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## YOUNG PEOPLE, FAITH, SPIRITUALITY, ECCLESIALITY

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### *Abstract*

Understanding and interpreting the religiosity, ecclesiality and spirituality of the youth today is essential if we are to adequately address their religious and spiritual questions, as well as needs. The first part of this paper examines the situation young people are in today. It seeks to answer the complex question of who young people are today and what are their basic characteristics in the contemporary world. The second part reflects on the relationship between the youth and faith. Considering that the youth religiosity is going through profound and lasting changes, the second part outlines the religiosity of the youth today based on relevant work and research, particularly those dealing with the religiosity of adolescents in Zagreb. The third part contemplates the relationship between the youth and the Church. The relationship between the youth and the Church is always a burning issue, especially nowadays, when research indicates young people increasingly moving away from the Church. The Church constantly finds itself at a new crossroads when it comes to its relationship with the youth. With each new generation, we need to look for a new rapport, a new way of communicating, and at present, it is necessary to do so in a notably sensitive and complex way. Incentives to reflect on the relationship between the Church and the youth come from the Synod on Young People, which has dealt with their issues, religiosity, relationship to the Church and the like. The fourth part deals with the problem of young people's spirituality and presents the basic characteristics of the so-called traditional and secular spirituality.

*Keywords:* Spirituality, Young People and the Church, Youth Synod, Ecclesiality, Faith

## 1. The youth today

Young people are particularly interesting because they are at the end of their developmental age, but also because of social and Church concerns for their active and constructive involvement in the adult world. There is some confusion in day-to-day discourse regarding the content related to the concepts of young people, the youth, juvenescence and adolescence. Uncertainty about the meaning of adolescence and youth and the boundary between these two stages of adolescence is also evident. These uncertainties are compounded by the prolonged period in which young people enter the adult life.

### 1.1. *Who are young people today?*

The complexity of the task of defining the term *young people* is just as complex as the society they live in today<sup>1</sup>. It is already in the first chapter of *Instrumentum laboris*, from the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, that the question of what it means to be young today was raised. As we can see in the introductory part of the document, there are approximately 1.8 billion people between the ages of 16 and 29 in the world today.<sup>2</sup> This number varies across different countries. According to the data from Episcopal conferences around the world, it appears that young people sometimes make up to 1/3 of the population in some countries, while in some countries they amount to less than 15 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

However, there is a problem with interpreting who young people are. There is no unique standpoint. Until the 1980s, from a sociological perspective,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stefano LAFFI, *La congiura contro i giovani. Crisi degli adulti e riscatto delle nuove generazioni*, Milano, 2014, 92–96.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, *Instrumentum laboris*, Città del Vaticano, 2018, no. 6 (*Instrumentum laboris*); Cf.: Monica DAS GUPTA – Robert ENGELMAN – Jessica LEVY et al., *The power of 1,8 bilion Adolescents, Youth and transformation of the future*, Editorial Team, 2014; UNEPA, *The State of world population*, 2014, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report\\_FINAL-web-pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web-pdf) (Accessed 23. VII. 2019).

<sup>3</sup> *Instrumentum laboris*, no. 6. See more about the world's youth demographics in: UNFA State of the World Population 2014, *The Power of 1.8 Billion Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future*, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report\\_FINAL-web.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf) (Accessed 23. VII. 2019), 104–1014. For a specific overview of the situation in Croatia, see: Miran LAVRIČ-Smiljka TOMANOVIĆ-Mirna JUSIĆ, *Youth study Southeast Europe 2018/ 2019*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332383648\\_YOUTH\\_STUDY\\_SOUTHEAST\\_EUROPE\\_20182019](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332383648_YOUTH_STUDY_SOUTHEAST_EUROPE_20182019) (Accessed 24. VII. 2019), Anja GVOZDANOVIĆ-Vlasta ILIŠIN-Mirjana ADAMOVIĆ et al., *Youth Research 2018/2019*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb, 2019.

young people were considered to be persons between 18 and 24 years of age. The classic division into pre-adolescence (9/10 – 13/14), adolescence (14/15 – 18/19) and youth (18/19 – 24/25) was accepted for a long time. More recent research indicates that the period covering youth has been increasingly extending. The great connoisseur of the adolescents and the youth, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, introduces a three-part categorization, which is the result of numerous societal changes that are strongly reflected on the youth. He distinguishes adolescents (15 to 19 years old), pre-adults (20 to 29 years old) and adult youth (30 to 34 years old).<sup>4</sup> A similar classification was devised by Jose Luis Moral: youth (15 to 24 years old); young adults (25 to 29 years old) and adult youth (30 to 34 years old), although some studies extend youth up to 39 years of age.<sup>5</sup> As *Instrumentum laboris* points out, »youth is characterized as a privileged age in which a person makes decisions that determine his or her identity and existence.«<sup>6</sup> The fact is that due to various obstacles, principally economic ones, certain societies see young people prolonging important life decisions. Some do so at the age of 18, while in some countries that can happen as late as in their 30s. Sociological research even mentions the phenomenon of »prolonged youth« denoting how young people nowadays stay with their parents much longer.<sup>7</sup>

Every society regenerates because of younger generations. In this sense, the slogan »young people are the future of society« also makes sense. Today, young people live a kind of »tradition-modern« dichotomy in a society that is taking on the characteristics of a hybrid society.<sup>8</sup> The values of young people, lifestyles and moral principles partly remain anchored in traditional society, but at the same time are strongly influenced by mass media. Young people are experiencing a tension between the »old« and the »new.« Unable to fulfil their own desires and needs, they are increasingly leaving their homelands and moving to other countries.<sup>9</sup> Young people are progenies of sociocultural contexts in which they were born and raised, comprised of their families,

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Jensen ARNETT, *Emerging Adulthood. The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*, Second edition, Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. José Luis MORAL, *Pastorale giovanile. Sfida cruciale per la prassi cristiana*, Torino, 2018, 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Instrumentum laboris*, no 16

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Eugenia FAMIGLIA – Ellena MARTA, *Giovani in famiglia: risorsa o rifugio?*, in: ISTITUTO GIUSEPPE TONIOLO, *Le condizioni giovanile in Italia. Rapporto 2013*, Bologna, 2013, 23–48.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Francesco Del PIZZO – Pasquale INCORONATO (ed.), *Giovani e vita quotidiana. Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, Milano, 2019, 24.

<sup>9</sup> The Republic of Croatia also faces the problem of youth emigration. Although there are indications of a decline in numbers, young people still find both European and other countries appealing.

culture, politics, school and mass media. Each of these institutions or contexts influences lifestyle formation of new generations. As highlighted in the Preparatory document of the Synod on Young People: »Today's generation of young people lives in a world that is different from that of their parents and educators. Economic and social changes have affected the gamut of obligations and opportunities. Young people's aspirations, needs, feelings and manner of relating to others have changed as well.«<sup>10</sup> Young people are an expression of a society very different from older societies. Rapid social changes contribute to the alienation of young people and the elderly. It is a fact that adults continue to govern, while young people remain on the sidelines of society. Their entry into the adult world is constantly delayed. In fact, the period of time devoted to studies, finding a permanent job, solving the affordable housing issue, starting a family and taking on parental responsibilities does not conform to the previously established rhythm, but is constantly extended. It is sufficient to point out the fact that there is a significant amount of young people among the unemployed. They identify themselves as the NEET generation.<sup>11</sup> Unemployment is one of the main reasons young people do not actively participate in the public life. Their opinions are not being heard, they do not participate in making important decisions, and they do not contribute to improving the common good. In many European countries, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe, young people between the ages of 18 and 34 live with their parents for significantly longer periods of time. This phenomenon is also visible in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>12</sup> Yuri Kazepov describes the identity of young people as complex, dynamic and plural. Transition that young people go through is fluid and changeable; different from that of their parents; they are starting families and having children later in life. Young people are very mobile, they change jobs, they are open to change and embrace diversity.<sup>13</sup> In describing the circumstances in which young people live today, some authors refer to Simone

<sup>10</sup> XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Preparatory document, Città del Vaticano, 2018, no. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Elizabeth BIANCHETTI, *Chi sono giovani d'oggi? Una generazione liquida con un'identità plurima*, interview with Yuri Kazepov, 11 March, 2015, <https://csvlombardia.it/milano/post/chi-sono-i-giovani-doggi-una-generazione-liquida-con-unidentita-plurima/> (Accessed 23.VII.2019).

