

Ivan Platovnjak

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology, Poljanska cesta 4, SI-1000 Ljubljana
ivan.platovnjak@teof.uni-lj.si

**The Understanding of Spirituality
among Slovene Catholics on the Basis
of the Survey “Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality”**

Abstract

When we take into account the number of parishes, convents and monasteries, retreat houses, etc., that are part of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia, we see that there is considerable activity in the area of spirituality. We can ask ourselves the following question: how do Slovene Catholics understand spirituality? In this article, the author tries to answer these questions by first defining spirituality, after which he presents the analysis of questions answered by Slovene Catholics in the online survey “Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality”. Furthermore, he explains to what extent secular spirituality can be traced in the understanding of spirituality among Slovene Catholics, and in what ways Pope Francis’ teachings on Catholic spirituality can encourage them to truly understand and actualise it more deeply.

Keywords

spirituality, secular spirituality, catholic spirituality, Pope Francis, survey, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato si’*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Gaudete at Exsultate*

Introduction

People today are showing a great interest in spirituality in Slovenia and throughout the world. One can find different kinds of spirituality, as it has become a real market niche in Slovenia. When we take into account the number of parishes, convents and monasteries, retreat houses, etc.,¹ that are part of the Catholic Church, we see that a lot is going on in the area of spirituality. We can ask ourselves: how do Slovene Catholics understand spirituality? Does their understanding of Catholic spirituality differ from secular spirituality? If it does, what is the difference? How should we understand Catholic spirituality in terms of the teaching of Pope Francis? Does the understanding of the spirituality of Slovene Catholics conform with the Pope’s understanding? If not, how can the Pope’s understanding of Catholic spirituality encourage Slovene Catholics?

In this article, we will try to answer these questions by first defining spirituality, after which we will present the analysis of two questions answered by Slo-

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In 2016 there were 1.523.113 Catholics in Slovenia, which is 73.78% of the entire population. There were 785 parishes, 778 diocesan priests, 267 religious priests, 99 convents and monasteries, 784 friars, monks and nuns, 612 lay catechists, and 23 retreat houses with 1036 beds. In 2016, 14.910 people attended spiri-

tual retreats or spiritual exercises. Cf. Slovenska škofovska konferenca, *Letno poročilo Katoliške cerkve v Sloveniji 2017* [Annual Report of the Catholic Church in Slovenia 2017]. Available at: <https://katoliska-cerkve.si/letno-porocilo-katoliske-cerkve-v-sloveniji-2017> (accessed on 19 November 2018).

vene Catholics in the online survey “Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality”. These questions were: how important is spirituality for you and how do you personally understand spirituality.² Furthermore, we will explain to what extent secular spirituality can be traced in the understanding of spirituality among Slovene Catholics, and in what ways Pope Francis’ teachings on Catholic spirituality³ can encourage them to truly understand and actualise it more deeply.

1. A Short Definition of Spirituality

The word spirituality was formed in the context of Christian theology. It originates from the Latin noun *spiritualitas*, which derives from the Greek noun *pneuma* meaning spirit. It is interesting that *spirit* in the Bible was not the opposite of the physical or material (e.g., 1 Cor 2:14–15) but of the flesh or everything that opposes God. This is why a spiritual person was, in its original Christian sense, a simple person in whom the Holy Spirit, God’s and Christ’s spirit lived. Despite this, it is now (occasionally this was also the case in the history of Christianity) often understood as the opposite of the material or physical; as something important for our lives, but is impossible to sense or measure. In the light of such an understanding of spirit, spirituality means dealing with the immaterial (e.g. inner life, experience, immaterial values, transcendence, etc.).

Since the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, people gradually started searching for answers to fundamental life questions outside of Christianity. Many people started to distance themselves from Christianity as a religious institution and searched for spirituality without religion.⁴ They found religion old-fashioned or in opposition to the scientific understanding of the world. At the same time, they realised that even science could not give complete answers to fundamental questions of life, so they needed non-religious spirituality to get the answers. As a consequence, many people have recently started using the term secular spirituality religion.⁵ In secular spirituality, the word spirituality refers to the deeper values and views of life that people want to live. It means searching for something that can help a person achieve the fullness of their life, to find answers to fundamental questions and the meaning of life, and to realise it in the fullness of a person’s ability.⁶ Secular spirituality is not linked to any religious context; it can be expressed and realised within the context of philosophy, psychology, art, culture, science, etc.⁷ One might say that secular spirituality tries to elaborate a new universal humanism with a wider and more comprehensive view of human nature, in which the emotional and spiritual, as well as the intellectual and social sides of human experiences will come to light.⁸

There are some Christians, as well as some adherents of other religions, however, who believe that it is impossible to live a spirituality outside of an institution. Thus, they have begun to define spirituality as the heart of religion. For them, spirituality is the realisation of religion or religion that is lived on a personal and integral level.⁹ Therefore, some people started to use the expression religious spirituality, which clearly states that this is the spirituality that includes a system of convictions and beliefs about transcendence, that is based on sacred texts, that has a specific structure and is within a certain institution.¹⁰ In brief, we can define religious spirituality as a lived faith in all dimensions of a human person, as their personal and communal way of living and acting.

