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## **Germany: negative data for the Catholic Church. Mgr. Bätzing (Bishops' Conference), "bold changes to regain credibility"**

The analysis of the statistical data of the Catholic Church in Germany for 2019 will be deferred until next Autumn Plenary Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference (DBK). This is what the president of the German Bishops, Mgr. Georg Bätzing (pictured), said following the release of the data, pointing to the need for "bold changes in our ranks". The data show a total of 272,771 people who left the Catholic Church last year: in total, the number of Catholics in Germany decreased by over 400,000 people. The "official" number of Catholics in 2019 was 22,600,371 (23,002,128 in 2018) accounting for 27.2 percent of the German population, down from 27.7 percent in 2018. About ten thousand fewer funerals were celebrated, and even Baptisms were down by 5% to 159,043. Even the number of new Catholics decreased by 5% to 2,330. 5,339 people sought readmission to the Catholic Church, which constitutes a 15% decrease compared to 2018. Weddings, communions and confirmations also decreased, as well as mass attendance, which fell to an all-time low of 9.1% (it was 9.3 in 2018). A positive note is the ordination of 8 new permanent deacons. But the number of priests fell by 300 compared to 2018. During the DBK Autumn Plenary Assembly, a study day will be held to allow the bishops to give advice on the latest developments and on the way the results will be incorporated in the "synodal journey". Bätzing emphasized the line of the Bishops' Conference: "After a significant loss of credibility, we should try to regain trust. Honesty and transparency, the Church's helpful answers to the questions of our time and some processes of change should help us show what stands, and is, at the centre of our faith - the gift of God Who gives meaning to our lives through faith".

Massimo Lavena