<sup>12</sup> *Mediteranski sindrom hara i Hrvatskom, mladi do 32. godine ostaju na materinoj spizi: je li problem samo u nedostatku uvojeta ili je u pitanju problem kojem nema pomoći*, <https://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/novosti/hrvatska/clanak/id/555687/> (Accessed 23.VII.2019). In the article, prominent Croatian sociologists discuss the phenomenon of prolonged youth in Croatia.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Elizabeth BIANCHETTI, *Chi sono giovani d'oggi? Una generazione liquida con un'identità plurima*, interview with Yuri Kazepov, 11 March, 2015.

Weil's description of a time of universal despair (1934). She indicated a time devoid of the future, in which the coming time does not represent hope, but anxiety.<sup>14</sup> Philosopher Umberto Galimberti<sup>15</sup> in his new book<sup>16</sup> portrays young people as a »generation without« (workplace, home, family, politics...), and links their difficult status in modern society to the technological culture. In the digital era, people are no longer subjects of their work, but enforcers of rules governed by technology which is guided by the criteria of efficiency and productivity. People are required to become machine-like or transform into machines.

With regard to defining youth, an interesting new term has appeared in the Collins Online Dictionary – »snowflake generation«<sup>17</sup> which describes young people as adults that are emotionally very sensitive and unable to accept opposing opinions. Young people are extremely sensitive and do not tolerate criticism. It is a generation of sensitive individuals who consider themselves special and unique; just like »snowflakes«, they can be seriously compromised by a different opinion. They are so scared that they literally dissolve when faced with a different opinion. While growing up, many young people come across two important problems: cultural identity and distancing from their own traditions. Modern migration, technology and globalization also greatly contribute to this. Analysing the aforementioned situation, Federico D'Agosto points to the complex conditions in which young people live, occurring within the network of relationships between identity, self-realization and development. He distinguishes four possible models in relation to identity construction: cultural identity enclosed in one's own traditions, abandonment of identity in the face of modernity, tensions between cultural identities, intergenerational heritage and auto-propulsive development, synthesis of cultural identity and openness to new technologies.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Non ci sono più i giovani di una volta, <https://www.rossolimone.com/blog/non-ci-sono-piu-i-giovani-di-una-volta-i-giovani-d-oggi/> (Accessed 18.VII.2019).

<sup>15</sup> The author has written several books on the youth: *Lospite inquietante. Il nichilismo e giovani*, Milano, 2007; *È una Chiesa per giovani? Proviamo ad ascoltarli*, Milano, 2018; *La parola ai giovani. Dialogo con la generazione del nichilismo attivo*, Milano, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Umberto GALIMBERTI, *La parola ai giovani. Dialogo con la generazione del nichilismo attivo*, Milano, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *Collins Online Dictionary*, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/it/dizionario/inglese/snowflake-generation> (Accessed 18.VII.2019). See also: Cf. Ilaria CAIELLI, *Isogni della »snowflake generation«*, <https://www.vanityfair.it/mybusiness/news-mybusiness/2018/04/02/generazione-snowflake-psicologia-formazione-giovani-lavoro> (Accessed 18.VII.2019).

<sup>18</sup> Federico D'AGOSTINO, *Giovani, famiglia e religiosità nel sud*, in: Francesco Del PIZZO – Pasquale INCORONATO (ed.), *Giovani e vita quotidiana. Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, Milano, 2019, 26.

Moving away from tradition can result in denial of identity or uncritical assimilation in the face of modernity.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.2. Youth / the youth or young people?

There has been an increasing number of authors who question the use of the term *youth* (*the youth, young people*). One of them is Pope Francis. The Pope discusses the perception and interpretation of the reality in which we conceptualize *youth*. He believes that there is no youth, but instead concrete young people, their history, faces, views and illusions, while youth is a social »construct«. Generally, the term 'generation' is often used in defining young people. It has been used since the 1960s. Since then, there have been different generations that bear the mark of their time and socio-cultural context: *baby boomers* 1946–1960; Generation X 1960–1980; Generation Y 1981–1995; Generation Z (Millennials, Generation 2.0, APP Generation, Gap Generation...) from 1990 onwards; NEET Generation; »No« Generation; »Without« Generation; iGeneration; *Snowflake Generation* etc.

Profound changes have also taken place in connection with institutions that have influenced young people. Who influences the behaviour, culture and lifestyles of young generations today? It used to be the family, the school, the society, the Church. Nowadays, it is influencer blogs that offer advice in all areas of life: beauty, health, fashion, music, lifestyles, home decor, and more. The number of influencers is increasing daily, and what they do has become a lucrative and well-paying job. Then, there are also *Youtubers*.<sup>20</sup> *Instrumentum laboris* lists six anthropological-cultural challenges that strongly characterize the life context of young people. These are: a new understanding of the body, emotions and sexuality; a new paradigm of knowing and seeking truth; the anthropological implications of the digital world; disappointment in institutions and new forms of participation; a multitude of offers and a culture of indecision; secularization.<sup>21</sup>

In order to know and understand young people, it is important to notice changes occurring in the youth world. As a good method José Luis Moral offers

<sup>19</sup> Federico D'AGOSTINO, *Giovani, famiglia e religiosità nel sud*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Youtubers (Very Influential People – VIP 2.0)* are young people who have an online presence, constantly posting their own videos on YouTube. These are creative girls and boys who have imposed their creativity in the public media space. They are followed by millions of people who listen to their advice and adopt their life habits.

<sup>21</sup> *Instrumentum laboris*, no. 51–63.

a *cultural analysis method*, inspired by the humanities. The analysis of the youth and their culture includes *behaviours, attitudes, values, religion, language, music, fashion*, etc. When there is no complete analytical approach to the world and culture of young people, we offer them answers to questions they do not even ask.<sup>22</sup> This is also true of the content we offer to young people in pastoral work and catechesis. It is important to be honest and objective while analysing the situation of young people, and not to embellish or distort reality according to one's wishes or predefined frameworks. Luis Moral finds it inappropriate to talk about the youth in a static category. It is much more realistic to talk about the youth marked by diversity and plurality. He recalls that at the beginning of the 20th century one could still speak, in a certain sense, of the »metaphysics of youth«, which idealized its own identity until turning it into a metaphor for the future and the novelty. »Youth was at the centre of the birthplace of new things« Walter Benjamin wrote in 1914 in his book *'Metaphysics of Youth'. Writings 1910–1918*. A century later, the optimistic metaphysics of youth sounds like a sarcastic lie, replaced by »metaphysical pessimism«, as Luis Moral asserts. Despite all this, it is wrong, even dangerous, to observe young people today as a »lost generation«. Luis Moral believes that »humanity is moving towards a radical and new social, economic, political and religious transformation that erases past schemes in the interpretation and understanding of life. Whether we like it or not, on a cultural level, we are witnessing the emergence of a 'new individual' whose life and face are already anticipated by the youth.«<sup>23</sup>

Moral thinks that the first prerequisite for understanding today's youth is to be on the side of the youth, to empathize with them (*patire cum*), because only that kind of an attitude can help with understanding and interpreting their lives. And that implies passing the microphone to young people and listening.<sup>24</sup> In order to get to know young people, it is necessary to make a transition from »talking about young people« to »talking to young people«. Moreover, it is necessary to confront their own Christian identity – consider it from their concrete standpoint.

