



AFRICA - Sharp increase in Christians and Muslims in Africa in past century, report says

Rome (Agenzia Fides) – The past 100 years have witnessed a sharp increase of Christian and Muslim believers in Africa. This was what was found in a report released April 15 in Washington by the Pew Research Center, the result of a survey of 25,000 Africans between December 2008 and April 2009, in 60 languages and 19 countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Djibouti, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). According to the report, the number of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 11 million in 1900 to 234 million in 2010. Christians have grown from 7 million in 1900 to the current 470 million. This means that one out of every five Christians and one out of every seven Muslims worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa. While sub-Saharan Africa has almost twice as many Christians as Muslims, on the African continent as a whole the two faiths are roughly balanced, with 400 million to 500 million followers each.

The authors of the report point out, however, that beliefs and traditional African religious practices continue to be adopted by a large number of Muslims and Christians.

The report notes that in sub-Saharan Africa, Christians and Muslims generally have a positive view of each other, and in most countries, relatively few people think that there is hostility against Muslims or Christians.

However, Muslims and Christians recognize that they know relatively little about the faith of the others.

Many Africans say they are concerned about religious extremism, even within their own faith. Many Muslims say they are more concerned about Muslim extremism than about Christian extremism, and Christians in four countries (Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia) say they are more concerned about Christian extremism than about Muslim extremism. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 16/4/2010)