

The Catholic Church in Cameroon

The Catholic Church occupies a significant part of Cameroon's religious landscape. Indeed, it represents approximately 36% of the total population, or nearly 10 million people, out of an estimated 28 million inhabitants in 2022. Based on a legal framework agreement with the state that guarantees its status and freedoms, it currently has a total of five ecclesiastical provinces (five archdioceses) and twenty-one suffragan dioceses. This means that it is comprised of 26 ecclesiastical jurisdictions in total.

With these realities, this Church is at the heart of several challenges of various kinds. We would like to say that this Church is facing specific situations related to its position as leader among the other churches which, naturally, also pose difficulties for it in carving out its place in the Cameroonian nation. We can highlight the growing number of evangelical churches which are well represented and have many followers. In addition to evangelization, there is the important place of integrating the dimension of teaching and healing. All this in a socio-political context that has been dotted for years with separatist crises in the Northwest and Southwest regions. These are called NOSO crises. We do not forget the war crisis against the Islamic sect Boko Haram in the Far North, which is constantly claiming victims. All this requires the presence and role of the Catholic Church in promoting peace and fighting against violence. Let us finally highlight the political aspect with the expected elections that concern the national and international world.

Speaking of specific situations related to faith and evangelization, it must be said that the churches of evangelical obedience, especially called "revival churches", proliferate and attract many persons. Their preaching in the sense of "earthly happiness" or the gospel of "success" relates to the "sale of illusions" captivates many people who are subject to poverty and material precariousness. The latter are also related to the unemployment rate in the country. Which naturally leads to an evangelization of "deliverance" because failure, lack of employment, lack of marriage, etc., all this is

sometimes perceived as impediments and realities related to the work of the devil, to possession, to bewitchment or sorcery. Which makes revival churches promote a gospel of "deliverance or healing." In short, the Catholic Church must face up to the naivety of certain people who are lured by revival churches.

Speaking of specific situations related to the social and political context, it is necessary to emphasize the crises of NOSO where the Church is like caught between the hammer the anvil. Indeed, during the last 7 years of these separatist crises, the Catholic Church has tried and is trying to mediate and help. But we have witnessed the kidnapping of ecclesiastics, the destruction of churches and Catholic works. It can be said that the Church has been a target for separatists. But she has never given up in this difficult context in the sense of her involvement for peace and the well-being of populations. This mistreatment also came from the army against the Church. We cannot forget to say that these crises lead to the displacement of populations, making vulnerable people victims of abuse or engaging in activities that do not honor the human person, especially prostitution with its share of misfortunes. The Church is thus called upon to protect the dignity of the human person.

In the Far North, violence and kidnappings have also shaken the Church by the Islamic Sect Boko Haram.

The Church has always been committed through the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) to call for appeasement, cessation of hostilities and respect for people and property. These crises are not yet contained at the present time.

In the socio-political case, particularly in the context of governance, we highlight the Church's call for the organization of free and inclusive elections for a peaceful transition. In the context of the presidential elections to come on October 12, 2025, the Church preaches and calls with all her hopes for consideration of the legitimate aspirations of the people for a peaceful election for a peaceful country after the election. There is also the call of the Church for good governance, social justice and the fight against bribery. Here and there, we see accusations against the Church regarding

its place in the political debate linked to its prophetic role. This is coupled with political pressures that undermine and tend to show a tendency towards instrumentalization.