## 2. Young people and faith

Profound and lasting changes are visible in the religiosity of young people. The process of secularization that has overtaken all Western societies and

<sup>22</sup> Josè Luis MORAL, *Pastorale giovanile. Sfida cruciale per la prassi cristiana*, Roma, 2018, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Josè Luis MORAL, *Pastorale giovanile. Sfida cruciale per la prassi cristiana*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 13.

cultures has caused the end of mass religious practices in many European countries, including the Republic of Croatia. Religious affiliation is no longer an automatic or natural process, but a matter of personal choice. As Enzo Bianchi points out, »we have young people for whom 'being born and becoming a Christian' are no longer 'synchronized events'«<sup>25</sup>. Pertaining to religiosity, it should be noted that it is not the religious dimension itself that is in crisis, but the sense of belonging to a structured or institutional religiosity. Analysts dealing with youth religiosity support a different typology.<sup>26</sup> Paula Bignardi believes that young people do not reject their own inner religiosity, but the way in which it is lived and presented to them. They have difficulties with a religion that boils down to a doctrine; to facts unrelated to life experience; to rituals they do not understand; and that imposes morality that does not evoke one's own responsibility nor becomes a concrete experience. When it comes to young people, P. Bignardi argues that religious offerings can only go through authentic human experience.<sup>27</sup>

Sociological research has confirmed that Croatia is one of the most religious countries in Europe. As reported by the *European Values Study*, religious self-identification in Croatia is almost beyond 85 per cent, although there are differences by regions.<sup>28</sup> Sociologist Siniša Zrinščak believes that two processes in the development of religiosity are noticeable in Croatia: high-institutional religiosity on the one hand and individualized religiosity on the other.<sup>29</sup> In her analysis of the religious situation, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov emphasizes traditional Church religiosity as a strong cultural and identification framework for the largest part of the population in Croatia.<sup>30</sup> These religiosity analyses refer to the general population of Croatia. In this reflection, we are focused on the religiosity of young people. What are the basic characteristics of their

<sup>25</sup> Enzo BIANCHI, Prefazione, in: Armando MATTEO, *La prima generazione incredula. Il difficile rapporto tra i giovani e la fede*, Soveria Mannelli, 2017, VIII.

<sup>26</sup> The American study on adolescent religiosity brings several profiles of religiosity: abiders, adapters, assenters, avoiders, atheists. Lisa D. PEARCE – Melinda Lundquist DENTON, *A Faith of Their Own. Stability and Change in the Religiosity of America's Adolescents*, Oxford-New York, 2011, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Paola BIGNARDI, *Fede e valori religiosi*, in: ISTITUTO GIUSEPPE TONIOLO, *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto Giovanile 2018*, Bologna, 2018, 223–224.

<sup>28</sup> In Croatia, 77.9% of men and 89.2% of women identify themselves as religious. See more in: Josip BALOBAN – Gordan ČRPIĆ – Josip JEŽOVITA, *Values in Croatia from 1999 to 2018 according to the European Values Study*, Zagreb, 2019, 88.

<sup>29</sup> *Sociologists on religion: Is Croatia a »nation of believers«*, <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/hrvatska-zemlja-visoke-razine-religioznosti-trecina-sam-svoj-vjernik---465884.html> (Accessed 19.VII.2019).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Sociologists on religion: Is Croatia a »nation of believers«*.



religiosity? Is it the religiosity with a »multitude of faces«, as described by R. Grassi?<sup>31</sup> What do young people in Croatia believe in and how?

In recent decades, a considerable amount of empirical studies on the religiosity of adolescents and young people has been published.<sup>32</sup> In the aforementioned studies we may encounter different typologies of religiosity. Federico D'Agostino distinguishes six variants of young people religiosity in Europe: sacramentalization and secularization of ritual transitions starts with family at home and ends at religious institutions; alienation and participation in the life of the Church through volunteering and involvement in various groups; religiosity that is increasingly unrelated to tradition and more reliant on one's beliefs and experience; distance from Church institutions, pursuit of spirituality and meaning; atheism of an extreme minority influenced by nihilism, narcissism, individualism; religiosity as a form of ethnic, national and regional identity faced with of a migratory wave and multiculturalism.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Riccardo GRASSI, *Giovani, religione and vita quotidiana. Un'indagine dell'Istituto Iard per i Centro di Orientamento Pastorale*, Bologna, 2006, 25.

<sup>32</sup> ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY TWICKENHAM LONDON / BENEDICT XVI CENTER FOR RELIGION AND SOCIETY, *Europe's Young Adults and Religion. Findings from the European Social Survey (2014–16) to inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops*, Stephan Bullivant, Institut Catholique de Paris, 2018.; Gissele VINCETT, *Young People and Religion and Spirituality in Europe: A Complex Picture*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283633189\\_Young\\_People\\_and\\_Religion\\_and\\_Spirituality\\_in\\_Europe\\_A\\_Complex\\_Picture](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283633189_Young_People_and_Religion_and_Spirituality_in_Europe_A_Complex_Picture) (7/20/2019); Hans Georg ZIEBERTZ – William K. KAY, (ed.), *Youth in Europe I, An International Empirical Study about Life Perspectives*, Berlin, 2005 (Croatia included); Hans Georg ZIEBERTZ – William K. KAY, (ed.), *Youth in Europe II. An International Empirical Study on Religiosity*, Berlin, 2006, Hans Georg ZIEBERTZ – William K. KAY – Ulrich RIGEL (ed.), *Youth in Europe III. An International Empirical Study about the Religion on Life Orientation*, Berlin, 2009; Sabrina P. RAMET – Irena BOROWIK, *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland. Continuity and Change Since 1989*, Krakow, 2017; Lisa D. PEARCE – Melinda LUNDQUIST DENTON, *A Faith of Their Own. Stability and Change in the Religiosity of America's Adolescents*, Oxford, 2011; Gisela TROMMSDORFF – Xinyin CHEN, *Values, Religion and Culture in Adolescent Development*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; ISTITUTO GIUSEPPE TONIOLO, *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto Giovani 2018*, Il Mulino, 2018; Vladimir BAKRAČ, *Religioznost mladih u Crnoj Gori i njihov odnos prema nekim moralnim vrijednostima*, in: *Sociološka luč* V/2, 2011; Juzuf ŽIGA – Lejla TURČILO – Amer OSMIĆ et al. (ed.), *Youth Study in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, 2015; Edina VEJO – Muharem ADILOVIC – Azemina DURMIC, *Religioznost i rizična ponašanja adolescenata u urbanim sredinama Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Federico D'AGOSTINO, *Giovani, Famiglia e religiosità nel sud*, in: Francesco Del PIZZO – Pasquale INCORONATO (ed.), *Giovani e vita quotidiana. Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, Milano, 2019, 29. The religious typology of Riccardo Grassi is interesting. The typology was constructed in accordance with young people's attitudes toward belief, attending rites and practicing personal prayer. Such a key leads to the following religious typology: agnostics, unbelievers, those who believe in the generic god, religious minorities, generic Christian, distant Catholic, occasional Catholic, ritual Catholic, intimate Catholic, moderate Catholic, ardent Catholic. Riccardo GRASSI (ed.), *I molti*

Paola Bignardi offers an interesting and somewhat similar analysis of the religiosity of *millennials*. She describes their faith as follows: they believe in God, pray in their own way, do not go to Mass, seek a warm atmosphere in the religious community, hold that it is good to believe, mix faith and ethics, have difficulty understanding the language of the Church, love Pope Francis, wonder what the role of the Church is and know little about Jesus Christ.<sup>34</sup> In the new socio-cultural circumstances, confessional affiliation and religious practices become a reality for a minority of young people. In general, there is a tendency among young people that they are not »against«, but they are accustomed to living »without« God revealed in the Gospel and »without« the Church, and resort to alternative religiosity and spirituality that is not over-institutionalized.<sup>35</sup>

A study on the religiosity of adolescents in Zagreb was published this year in Croatia.<sup>36</sup> It contained results of a survey conducted among high school students in Zagreb. Although adolescents make up only one part of the population that falls into the youth category, they are considered to be particularly important as they are extremely dynamic and unstable. It is in adolescence that transitions from unstable value orientations to firm attitudes occur. That is also true of religiosity. According to the study, the largest percentage of Zagreb's adolescents identifies as Catholic. It should also be noted that every tenth high school student identifies as non-religious (cf. Table 1).