2. The Understanding of Spirituality among Slovene Catholics as Indicated in Survey Results

The survey, entitled “Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality”, was conducted among Slovene Catholics in 2016.¹¹ The understanding of sacrifice in Christian spirituality was analysed in two previously published articles.¹² Most of the survey’s questions have been analysed. However, two questions that deal with understanding spirituality directly have not been analysed until now. We used the quantitative method to analyse the first question as the respondents

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These two questions were a part of the survey “Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality” created and carried out by the author in 2016. The data is in his possession. It was active on the website <https://www.1ka.si/a/90949> from 10 April 2016 to 8 May 2016.

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Pope Francis usually uses the term *spirituality* and *Christian spirituality* in his documents. As the head of the Roman Catholic Church, he primarily addresses Catholics and speaks about their spirituality. However, we will use the term *Catholic spirituality* as there are different ways of understanding Christian spirituality with regard to other Christian Churches. The term *Catholic spirituality*, therefore, refers to the spirituality of all members of the Roman Catholic Church. All Christians live a Christian spirituality, but each Church has its unique way of understanding the sacraments, liturgical life, life of the Church, liturgical year, devotions, etc. When we use the term spirituality only, we have in mind Catholic spirituality. If we do not, we define it.

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Cf. Anne C. Jacobs, “Spirituality: History and contemporary developments – An evaluation”, *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 78 (2013) 1, pp. 1–12, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v78i1.445>.

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Cf. Claire Wolfteich, “Animating Questions: Spirituality and Practical Theology”, *International Journal of Practical Theology* 13 (2009) 1, pp. 122–133, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt.2009.7>; Peter H. Van Ness, *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 1996; William G. Huitt, Jennifer L. Robbins, “An Introduction to Spiritual Development”, paper presented at the 11th Annual Conference: Applied Psychology in Education, Mental Health, and Business, Valdosta, GA, October 3. Available at: <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/spirituality.pdf> (accessed on 30 November 2018); Marilyn Mason, “‘Spirituality’ – What on Earth is it?”, paper given at the International Conference of Children’s

Spirituality at Roehampton Institute, Summer 2000. Available at: <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SpiritualitywhatonEarthisit.pdf> (accessed on 9 November 2018).

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Cf. Erika Prijatelj, “Healthy Cultures: New Challenges for Interreligious Dialogue”, *Synthesis philosophica* 32 (2017) 1, pp. 110–112, doi: <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp32108>.

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Cf. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality. A Very Short Introduction*, University Press, Oxford 2012, pp. 4–8; Pieter Botha, “Secular spirituality as virtue ethics: Actualising the Judaeo-Christian tradition today”, in: Cornel W. Du Toit, Cedric P. Mayson (eds.), *Secular spirituality as a contextual critique of religion*, University of South Africa, Pretoria 2006, pp. 95–115; C. Wolfteich, “Animating Questions”, pp. 122–132.

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Cf. Tony Svetelj, “A Renaissance of Globalization: A Theory of Compassionate Humanity”, *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 23 (2015) 2, pp. 217–233, pp. 220–221, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1558/eph.v23i2.29099>.

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Cf. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: the Search for a Christian Spirituality*, Doubleday, New York – London – Toronto – Sydney 1999, pp. 3–70; M. Mason, “‘Spirituality’ – What on Earth is it?”; C. Wolfteich, “Animating Questions”, pp. 125–131; Carlos Miguel Gómez, “In the Beginning was the Deed? Discovering the Presence of the Spirit in Social Construction”, *Scientia et Fides* 6 (2018) 1, pp. 53–77, doi: <http://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2018.006>.

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Cf. P. Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, pp. 8–9.

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“Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality” survey.

