or 77,4 each year (= a deficit of 156)  
 departures: 371, or 24,7 each year  
 Total deficit: 527, or 35,1 each year

**2. The places where the C.M. is decreasing.** If the decrease in numbers of the Congregation varies from year to year and is tending to slow, it also varies according to the provinces. There are, on the contrary, **19 provinces or vice-provinces which have increased in number during the last 15 years:** the 5 provinces of Asia (+ 31,3 %), the 5 (vice)provinces of Africa (+35,3 %) (Mozambique, which had decreased considerably because of the war, has progressed because the Superior General has sent reinforcement), 7 of the 14 (vice)provinces of Latin America (including Cuba, which, after having decreased considerably has increased thanks to the reinforcements sent by the Superior General) and 2 provinces of Eastern Europe (Poland and Slovakia). **The provinces which have decreased the most** are those of Western Europe (-23 %), although some have not changed much (Saragossa - 2,9 % in particular), the provinces of the United States (-31,8 %), as well as those of Brazil (-18;7 %) and Venezuela (-30,2 %) for Latin America which overall has decreased by 4 %.

**3. Decrease by provinces grouped regionally since 1980:**

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>difference</b>	<b>%</b>
United States	739	504	-235	-31,8 %
Western Europe	1635	1258	-377	-23 %
Oceania	77	62	-15	-19,5 %
Latin America	855	812	-30	-5 %
Eastern Europe	383	383	0	0 %
Asia	262	344	+82	+31,3 %
Africa	136	184	+48	+35,3 %
<b>TOTAL (+Gen. Curia)</b>	<b>4094</b>	<b>3567</b>	<b>-527</b>	<b>-12,87 %</b>

### **e. The recent crisis situated in the history of the C.M.**

You will find in an annex a graphic representing the actual crisis, situated in the history of the Congregation. The numbers of our members are well known since 1853, at which time the Catalogue began. For the preceding periods, we only have a few sporadic facts, but they are nonetheless suggestive. I have grouped these together by dotted lines which show that it is a reconstruction using the facts which are themselves indicated by the small squares. We can make the following observations:

a) This crisis, which dates back 30 years, can be seen all the better on the graphic since it suddenly interrupted a regular increase of our numbers from the beginning of the 19th century. We also note the present tendency to stabilization.

b) There were crises in the history of the Congregation in the 17th and 18th centuries, from which it picked itself up. This allows us to relativize that which we are experiencing and hope for the future. We must point out, however, that the crises that have marked the history of the Congregation are not all of the same nature. Certain were due to external factors, such as that at the end of the 18th century, due to the French Revolution. The present one is due to much more internal reasons, personal crises in the context of the profound changes in society and in the Church. I leave it to historians to make the analysis.

c) We can note that the brothers who, for almost three hundred years always composed about one-third of the Congregation, accompanying the variation in the figures for priests, attained their summit in 1900 with 805 members. They then began to stagnate, even to diminish, while the priests increased rapidly in number. Their decrease has been rather regular since 1940 and especially since the 60's.

## **II. The young men in formation by province.**

**a. Figures for 1995.** I changed some points of the statistics forms in order to have more precise information, in particular with regard to the young men in formation. So we now have numbers by levels of formation (Internal Seminary, philosophy, and theology), whether they are "admitted" or not. Here are the figures for 1995:

	<b>Candidates priests</b>	<b>Candidates brothers</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Internal Seminary	163	15	178
Philosophy	436		436
Theology	355		355
Brothers in formation		42	42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1011</b>

Let us make three remarks: 1) The global figure for the young men in formation is rather satisfying. 2) One notices, however, that the candidates to the brothers are few. 3) These globally positive figures cover very varied realities according to the provinces or countries.

**b.** You will find in an annex **a graphic representing the young men in formation by province.** It is rather different from that of last year which only indicated the "scholastici admissi" (those admitted to the Internal Seminary) and "incorporati." This year I considered all the young men in formation, regardless of their level (Internal Seminary, philosophy and theology). There are provinces which have the Internal Seminary after the philosophy. All these non-"admitted" philosophy students were, until last year, excluded from the figures, whereas this year they are included. This explains why Colombia and the Philippines, which have their Internal Seminary after philosophy, move ahead of Indonesia and Poland, which begin formation with the Internal Seminary.