Participants per religious commitment	n (%)
Catholic	957 (86.1)
I have no religious commitment / I am an atheist / agnostic	116 (10.4)
other religious commitment	16 (1.4)
Muslim	14 (1.3)
Orthodox Christian	4 (0.4)
Jehovah's Witness	4 (0.4)
In total	1111 (100.0)

Table 1.

volti della religiosità giovanile, in: Ibid, *Giovani, religione e vita quotidiana. Un'indagine dell'Istituto Iard per and Centro di Orientamento Pastorale*, Bologna, 2006, 25–85.

<sup>34</sup> Paola BIGNARDI, *Giovani e fede*, in: *Giovani, Famiglia e religiosità nel sud*, in: Francesco DEL PIZZO – Pasquale INCORONATO (ed.), *Giovani e vita quotidiana. Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, Milano, 2019, 76.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Armando MATTEO, *La prima generazione incredula. Il difficile rapporto tra giovani e la fede*, Soveria Mannelli, 2017, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Blaženka Valentina MANDARIĆ – Ružica RAZUM – Denis BARIĆ, *Religioznost zagrebačkih adolescenata*, Zagreb, 2019.

Seeing that these are adolescents, one cannot expect firm homogeneity in their religiosity. It is a heterogeneous, gradual and layered faith, as can be seen from the table below. Many, after receiving the sacrament of Christian initiation, abandon religious practices or reduce them to commemorative events. Although on different levels, most claim that faith is important in their lives (cf. Table 2).<sup>37</sup>

<b>Relation to religion</b>	<b>n (%)</b>
I believe and practice faith	593 (53.7)
I believe, but I do not practice faith	242 (21.9)
I doubt	60 (5.4)
I am exploring	96 (8.7)
I do as others do, without thinking	16 (1.4)
I do not care about religion (faith)	98 (8.9)
<b>Importance of faith (religion) in life</b>	<b>n (%)</b>
unimportant	92 (8.3)
mostly unimportant	104 (9.3)
somewhat important	336 (30.2)
very important	441 (39.6)
most important	140 (12.6)
In total	1113 (100.0)

Table 2.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that adolescents, after receiving the sacrament of Christian initiation, distance themselves from active involvement in the life of the parish community to which they belong. Apart from participation in Sunday Masses, their attendance at other parish activities is minimal or almost none (cf. Table 3).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ružica RAZUM, *Adolescenti, Crkva i vjeronauk*, in: Blaženka Valentina MANDARIĆ – Ružica RAZUM – Denis BARIĆ, *Religioznost zagrebačkih adolescenata*, 146–147.

<sup>38</sup> Ružica RAZUM, *Adolescenti, Crkva i vjeronauk*, 166–167.

Participation in activities in one's own or another parish: frequency of individual response.	never	rarely	sometimes	often
attending a parish catechesis or meeting for young people	63.6	18.8	10.2	7.3
Sunday Holy Mass	19.1	23.	20.9	36.4
sport activities	64.3	15.	11.8	8.9
helping with parish charity (Caritas)	66.5	17.9	11.7	3.8
editing a parish publication	92.5	5.	1.2	0.7
prayer meetings	63.6	18.8	12.4	5.2
participation in a Bible group	87.5	8.4	2.5	1.6
reading during Mass	75.7	13.1	6.8	4.4
singing or playing an instrument	73.0	9.0	9.1	8.9
Altar service	88.5	5.	2.9	3.4
other	84.8	1.5	4.4	9.4

Table 3.

As we have already pointed out, adolescence is a very sensitive period of life in which first important life decisions are reached, including those related to religion.

### 3. The youth and the Church

Young people have a special relationship with the Church. Their critical attitude towards all authority, including the Church, is well-known. For several decades, there has been a slow but progressive process of people, particularly young people, moving away from traditional places of worship in Europe. Religiosity no longer finds the space for its actualization exclusively in institutional areas of life. A religiosity that moves away from the Church and its teaching has been spreading. Young people coming from less religious families tend to have a weak sense of religion. It is interesting that young people do not see the necessary connection between religious practices and faith in God. Many young people consider that »it is not essential to go to church in order to believe in God and be a Christian.«<sup>39</sup> Many young people feel that their beliefs remain important to them even though they do not attend the Mass.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine COOK - Philip HUGHES, *Youth Spirituality: How Young People Change*, Pointers, 16 (2006) 3, 5, <https://cra.org.au/youth-spirituality-how-young-people-change/> (Accessed 13.VI.2019).

Young people are distrustful of the Church and often focus on its material wealth, desire for power and current scandals. Analysing responses in which young people expressed their attitudes towards the Church, Franco Garelli points out that the »image of the Church« is an image of an institution that is losing power and contact with today's young generation.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Alessandro Castegnaro, in his book *Fuori dal recinto*<sup>41</sup> asks if we can say that young people who »leave the churchyard« also lose the »antenna of faith«? Is »being outside the Church« the same as »not being religious«? Why is there a significant number of young people that leave the Church?

In relation to the youth, the Church is always at a new crossroads. The future of the Church, the future of faith and the future of the Church in the West all depend on the choice of the path. Research confirms that the faith of young people is increasingly private, subjective and distant from the Church.<sup>42</sup> When dealing with such a situation, the fundamental issue the Church faces is how to cultivate faith among young people, which will be both personal and ecclesial at the same time. The path to such faith leads, first and foremost, to young people, to listening to young people, to understanding their world and to establishing relationships with them. As Pope Francis often points out, belonging to the Church is not just about adhering to certain truths or lifestyles. It is the fruit of interpersonal relationships. It is much more challenging to establish authentic relationships than to hold catechesis.<sup>43</sup> In contemporary society, young people stay in various *lobbies* for too long before they are allowed and able to enter the adult world. That should not happen in the Church. The Church needs to find an adequate place for the youth, because their inventiveness, their youth and their creativity are needed.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Franco GARELLI, *Piccoli atei crescono. Davvero una generazione senza Dio?* Bologna, 2016, 121.

<sup>41</sup> Alessandro CASTEGNARO con Giovanni DAL PIAZ e Enzo BIEMMI, *Fuori dal recinto. Giovani, fede, chiesa: uno sguardo diverso*, Milano, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> INSTITUT CATHOLIQUE DE PARIS/ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY TWICKENHAM LONDON BENEDETTO XVI CENTRE FOR RELIGION AND SOCIETY, *Europe's Young Adults and Religion. Finding from the European Social Survey (2014–16)* Stephan Bulivant (ed.), <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-march-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf> (Accessed 23. VII. 2019).