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Cf. Ivan Platovnjak, “Žrtvovanje v krščanski duhovnosti” [“Sacrifice in Christian Spiritu-

could choose from different given answers. For the second question, which invited the respondents to write about what spirituality means to them personally, we used both the qualitative and the quantitative method. At first, we analysed the answers qualitatively, then we classified them into different categories of understanding spirituality, and counted them. In this way, we received the quantitative value of the responses. Unfortunately, as we did not have a comparison group, we were compelled to use the literature on the secular understanding of spirituality.¹³

2.1. Who Were the Survey respondents?¹⁴

The request to complete this online survey was sent to the mailing list of adult Catholics who participated in spiritual exercises conducted at various spiritual retreat houses across Slovenia;¹⁵ the mailing list of Catholics that in various ways participate in the pastoral care at Slovenian parishes; and the mailing list including most Slovenian priests, seminarians, religious order members, as well as religious education teachers. As a result, the sample mostly consisted of Catholics that, to a greater or a lesser extent, strive to live their faith and thus exhibit the typical characteristics of Catholics spirituality in Slovenia, but not all of them.

A total of 1298 respondents answered the questions in part, while 1093 respondents reached the end of the survey of 28 questions.¹⁶ Concerning gender, 30% of respondents were males, and 70% were females. Every age group – 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, and above 56 – corresponds to about 20% of the entire survey sample. The lowest number of respondents were aged 25 and under (9%). About half (52%) of the respondents were married, 22% were single, 10% were seminarians, consecrated people and priests, 5% were divorced, and 4% were widowed. Seven percent of all respondents provided various answers by selecting the text field “Other” (e.g. cohabitation, remarried, engaged, I have a boyfriend/girlfriend, single mother, etc.).

In response to the question asking if they describe themselves religious – regardless of whether or not they attend church – most of them answered that they were religious (60%), 30% found themselves deeply religious. Only 2% labelled themselves non-religious. Most of the respondents (85%) feel they are “spiritual” within a religion. Only 1% are neither religious nor related to any religious tradition.

Most of the respondents go to church once a week or more (75%). Only 4% never or seldom go to church. The majority of them find the following very important: personal prayer (74%), mass (63%), confession (53%), God’s Word (47%) and other religious practices. Most of the respondents believe in God (89%) and 81% believe in the Holy Trinity. Only 8% believe in reincarnation and 12% in fortune-telling. Many of them strongly believe in the soul (83%), heaven (80%) and resurrection (78%). Mary is also very important to 83%. However, only half of all respondents believe in the Church (53%).

Many of the respondents are Catholics who are active in their faith, pursuing their personal and spiritual growth as well as a life of faith. More than half of them actively participate in pastoral activities of the Catholic Church in their parishes (54%) and are members of various groups, including prayer, biblical and couples’ groups (53%). Many respondents regularly read spiritual literature (66%), and 47% have studied either religion, theology or spirituality. About one-third (34%) of the respondents are members of one of the spiritual movements in the Catholic Church, 30% often attend spiritual exercises.

The majority of Catholics who took part in the survey not only believe in the basic truths of the Catholic faith but also practise their faith regularly. They are very religious Slovene Catholics who are also quite active in the Catholic Church in Slovenia. This is not a typical sample of all Slovene Catholics. It does not show the faith and understanding of faith and spirituality of those who are more distant from the Church. We can say that the survey comprises the core of Catholics in Slovenia.

2.2. How Important Is Spirituality for the Respondents?¹⁷

In answering the question on the importance of spirituality for the respondents, they defined its importance in four areas: 1. for them personally, 2. for their living with others, 3. for the life of the Church and 4. for life in society. They could choose one of five degrees of importance: very important, important, average, not so important, not at all important. A total of 1088 of the respondents answered this question. As seen in Chart 1, spirituality is very important to the great majority of the respondents in all areas of their lives, particularly in their personal lives (79% of respondents). Spirituality is a bit less important for their interpersonal relations and for the life of Church. It is even less important for their life in society.

