

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

WEEK 24, JUNE 12 -18

Catholicism

Half of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics live in the Americas; a quarter in Europe; the rest are evenly divided between Africa and Asia. Catholicism is the biggest Christian bloc but is slowly declining as a percentage of the world and of the Church. Some trends:

1. *Traditional Catholic countries are becoming mixed populations of Catholics, non-religious, and other Christians, typically Pentecostals.* The largest Catholic country, Brazil, was 95% Catholic in 1950 but may be less than 50% Catholic by 2025. Many who were born Catholic have given up the faith, especially in Europe and North America; others, especially in Latin America, have embraced Pentecostalism.

2. *Child sex abuse scandals continue to unfold all over the world.* What will be the consequences? More people leaving the Church? People never trusting the Church again? A fresh seeking of God within the Church for holiness and mercy? Either way, the Church is being humbled and pruned as serious wrongdoing is uncovered.

3. *The Church continues to evolve.* The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s 'opened the windows and let fresh air into the Church.' Pope Francis, with his humble approachability and passion for the poor, is just the latest manifestation of these changes.

Many streams flow within Catholicism.

Traditional Catholicism, often with a strong emphasis on devotion to Mary, has re-emerged as a force, in part through the leadership of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis. Millions of Catholics



still appear (at least from a Protestant viewpoint) to be trying to earn their way to God's favour by masses, good works, ceremonies and pilgrimages.

Folk Catholicism is also still very common. Mixed with pre-Christian influences, this is a faith of saints, fiestas and hoped-for miracles, an attempted short-cut to blessing and spiritual power that is at times very dark.

The charismatic movement. Catholic charismatic renewal has a wide impact across the Church. The involvement of lay people, and the balance between adoration and activism give charismatics a vitality lacking in much of Catholicism globally.

✂ A truly renewed Catholic Church would be a great force for good in the world. Pray that its current trials will result in a fresh consecration to Jesus.

✂ Pray that the Catholic Church will re-centre itself on simple, personal trust in Christ.

✂ Pray that wrongs will be righted among the abused, the abusers, and the system that allowed abuse to flourish.

HAITI



The Western hemisphere's poorest nation, Haiti is often devastated by floods, hurricanes and earthquakes. Its poverty makes these disasters far worse than in neighbouring, richer countries.

Outside help, too, is compromised. After the 2010 earthquake that killed nearly a quarter of a million people, aid agencies brought help but also abused earthquake survivors. UN negligence caused a cholera epidemic. The remittances sent home by two million Haitians overseas are a life-saving, but poorly directed, source of national income; money isn't used for what Haiti really needs: roads, bridges, clinics, schools or electricity, for example.

Haitians mostly have the option of subsistence farming on tiny plots on depleted soil or trying to make a living in the city. Many emigrate, including a high proportion of the nation's graduates. This in turn means the nation is always short of teachers, health workers and business-people.

After the 2010 earthquake, the president called for three days of prayer and fasting and over a million Haitians (out of a population of 11.1 million today) came together to pray. Truly Haiti does need God's help for its people to find security, justice, opportunity and peace.

Up to 70% of Haiti's people are Catholics, but their Catholicism is often mingled with voodoo, which has its roots in West African animism. Evangelicals in various forms have grown in numbers, through evangelism, love in action, and by openly standing against voodoo.

✂ Pray for good leaders at every level of society and church who will build the nation rather than loot or exploit it.

✂ Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Haiti that will transform lives and communities and build the nation.

✂ Praise God for the resilience, courage and generosity of Haiti's people; pray that God will heal their land.

Praying for the World is a free weekly prayer guide to inspire and inform the whole church to pray for the whole world. Visit www.lausanne.org/pray to start any week. Created through the partnership of Operation World and the Lausanne Movement.