**c. Evolution of the number of young men in formation.** It is difficult to compare figures which do not represent exactly the same thing, in particular because the Internal Seminary, which makes them "admissi," took place at different moments of the formation according to the years. Actually, there is a tendency to delay it. However, we can give the following indications:

- 1956: 1597 (historical peak of the young men in formation)
- 1966: 1263 (historical peak of incorporated members)
- 1981: 478 ("trough of the wave" of the young men in formation)
- 1989: 724 (progressive rise since 1981)
- 1995: 1029 (figure which includes all the young men in formation)

### **III. A point of method: statistics by province or by country?**

We have seen that the situation is very different according to the provinces or regions of the world. Actually certain regions have had many vocations for a good number of years already and are increasing in number, while others have had few vocations for quite some time and are aging and decreasing in number. However, if we keep to the raw figures by province, as we have up until now, we get a vision of the reality which is a bit false due to the fact that a province may have missions or regions in the various parts of the world. Consider, as an example, the Paris Province, where French vocations are few. It has, however, confreres in parts of the world where vocations are numerous (notably in Vietnam and the Cameroon). This tends to give radically higher figures for the young men in formation for this province (63! which puts it in 4th place of the provinces having the most young men), when there are only 8 coming from France, but 36 from Vietnam, 18 from the Cameroon, and 1 from Algeria. We witness the same phenomenon for the Province of Ireland with Nigeria and the Eastern Province of the United States with Panama.

This year, in addition to the figures by province, I considered the figures by country or by world region. That allows us to see how the Congregation is really represented on each continent, counting the regions like Nigeria and the Cameroon with Africa, Vietnam with Asia, Panama with Latin America, etc. That also allows for a much more exact vision of the places where the Congregation is recruiting and thus the world regions where there is the greatest potential of strength for the future.

Let us specify that the Congregation, which has 45 provinces and 3 vice-provinces, is spread out over 80 countries in the world: 13 in Africa, 2 in North America (not including Mexico), 22 in Latin America, 12 in Asia, 17 in Western Europe, 11 in Eastern Europe, and 3 in Oceania. Many provinces are thus present in several countries and even on several continents.

#### **IV. The ratio between the young men in formation and the incorporated "adult" members**

The ratio between the number of incorporated members in a part of the world and the number of young men in formation is interesting because it reveals the dynamism of the region and its chances for the future. **The contrast among the parts of the world is striking.**

We notice that there are provinces or countries which even have more young men in formation than incorporated confreres, as is the case for the Philippines and Vietnam, while there are others which have absolutely no one in formation. More important still, there is a very strong contrast among different parts of the world: some have an excellent ratio between the incorporated members/young men in formation and others have one which is not good; that is, there are very few young men in formation in comparison to the number of incorporated members and so the future cannot be assured. Let us briefly look at the figures by world region:

- **Western Europe**, which has 1192 incorporated members, or 33,4 % of the C.M., has proportionally few young men in formation (78), or 7,7 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. It has, however, a rather great variety of situations with, on the one hand, countries which maintain a certain number of students like Spain (27) and Italy (20) and, on the other hand, countries like the Netherlands and Belgium which have none, with all the others in between.

- **Eastern Europe** (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia, etc.), which has 354 members, or 9,9 % of the C.M., and a proportionally satisfactory number of young men in formation (101), or 10 % of the young men of the C.M. Nevertheless, it should be noted that almost all the young men in formation belong to the Provinces of Poland (61) and Slovakia (25), while Slovenia (8) has proportionally few young men in formation.

- **North America** (I am only counting the United States and Canada and not Mexico which I put with Latin America), which has 509 members, or 14,3 % of the C.M.,

has few young men in formation (10), all in the United States, or 1 % of the young men of the C.M.

- **Latin America** which, from Mexico to Chile, counts 886 members, or 24,8 %, has a good future before it with 362 young men in formation, or 35,8 % of the young men of the C.M. There is, however, a great diversity of situations: Colombia is in a very good position with 85 young men in formation, while Argentina has only 8.

- **Africa**, which still has a small number of confreres with 235 members, or 6,6 % of the C.M., has a very large number of young men in formation, with 192 young, or 19 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. There is a great dynamism almost everywhere. Only Mozambique, which is picking itself up after a long war, still has reduced numbers.

- **Asia**, which counts 323 members, or 9 % of the C.M., has proportionally a very large number of young men in formation with 255, or 25,2 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. However, Lebanon shows a bit of a crisis with 9 young men in formation and Taiwan has none.

- **Oceania**, which counts only 68 members, or 1,9 % of the C.M., counts 13 young men in formation, of which 9 are in the Fiji Islands, or 1,3 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. Australia itself has only 4 young men.

**The ratio between incorporated members and the young men in formation is as follows:**

- North America : 1,96 %
- Western Europe: 6,54 %
- Oceania: 19,11 %
- Eastern Europe: 28,53 %
- Latin America: 40,85 %
- Asia: 78,94 %
- Africa: 81,70 %
- The average ratio for the C.M. is 28,34 %

The figures are very eloquent! The Congregation of the Mission which was born and developed largely in the northern hemisphere (Europe and the United States) will logically continue to diminish in these parts of the world and, on the contrary, know **an important development in the southern hemisphere**. We might notice even that it is **the countries which are most developed on the economic level** (United States, those of Western Europe, Australia, Taiwan) which **experience the strongest vocation crisis** and, thus, where the future of the C.M. is most uncertain. These statistics, moreover, corroborate with the general tendencies which we see in the Church.