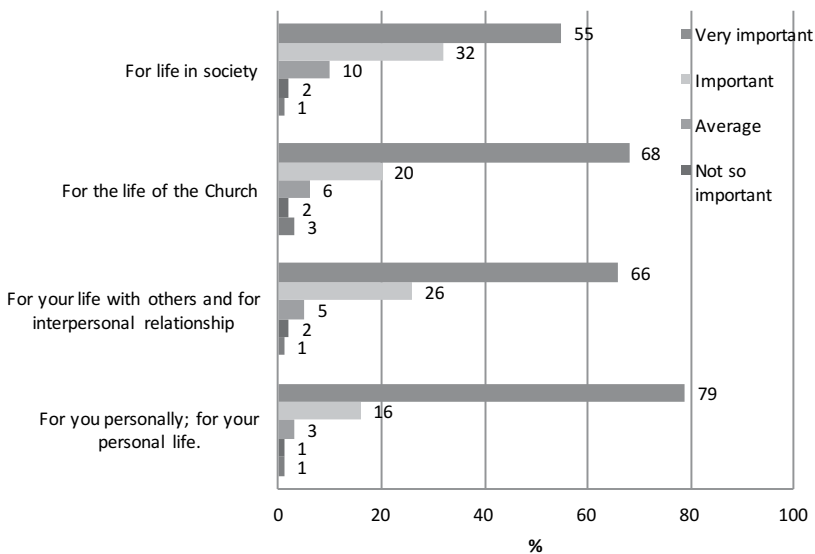


Chart 1: How important is spirituality to you?¹⁸

A more thorough analysis reveals that spirituality is only slightly more important to women than it is to men. Seminarians, persons in consecrated life

ality”], *Bogoslovni vestnik* 76 (2016) 2, pp. 245–264; Ivan Platovnjak, “Christian Spirituality as Sacrifice?”, *Nova prisutnost* 16 (2018) 1, pp. 21–38, doi: <https://doi.org/10.31192/np.16.1.2>.

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Cf. P. H. Van Ness, *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*; Jane Dyson, Mark Cobb, Dawn

Forman, “The meaning of spirituality: a literature review”, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 26 (1997) 6, pp. 1183–1188, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1997.tb00811.x>; M. Mason, “‘Spirituality’ – What on Earth is it?”; W. G. Huitt, J. L. Robbins, “An Introduction to Spiritual Development”; P. Botha, “Secular spirituality as virtue ethics”.

and priests, the widowed and the divorced find it more important than those who are married or single; and those who are over 46 years of age believe it is more important than those who are younger.

2.3. How Do the Respondents Understand Spirituality?¹⁹

To allow ourselves to grasp how they understand spirituality, the respondents were invited to briefly describe what spirituality means to them. There were 980 respondents (294 men and 686 women) to this question (Chart 2). We analysed the responses and divided them into thirteen groups according to their understanding of the topic. The largest group (42.3% – the total of the last five groups in Chart 2) relates their spirituality directly to their relationship with God. A small number of them (4.8%) described it briefly as a “relationship with God”. This can be understood in different ways. They wrote:

- “A relationship with God.”
- “A connection with God.”
- “A personal contact with God.”

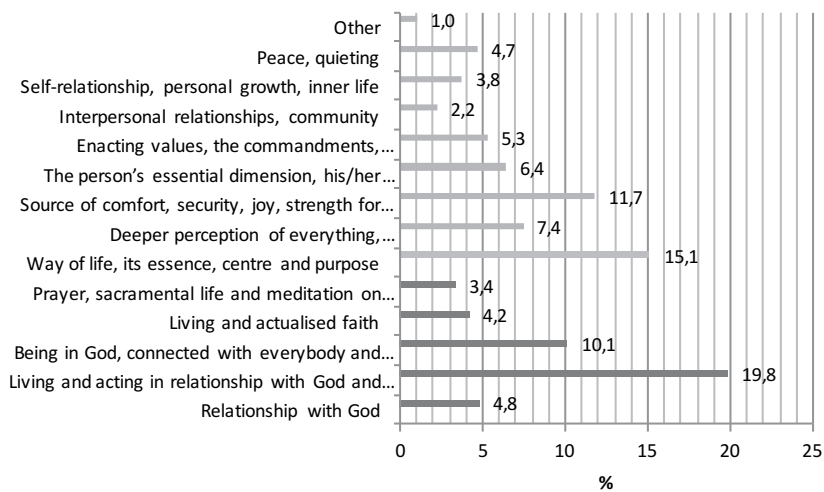


Chart 2: What does spirituality mean to you personally?
(all – 980 respondents)²⁰

A similar percentage (4.2%) of the respondents described their spirituality as a “living and actualised faith”:

- “Spirituality is a dialogue with God; it is a way of life because I am religious.”
- “It means that I live my faith every day.”
- “That you have a relationship with God; soul food is God’s Word and the Eucharist.”
- “To live according to the Gospel.”

This understanding means that spirituality does not mean only to believe, but to live faith in all its dimensions. Most respondents understand spirituality as “living and acting in relationship with God and being aware of his love and grace” (19.8%). These people responded:

- “To listen to and realise inner motives in a person’s heart, as they are the voice of the Spirit.”
- “Spirituality means to actively search for and keep the relation with God and his love every day.”
- “Acceptance of God’s presence, searching for God’s will, life which is socially committed.”
- “To show God’s presence with your life in your daily routine.”
- “A deep experience of God, living in His sanctifying grace, an everyday relationship with Him, which is also seen in accepting other people.”