<sup>43</sup> *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*. Available from: <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people-faith-an.html> (Accessed 23. VII. 2019); FRANCESCO, *Christus vivit Ai giovani e a tutto il popolo di Dio. Testo integrale dell'esortazione apostolica*. Guida alla lettera di Armando Mattei, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019.

Difficulties in the relationship between the youth and the Church are nothing new.<sup>44</sup> It raises a question that is both old and new: why do young people have difficulty understanding and accepting the Church? Studies on the religiosity of adolescents and young people in Croatia confirm that most of them are religious and identify as Catholic.<sup>45</sup> With reference to a recent survey, 86.1 per cent of adolescents living in Zagreb professed to be Catholic, 96.2 per cent said to be baptized, 95.0 per cent received Holy Communion and 93.8 per cent of them received the sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>46</sup> But after receiving the sacraments of Christian initiation, faith often loses its original fervour. An image developed by Paola Bignardi, in which she describes the faith of many young people today with the metaphor of »embers under the ashes«, can help us understand this situation.<sup>47</sup> Faith burns through the sacraments of initiation and religious socialization, but it is covered with ashes and therefore incapable of igniting or even warming up. Nonetheless, as the author emphasizes, it is still alive. It is enough for someone to blow into it and the embers will ignite and start burning once again. We have to, as she states, look for embers that are not always clearly visible. We might even burn our fingers searching. Notwithstanding, »only the Church that has the courage to blow away the ashes covering the embers will have a future«.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Valentina MANDARIĆ, *Crkva u očima mladih*, *Bogoslovska smotra*, 71 (2001) 4, 579 – 596.

<sup>45</sup> Valentina Blaženka MANDARIĆ, *Religiozni identitet zagrebačkih adolescenata*, Zagreb, 2000; Vlasta ILIŠIN – Furio RADIN (ed.), *Mladi uoči Trećeg milenija*, Zagreb, 2002; Anja GVOZDANOVIC – Vlasta Ilišin – Mirjana ADAMOVIĆ et al., *Istraživanje mladih u Hrvatskoj 2018./2019.*, Zagreb, 2019; Blaženka Valentina MANDARIĆ – Ružica RAZUM – Denis BARIĆ, *Religioznost zagrebačkih adolescenata*, Zagreb, 2019; Željko BONETI, Klatno se i dalje njiše. Institucionalna religioznost riječkih studenata, *Sociologija i prostor*, 54 (2016) 3, 265–294; Krunoslav NIKODEM – Juraj JURLINA, U očekivanju opadanja religioznosti? Komparativna analiza religioznosti zagrebačkih studenata, *Sociologija sela*, 56 (2018) 3, 273–298.; Siniša ZRINŠČAK, Ima neka tajna veza. Religioznost mladih kao indikator društvenih i religijskih promjena, *Društvena istraživanja*, 10 (2011) 1–2, 19–40; Mijo NIKIĆ, Suvremena duhovnost mladih između tradicije i nove religioznosti, *Diacovensia* 16 (2008) 1–2, 115–133; Antonio DRAGAN, Religioznost maturanata u Zadru, *Sociologija i prostor*, 49 (2011) 1, 91–108; Zdravka LEUTAR – Ivan LEUTAR, Religioznost studenata i njezin utjecaj na svakodnevni život, *Obnovljeni život*, 62 (2007) 2, 151–175; Zdravka LEUTAR – Ana Marija JOSIPOVIĆ, Neke dimenzije religioznosti mladih, *Nova prisutnost*, 6 (2008) 3, 397–420.

<sup>46</sup> Blaženka Valentina MANDARIĆ – Ružica RAZUM – Denis BARIĆ, *Religioznost zagrebačkih adolescenata*, 2019–2020.

<sup>47</sup> Paola BIGNARDI, *Giovani e fede*, *Giovani, Famiglia e religiosità nel sud*, Francesco Del PIZZO – Pasquale INCORONATO (ed.), *Giovani e vita quotidiana. Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, Milano, 2019, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Paola BIGNARDI, *Giovani e fede*, 80.

The crisis of religiosity is particularly evident in the »downfall of the Christian system: practice, belief and institutional affiliation.«<sup>49</sup> Of course, all this puts in question models that have been passed down to young people so far. The fundamental form of change in the religious life of young people is the »individualization of beliefs«, which is again a consequence of raising awareness of one's own autonomy and the right of a person to make his or her own decisions about life and consequently about religion. On the other hand, there is a growing number of young people in Europe who see themselves in a secular and immanent vision of human existence.<sup>50</sup> In more specific terms, research has been indicating the Church's inability to talk to young people for quite some time now, in terms of presenting a stronghold on matters of faith and worth.<sup>51</sup> In the study '*Piccoli atei crescono*', Franco Garelli addresses the issue of the youth's perception of the Church through the prism of its action on the local and universal level, with particular reference to the way they see Pope Francis. The responses young people provided show that they accept the Church serving in a specific territory and specific people, but reject the Church which operates politically, has its own influencing lobbies in the society and is eager for power and wealth. They also have problems with the Church delving too much into family and sexual morality. Young people accept the »Church of Pope Francis«. Pope Francis is the reason many young people still trust the Church or the reason they trust the Church again. Nearly 75 per cent of those surveyed, including the non-believers, have a positive image of the head of the Catholic Church. What particularly appeals to them about Pope Francis is his closeness to little people (86.5%) and his simplicity (84.8%).<sup>52</sup>

Recent research on the religiosity of young people unanimously points out that subjectivism is a fundamental feature of religiosity; a religion that functions on 'do-it-yourself' principles. In contrast, the objectivity of religious experience that has to do with rules, hierarchy, rites and dogmas is not accepted. »Relationship with the community, typical of any religious experience, is only accepted when the community is a place of acceptance, abundant with relationships and meaningful strongholds.«<sup>53</sup> The youth resist the Church as an institution because of its past and its present. It fits in well with their general

<sup>49</sup> Juan Martin VELASCO, Religiozna situacija mladih u Europi. Pokušaj tumačenja i prijedloga za djelovanje, *Kateheza*, 29 (2007) 2, 166.

<sup>50</sup> Franco GARELLI, *Piccoli atei crescono. Davvero una generazione senza Dio?*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Franco GARELLI, *Piccoli atei crescono. Davvero una generazione senza Dio?*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 121–143.

<sup>53</sup> Paola BIGNARDI, *Fede e valori religiosi*, in: ISTITUTO GIUSEPPE TONIOLO, *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto Giovanile 2018*, Bologna, 2018, 211.

opposition to rules, authority and structures. The youth create an image of the Church based on its activity in a concrete society. High school students in Zagreb believe that the Church's most important task is to help people in need and to work towards achieving peace around the world. An area that the Church should in no way be concerned with is politics.

The Church's role in the society	Extremely unimportant	Mostly unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Mostly important	Extremely important
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
To proclaim Jesus Christ and the Gospel	92 (8.4)	44 (4.0)	173 (15.8)	339 (30.9)	448 (40.9)
The sacraments	88 (8.1)	46 (4.2)	165 (15.1)	333 (30.5)	459 (42.1)
To help those in need	21 (1.9)	4 (4)	54 (4.9)	206 (18.7)	817 (74.1)
To advocate peace among nations	27 (2.5)	7 (6)	53 (4.8)	179 (16.3)	832 (75.8)
To take a critical attitude towards negative phenomena in society	116 (10.7)	74 (6.8)	260 (24.0)	311 (28.7)	321 (29.7)
To set up social, educational and health institutions	75 (6.9)	50 (4.6)	224 (20.6)	316 (29.1)	421 (38.8)
To promote dialogue between religions	73 (6.8)	53 (4.9)	236 (21.9)	325 (30.1)	392 (36.3)
To interpret and defend Christian moral and ethical principles	81 (7.5)	69 (6.4)	274 (25.4)	284 (26.4)	369 (34.3)
To gather and raise children and young people	81 (7.5)	73 (6.7)	167 (15.4)	266 (24.6)	496 (45.8)
To solve certain social problems (violence, drugs, poverty, corruption, unemployment)	59 (5.4)	32 (2.9)	153 (14.1)	302 (27.8)	541 (49.8)
To participate in political events	468 (43.0)	187 (17.2)	258 (23.7)	96 (8.8)	80 (7.3)

Table 4.