## **V. Aspirants.**

Using these figures as a base, we can say that we are not lacking in reserves because, behind these students, there is a good number of aspirants (**953 counted**).

We have some information on the "channels" which these aspirants follow (minor seminaries, vocation groups, preparatory year). The global figures give this:

	<b>Candidates priests</b>	<b>candidates brothers</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Vocation groups	353	13	367
minor seminaries	466	8	466
preparatory year	110	10	120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>953</b>

We can note that, overwhelmingly, the young aspirants are attracted by the priesthood and that very few declare themselves attracted by the life of a brother.

We also observe that the number of those who are in minor seminaries remains more important than those who are in vocation groups.

The preparatory year has not developed everywhere and probably does not always cover the same reality.

The figures, of course, vary a great deal from one part of the world to another. They are significant for certain countries of the world, but not for others, because some provinces (like those of Eastern Europe, for example), who have many young men in formation each year, did not indicate the figures for aspirants, which is, evidently, inexact. We cannot then get an idea of the whole situation in the C.M.

Let us take a quick glance at the principal results. The figures for Asia with only 105 aspirants are certainly also below the reality (Vietnam, for example, did not indicate any, which is inexact). The region of the world which indicated the most aspirants is Latin America which counts 490, of which 205 are for Colombia. Then, Western Europe with 187 aspirants, of which 104 are in Spain and 79 in Portugal. Finally, Africa totals 146 aspirants, of which 55 are for Ethiopia and 37 for Eritrea. Let us hope that next year we will have more exact figures which will permit us to have a more precise idea of the situation with regard to these "aspirants."

## **VI. Summary table by country grouped regionally for the year 1995**

	INCORPORATED ADULTS		YOUNG MEN IN FORMATION	
	Number	% / C.M.	Number	% / C.M.
Western Europe	1192	33, 4 %	78	7,7 %
Eastern Europe	354	9,9 %	101	10 %
North America	509	14,3 %	10	1 %

Latin America	886	24,8 %	362	35,8 %
Africa	235	6,6 %	192	19 %
Asia	323	9 %	255	25,2 %
Oceania	68	1,9 %	13	1,3 %
TOTAL	3567	100%	1011	100%

## **To conclude.**

1. The major tendencies which are clear in the C.M.:
  - a. From a global point of view, after the great crisis of the 60's and 70's, which saw our numbers diminish considerably, the decline clearly tends to slow over the course of the years, except for the brothers who continue decrease in a worrying manner.
  - b. We witness, moreover, an appreciable increase in the young men in formation. If this tendency continues, we can hope for a stabilization then, perhaps, an increase in our global numbers in a few years.
  - c. However, the reality is very variable according to the regions of the world. Some have many vocations and are increasing in number. Others having few vocations and continue to diminish. If these tendencies continue in the coming years, we will witness a move of the Congregation from the North and West toward the South and East.
  
2. If we belong to a part of the world where the Lord gives us the grace of having numerous vocations, and they are to be received with humble thanksgiving, we must know how to pay the price of good formation by being ready to free formation personnel as well as provide the necessary material means for formation. On these two levels, the Superior General unceasingly invites us to interprovincial cooperation.
  
3. If we belong to a part of the world where vocations are less numerous, far from becoming discouraged, these statistics stimulate us to two things: on the one hand, to reflect on the reasons why we do not have vocations or they do not persevere and to have a vocation pastoral which is active and, on the other hand, to have a missionary activity adapted to the needs of the people and aimed at building fervent and dynamic Christian communities which will be favorable grounds for the blossoming and maturing of vocations.
  
4. The reality of the world and the Church is changing. We must not shout victory because we have many vocations in some parts of the world, nor be upset because we do not have them in others. Actually, we saw countries which, up until a few years ago, had many vocations, like certain regions of France, the Netherlands, and Ireland and where they dried up in a few years. Conversely, we see some countries of Africa or Latin America, which had very few vocations for many years, getting started all of a sudden. The situation in a country can change quickly, positively or negatively. Thus, we must be vigilant.

5. The decrease in our number, we have seen, comes in large part from the confreres who leave the Congregation (dispensation from vows, return to the lay state by the Holy See, dismissal, or illegal departure). It would be wrong to think that this phenomenon touches only or principally the young confreres or the young provinces. In reality this touches all continents and all ages with, it seems, a worsening among confreres from 40 to 50 years of age. It is, therefore, important to reflect on the reasons for the departures in order to find solutions, because it is useless to have young men who come if some of them will leave after a few years of ministry. So, I leave this point too to your reflection.