

Muslims Now Surpass Catholics in Number

by Susan Brinkmann, OCDS

Staff Writer

(March 31, 2008) The trend toward smaller families among Catholics has resulted in Islam surpassing Roman Catholicism as the world's largest religion for the first time in history.

"For the first time in history, we are no longer at the top," said Monsignor Vittorio Formenti in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano. "Muslims have overtaken us."

Monsignor Formenti, who compiles the Vatican yearbook, said Roman Catholics account for 17.4 percent of the world population while Muslims now comprise 19.2 percent.

"It is true that while Muslim families, as is well known, continue to make a lot of children, Christian ones on the contrary tend to have fewer and fewer," Monsignor said.

The data, compiled by the Vatican, refers to 2006. The figures on Islam were put together by Muslim countries and then provided to the United Nations.

However, according to the CIA Fact Book, all Christian denominations combined still outnumber Muslims, according to 2007 estimates. Christians comprise 33 percent of the world population followed by Muslims at 21 percent, Hindus at 13 percent, Buddhists at six percent, atheists at two percent and Jews at .2 percent.

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