Scarce trust, gradual alienation and the youth's expectation that the Church has changed is the briefest summary of research on the relationship between young people and the Church.

It can generally be said that young people use two interpretative keys or approaches when evaluating the Church. The first one is personal experience



(positive in most cases) they had in their own parish, through catechesis or other similar activities. The second key is seeing the Church through a structural and institutional perspective, which regularly has a negative connotation. Furthermore, young people now often make a distinction between personal faith (which is not in question) and church affiliation, which is increasingly weakening. Young people have something in common, whether they experience the Church negatively or positively, and it is a wish for the Church to change. They emphasize the importance of change if the Church still wants to have a significant place in young people's lives. It has to change its relationships, be more active, go outside its boundaries and meet people, use a language that young people understand, keep up with the times and changes in the context in which they live.

Even a cursory analysis of the relationship between the youth and the Church indicates certain aporias and an increasing number of religious young people moving away from the Church. Research, on the other hand, confirms that young people still trust the Church, despite all the objections. According to the Survey of *Values in Croatia*, young respondents have more confidence in the Church than their older counterparts.<sup>54</sup> Croatian Youth Survey from 2018/2019 also confirms that the Church still enjoys young people's trust. On the scale of what young people do and do not trust, in terms of political and social institutions, the Church comes third.<sup>55</sup>

The question that spontaneously arises from it consists of what the Church should do to keep young people in their fold and how to bring back those who have already moved away from it? Armando Mateo offers an answer that seems simple but is rather demanding. »If young people no longer want to go to this kind of a church, we should simply change 'this Church'; if the current models of mediating the beauty, humanity and joy of faith in Christ no longer touch the hearts of the youth, then 'current models' that mediate the beauty, humanity and joy of faith in Christ should simply be changed.«<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Josip BALOBAN – Gordan ČRPIĆ – Josip JEŽOVITA, *Vrednote u Hrvatskoj od 1999. do 2018. prema European Values Study*, 32–33.

<sup>55</sup> Anja GVOZDANOVIC – Vlasta ILIŠIN – Mirjana ADAMOVIĆ, *Istraživanje mladih u Hrvatskoj 2018./ 2019.*, Fridrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Armando MATTEO, *La prima generazione incredula. Il difficile rapporto tra i giovani e la fede*, Soveria Mannelli, 2017, 101.

#### 4. Young people and their spirituality

Understanding the spirituality of today's youth is important for many reasons. Firstly, if religious education is to take into account the needs of the addressee, they need to be understood and addressed appropriately. Pertaining to the spirituality of today's youth, all research indicates that young people are poorly engaged within their Catholic communities, that is, their spirituality shows signs that fall outside the dominant scope of the so-called traditional Catholic spirituality. Furthermore, understanding the impact of social and cultural changes on spirituality can provide valuable insights into the cultivation of spirituality, help to establish a correct diagnosis and assessment of new developments and cultural contexts, as well as to understand appropriate ways with respect to the content and mode of nurturing the spirituality among young generations.

In an effort to interpret changes in spirituality in regards to the socio-cultural changes, the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, a document of the Second Vatican Council, is of significant value: »...The Church always has to question the signs of time and interpret them according to the Gospel in order to answer eternal human questions about the meaning of present and future life and their relationship with each other, in a way that suits each and every generation. Therefore, it is necessary to know and understand the world we live in, its expectations, aspirations and often dramatic significance. (...) The human race is in a new age of its own history, in which profound and rapid changes are spreading across the world. (...) We can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, which also encompasses religious life.«<sup>57</sup>

##### 4.1. Religiosity and spirituality. Two different takes on spirituality: traditional and mundane

Spirituality and religiosity, although closely related, are not synonymous. It is important to distinguish them, especially in the context of religious upbringing and education. Religious educators/teachers can no longer assume that all the addressees of religious education are believers with religious experience and understanding. While the pursuit of religious education cannot rely upon the premise of existent religiosity and religious experience, we can safely expect that all children and young people have experiences that we can call spiritual. However, the complexity of the spirituality of contemporary youth

<sup>57</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7. XII. 1965), no. 4, Dokumenti, Zagreb, 2008.

must not be underestimated.<sup>58</sup> There are obvious spiritual changes as regards the spirituality which has been closely linked to religiosity, and specifically, Christian religiosity.

Spirituality has traditionally been inextricably linked with religion and religiosity. In that context, religiosity can be explained as »spirituality that is related to religion«<sup>59</sup>. Currently, however, there is a lack of consensus on the definition and understanding of spirituality. Trying to define this term, some emphasize the relationship with the divine or the infinite; others accentuate the relationship with oneself; others with nature; while some point out the concept of transcendence.<sup>60</sup> On the one hand, a humanistic or secular perspective describes spirituality as a phenomenon that does not necessarily involve a religious aspect such as belief in God or the infinite. All people are spiritual, but not necessarily religious. Based on research, some scholars claim that spirituality is a necessary part of a person, regardless of his or her religiosity or non-religiosity.<sup>61</sup> The spiritual dimension finds its expression in human aspirations, moral sensibility, creativity, love and friendship, fascination with nature and human beauty, scientific and artistic endeavours, intellectual achievements, physical activities and selfless love. Spiritual life, however, is not the same as intellectual, affective or moral life, but rather refers to the inner life in which freedom, depth, beauty, novelty and eminence blossom.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the religious perspective describes spirituality by respecting religious aspects. Spirituality thus includes not only general humanistic designations, but also a relationship with the divine or the infinite, which is fundamentally

<sup>58</sup> To find out more about the changes observed in the field of contemporary young people spirituality, as part of religious education, see: Ružica RAZUM, O učenju duhovnosti u vjeronaučnoj nastavi, in: Stipo KLJAJIĆ – Mario CIFRAK (ed.), *Znat će da prorok bijaše među njima! (Ez 33.33). Zbornik u čast prof. dr. sc. Bože Lujčića, OFM, povodom 70. godine života*, Zagreb, 2018, 845–862.

<sup>59</sup> Graham ROSSITER, A case for a »big picture« re-orientation of K-12 Australian Catholic school religious education in the light of contemporary spirituality, *Journal of Religious Education*, 58 (2010) 3, 5–18, here 7.

<sup>60</sup> For more on this, see: Graham ROSSITER, A case for a »big picture« re-orientation of K-12 Australian Catholic school religious education in the light of contemporary spirituality, 5–18; QUEENSLAND CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, *Spiritual Development and Religious Education in the Early Years: A Review of the literature*, 5–9.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example: David HAY – Kate HUNT, *Understanding the Spirituality of People Who Don't Go to Church. A report on the findings of the Adults' Spirituality*. Project at the University of Nottingham, 2000, [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/3678/understanding\\_spirituality\\_report.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/3678/understanding_spirituality_report.pdf), (Accessed 20.VIII.2019).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Daniela SILVESTRI, *I giovani e il bisogno di spiritualità*, <http://notedipastoralegiovanile.it> (Accessed 12.VIII.2019), 5.

in its core. In line with this concept, spirituality is so intimately rooted in religion that it does not make sense to separate the two.<sup>63</sup>

Regardless of the different definitions of spirituality, traditional or secular, some common elements of spirituality are clear. One of the most prominent ones is the human ability to transcend the immediate, to transcend the present moment and place, in search of the meaning and coherence of life. Another essential characteristic of spirituality is the sensibility to the morality of human acts, expressed in religious as well as in humanistic categories. The universal search for meaning and identity is also attributed to spirituality. The spiritual aspect of identity focuses on who the individual person really is, and what his or her place and purpose is in this world. A sense of familiarity, or interconnectedness, is also attributed to spirituality.

#### 4.1.1. Traditional spirituality

Traditionally, in most European countries, spirituality was identical to being religious in a Christian format: spirituality was equivalent to religiosity. The socio-cultural environment of former traditional spirituality was an environment dominated by religious, that is, Christian realities. That was an environment in which »it was impossible not to be a Christian«; Christian life was adopted by participating and belonging to a society and a family whose life was marked by religious characteristics.<sup>64</sup> For traditional Christian spirituality, everything began and ended with God, the Church and the Bible. Being spiritual / religious was then a matter of worshipping and obeying God. The system of religious doctrines, although some found it difficult to understand and welcome in their own lives, was accepted without questioning the authority of the Church and God. A simple system of objective doctrinal pillars of faith was effective because it was wholeheartedly supported by the community.<sup>65</sup> Born in such an environment, individuals absorbed the values of that environment. The alternative was almost non-existent.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Tony EUADE, *Strangely familiar? Teachers making sense of young children's spiritual development*, in: *Early Years*, 25 (2005.), 3, 237–248, quoted in: QUEENSLAND CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, *Spiritual Development and Religious Education in the Early Years: A Review of the literature*, 4–5.

<sup>64</sup> More on religious instruction in such a society: Alfred LÄPPLE, *Breve storia della catechesi*, Brescia, 1985, 81–98; Luigi La ROSA, *La formazione cristiana nel medioevo*, Turin, 1998; Alojzije HOBLAJ – Milan SIMUNOVIĆ, *Crkvena kateheza na katedri religiozne pedagogije i katehetike*, www.kbf.hr, 45–46. (Accessed 10.VII.2019).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Joseph COLOMB, *Kateheza životnih dobi*, Zagreb, 1981, 9.

Graham Rossiter outlines six key meanings that pervaded common spirituality in that environment: 1) The unquestionable centrality of God who was accepted as the beginning (creator), the end and the judge of the human race; 2) Earthly life was understood only as a preparation for eternity; 3) The power of the Church (religion) over individuals, usually intertwined with political power, was almost absolute; 4) Obedience was an essential feature of interpersonal relationships. Obedience to God was equal to obedience to the Church (religion). Religious and political authorities were respected without questioning; 5) Fear of God as well as the fear of religious and political authority was a strong motivating factor. The idea of rewarding the good and punishing the evil was an important moral motivating factor. The ultimate fear was the fear of eternal punishment in hell; 6) The evil in the world took shape in the image of the Devil. He was to blame for much of what was wrong in both personal and social lives.<sup>66</sup> Traditional spirituality was achieved mainly through regular religious life, which included regularly attending the Sunday Holy Mass, sacramental life, performing traditional devotions, prayers, pilgrimages, folk missions, spiritual exercises for various classes and the like.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Contemporary, worldly spirituality

In recent decades, traditional religiosity / spirituality has transitioned into religiosity / spirituality that can be described more as secular, eclectic, individualistic, etc.<sup>68</sup> Many factors have contributed to changes in religiosity and spirituality in recent decades. In order to understand and interpret these changes, Rossiter uses the phrase '*change in cultural meanings*'.<sup>69</sup> It is interesting that back

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Graham ROSSITER, Understanding the Changing Landscape of Contemporary Spirituality: A useful starting point for reviewing Catholic school religious education, *The Person and the Challenges*, 3 (2013) 1, 157–179, here 170.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Mijo NIKIĆ, Suvremena duhovnost mladih između tradicije i nove religioznosti, 118.

<sup>68</sup> For more on this, see: Valentina Blaženka MANDARIĆ, *Mladi integrirani u(ili) marginalizirani*; Zagreb, 2009; Zdravka LEUTAR – Ana Marija JOSIPOVIĆ, Neke dimenzije religioznosti mladih, *Nova prisutnost: časopis za intelektualna i duhovna pitanja*, 6 (2008) 3, 397–421; Mijo NIKIĆ, Suvremena duhovnost mladih između tradicije i nove religioznosti, 115–133.

<sup>69</sup> Graham ROSSITER, Perspectives on Contemporary Spirituality: Implications for Religious Education in Catholic Schools, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 2 (2010) 2, 129–147; *Ibid*, Understanding the Changing Landscape of Contemporary Spirituality: A Useful Starting Point for Reviewing Catholic School of Religious Education, *The Person and the Challenges*, 3 (2013) 1, 157–179. See especially Maria CRAWFORD – Graham ROSSITER, *Reason for Living: Education and Young People's Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality*, Melbourne, 2006.

in 1948 J. Colomb pointed out the fact that the social world had slowly become less Christian, which then caused great religious and spiritual changes.<sup>70</sup> The current socio-religious context has been substantially changed. Concepts such as secularization, pluralism, and individualisation are often used to describe the changes that are observed at the level of religiosity / spirituality of contemporary people. Changing the spirituality of people, in particular today's youth, is extremely profound and powerful. The changes observed on the level of religiosity / spirituality are the results of deeper changes occurring on the socio-cultural level.

Recent decades have witnessed significant changes in cultural values that have contributed to the change in traditional spirituality. Migration of people to cities, development of science and technology, interpretation of human behaviour with the help of humanities and social sciences, universal education, the media, are just some of them. All of this has contributed to the creation of multiple benchmarks. Every individual is in a situation of permanent choice; the meaning of life is no longer socially defined but has become a matter of personal choice. The style and rhythm of modern life have changed the way many people, including young people, relate to religion and give meaning to religion in their own lives. The changes do not represent just a passing crisis, a temporary eclipse of religious / Christian identity. They are much deeper and far-reaching. For many, religion does not play a significant role in their proper lives. They see religion as something optional, and not as an indisputable component of their lives. Although they declare themselves as Catholic, believers show little or no attention to religion / Christianity in their daily lives. »Obedience to God« used to hold an important place in people's lives; while today the emphasis is put on »living your best life«. Religiosity which prioritizes prayer and liturgy seems to be no longer perceived as important / acceptable / necessary by many. Some will say that spirituality has disappeared with it. Others point out that spirituality has not disappeared but rather enclosed itself more into a subjective and individualistic structure. The decline of religious practice does not mean that spirituality has also disappeared, more that spirituality has left its usual state. Spirituality has lost its cultural and religious framework.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Pour un catéchisme efficace, 1948, quoted in: Ubaldo GIANETTO, Uvođenje u kršćanstvo, in: Marko PRANJIC (ed.), *Religijskopedagoško-katehetski leksikon*, Zagreb, 1991, 777.

<sup>71</sup> Graham ROSSITER, A Case for a »Big Picture« Re-orientation of the K-12 Australian Catholic School. Religious education in the light of contemporary spirituality, 8.

According to many studies, young people consider spirituality as a positive reality. In fact, an increased interest in spirituality is noticeable, particularly among young people.<sup>72</sup> A considerable number of them feel open to spiritual experiences. Many, however, do not necessarily associate spirituality with the Church, but more with specific life situations. It is important to note that openness to spiritual experiences and positive attitudes toward spirituality are generally present, regardless of the frequency of church-going among young people. The very final document of the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment* points out that many young people do not know what the meaning of life is. They do not associate life with transcendence. Many have lost confidence in institutions, no longer find themselves in great traditional religions, and often do not identify as religious. Still, as the document highlights, »young people are open to the spiritual dimension.«<sup>73</sup>

In describing the religiosity of today's adolescents and young people, the following tendencies are emphasized in their expression of religiosity: subjectivity in their approach to religion; personal experience becomes crucial for authenticity and truth; distance from religious practices; opposition to any form of authority, even religious ones; plausibility of religious authority is diminishing; individuals make their own decisions about various aspects of spirituality; a gap between religious commitment and the importance attached to religion; acceptance of a new religiosity marked by syncretism, eclecticism, individualism and distancing from traditional religion; linking religiosity solely to one's privacy and the like.<sup>74</sup> People pay more attention to their own autonomous frames of reference as the ultimate criterion for deciding on spiritual

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Catherine COOK – Philip HUGHES, *Youth Spirituality: How Young People Change*, 5. Some authors, when analysing the state of spirituality among today's youth, mention the »spiritual revolution«. For more on this, see: Paul McQUILLAN, *Youth Spirituality: A Reality in Search of Expression*, *Australian eJournal of Theology* 6 (February 2006), available from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/>, 1 – 2 (Accessed 1.V.2019).

<sup>73</sup> Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html> (Accessed 23.VII.2019).

<sup>74</sup> For more on this, see: Valentina Blaženka MANDARIĆ, *Mladi integrirani u(ili) marginalizirani*, 36–148; Graham ROSSITER, *Understanding the Changing Landscape of Contemporary Spirituality: A Usual Starting Point for Reviewing Catholic School of Religious Education*, 175; Paul McQUILLAN, *Youth Spirituality: A Reality in Search of Expression*, 1–2; *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*: <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html>, no. 7. (Accessed 23.VII.2019).

and moral questions. Traditional religious authority has lost its plausibility. Its advisory role is nowadays more accepted than its normative role.<sup>75</sup>

#### *4.2. Implications for educational action*

Changes in the spirituality of contemporary people, specifically today's youth, are so profound and powerful that ignoring this fact could be the reason for the failure of ecclesiastical education. The changes noticed on the level of religiosity / spirituality are the result of deeper and more extensive changes taking place on the socio-cultural level.

One important aspect of the current complex situation in regard to changes in spirituality and religiosity concerns the identification and comprehension of the addressee of the Christian message. It is obvious that poor knowledge of the addressee and failure to take into account the changes that have taken place could result in misunderstanding and rejection of the Christian offering. It is necessary for educators to be sensitive in order to discover different levels of understanding and adherence to the religious and the spiritual, and to accept this diversity. If Christian speech, in particular within the context of religious education, is placed in the cultural-religious context of traditional religiosity / spirituality, while most young people find themselves closer to the cultural framework of contemporary religiosity / spirituality, today's youth will create basic assumptions for misunderstanding and rejection of Christian speech.

The changes in spirituality that we notice in modern man, most notably among the youth, cannot be ignored and reverted to the »old«. The starting point for the religious upbringing and education of young people who want to be taken more seriously, should be accepting that the spirituality of today's people, especially the youth, is increasingly characterized by the so-called »Worldly or profane spirituality«. Taking this into account, educators should become more successful in engaging in a more constructive and fruitful

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Graham ROSSITER, *Understanding the Changing Landscape of Contemporary Spirituality: A Useful Starting Point for Reviewing Catholic School of Religious Education*, 171-174. David Hay and Kate Hunt, presenting the results of a study conducted in the UK and in Australia, highlight the following: » (...) While the mainstream Christian churches in both countries are losing adherents, the spiritual hunger of people remains a reality. This paper suggests there is a number of difficulties that must be overcome before young people in particular find an expression for their spirituality in traditional Christian churches«. For more on this, see: Paul McQUILLAN, *Youth Spirituality: A Reality in Search of Expression*, 3.



dialogue with young people. They should aim to create the preconditions for empowering young people's true spirituality, regardless of their current (non) religious experience.

### Closing thoughts

Defining young people is far from easy. Firstly, there are different viewpoints regarding the interpretation of who young people are. Many people feel that the use of the term *youth* might be questionable. Equally, it is increasingly difficult to understand the challenges that young people are faced with today, as well as the impact those challenges exert on them. In any case, in order to establish a dialogue with young people, it is necessary to understand them and notice the changes occurring in their world.

The world of young people and their religiosity / spirituality are undergoing profound and lasting changes. Generally speaking, the religious situation of the world at present is extremely complex. On the one hand, there are signs indicating that traditional religions and religious institutions are going through a crisis; while on the other hand, signs of religious awakening and revitalization of religion are also present in that same society. The changes observed at the level of religiosity / spirituality, in particular among young people, are the result of deeper and more extensive changes taking place on the socio-cultural level. The socio-cultural context has changed. Consequently, religiosity / spirituality has also been experiencing changes.

The religiosity of adolescents and young people has been the subject of much research in the Republic of Croatia, in Europe and the rest of the world. In describing the religiosity of today's adolescents and young people, the following characteristics are emphasized: subjectivity in their approach to religion, personal experience becoming crucial for authenticity and truthfulness; distance from religious practices; detachment from authority; acceptance of a new religiosity marked by syncretism, eclecticism, individualism and distancing from traditional religion and the like. Traditional religious authority has lost some of its power, while individuals pay increasingly more attention to their own autonomous frames of reference. The number of religious young people moving away from the Church has been increasing. Many have lost confidence in institutions and no longer see themselves in traditional religions. Spirituality of many people is enclosed into subjective and individualistic frames and is no longer necessarily connected to transcendence.

It is clear that the change in the religiosity / spirituality of the youth today is so profound and powerful that ignoring it might cause a failure of the mission that the Church is carrying out regarding children and young people. Extreme efforts must therefore be made to understand and interpret young people, their religiosity, their spirituality and their ecclesiality. Each new generation needs a different approach and relationship.

### *Sažetak*

#### **MLADI, VJERA, DUHOVNOST, CRKVENOST**

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*Razumjeti i interpretirati religioznost, crkvenost i duhovnost današnjih mladih nužno je želimo li na primjeren način odgovoriti na njihova religiozna i duhovna pitanja i potrebe. U prvom dijelu ovog rada razmatra se situacija mladih danas. Nastoji se dati odgovor na složeno pitanje kakvi su mladi danas i koje su temeljne karakteristike mladih u suvremenom svijetu. U drugom dijelu promišlja se o odnosu mladih i vjere. Budući da religioznost mladih doživljava duboke i trajne promjene, na temelju relevantnih radova i istraživanja daje se obris religioznosti mladih danas, s posebnim osvrtom na istraživanje o religioznosti zagrebačkih adolescenata. U trećem dijelu promišlja se o odnosu mladih i Crkve. Odnos mladih i Crkve uvijek je aktualna tema, a na osobit način je to danas kad istraživanja ukazuju na porast broja mladih ljudi koji se udaljavaju od Crkve. Crkva je u odnosu prema mladima uvijek na novom raskršću. Sa svakom novom generacijom potrebno je tražiti novi odnos, novi način sporazumijevanja. Danas je to potrebno činiti na osobito osjetljivo i složen način. Poticaji za promišljanje o odnosu Crkve i mladih dolaze nam i iz održane Sinode o mladima, koja se bavila problematikom mladih, njihovom religioznosti, njihovim odnosom prema Crkvi i slično. U četvrtom dijelu obrađuje se problematika duhovnosti mladih te se predstavljaju temeljne karakteristike tzv. tradicionalne duhovnosti te sojetovne duhovnosti.*

*Ključne riječi: Duhovnost, mladi i Crkva, Sinoda o mladima, crkvenost, religioznost*