The experience of God in everyday life is emphasised in these comments. This experience cannot be gained only through prayer, sacramental life and meditation on the Word of God, but also in the actual awareness of God, His love and His active presence in His grace. The grace is manifested by peace and strength to live and act in the way Jesus Christ teaches us.

One-tenth (10.1%) of the respondents see spirituality as “being in God, connected with everybody and everything”. These people described it in the following way:

- “Life in Christ, through Christ and with Christ; with love, through love and in love.”
- “To see God in everybody.”
- “For me, it means that I live and move in God and with God. Practically, it means that I see, hear and feel the people around myself, that I show them they are important to me.”
- “To be with the Lord in everything.”
- “An effort to fulfil the longing for transcendence; everlasting loving coexistence with love and the loved ones.”
- “Spirituality is the actual living of all relationships: with God, my neighbour, myself, work ...”
- “Searching for the Spirit and opening up to the Spirit at all times, in every possible way, everywhere and in all things.”
- “The life here and now, with my brothers and sisters, with the creation and with God.”
- “A place in my soul where I meet God in different ways; life with other people and nature.”

These respondents see their spirituality as life and activity in God himself. It connects them with all people, making them brothers and sisters with every-

14	“Sacrifice in Christian Spirituality” survey.	analysis includes the number of respondents for every single question.
15	Various people with very different needs attend spiritual exercises provided by retreat houses. As might be expected, there are more female than male participants with women constituting almost two thirds of all participants.	17 Ibid.
16	Different questions were answered by varying numbers of participants, which is why the	18 Ibid.
		19 Ibid.
		20 Ibid.

body and with all creation. The apostle Paul explains that we live, move and have our being in God (Acts 17,28). They are well aware that they cannot live their spirituality unless they are deeply connected with all the people. They are trying to build a community of brothers and sisters with every human being and with creation. The main fruit of this spirituality is exactly what Jesus desires when He invites people to be one as He is one with the Father in the Holy Spirit.

It is also important to note that only 3.4% of the respondents understand spirituality as limited to “prayer, sacramental life and meditation on the Word of God”. They wrote:

- “Prayer.”
- “Searching for God through conversation, prayer and contemplation.”
- “Sacraments, the rosary, pilgrimages, reading and meditating on the Word of God.”
- “To deepen my faith through God’s Word.”

This does not mean that only 3.4% of the respondents find prayer related to spirituality or as its primary dimension. Many more think so, but not exclusively. This could indicate a very narrow view of spirituality, which is not in the spirit of Christian spirituality.

If we analyse the understanding of spirituality in relation to God – religious spirituality, how people perceive God and address Him – in more detail, we see that the respondents used the word God most frequently. Even though in the heart of Christian faith is the faith in God in three persons, only six people used this name for God. Of the three persons of God, Jesus Christ is closest to thirty-five people. The Holy Spirit was mentioned by twenty-five people, while God was mentioned by only six. Only one person mentioned God as the Creator, and seventeen people mentioned creation. It is also interesting to see that only four people mentioned Mary in connection with understanding spirituality.

Eight other groups of understanding spirituality can be indirectly connected to God; therefore they are a part of religious spirituality. However, this understanding of spirituality could also be seen as secular. In most of these cases, spirituality is “a way of life, its essence, centre and purpose” (15.1%). These people wrote:

- “Spirituality determines and guides my actions, thoughts, relationships; it gives a meaning to my life.”
- “Spirituality is the way I live; it means everything to me.”
- “The heart of my life.”
- “Every breath that I take, every beat of my heart, all of my thoughts, words and actions.”
- “It is like salt – without it, food is tasteless; and it is like light, which shines in the dark.”

A smaller number of these respondents see spirituality as “a source of comfort, security, joy, strength for their living and activity” (11.7%). These people wrote:

- “I could not live without spirituality; it has rescued me.”
- “It is as important as water is for life; without it, everything goes dry.”

- “It is the source of my existence.”
- “It strengthens me in my life and eases my life when I need to make decisions.”
- “It is the source and refuge (not flight!) – from here, its fruit goes into the world and the place where I live.”
- “For me, spirituality is my inner satisfaction.”

For other people, spirituality is “a deeper perception of everything, transcending the material” (7.4%). These people wrote:

- “Spirituality makes me see the world and relationships in a broader perspective.”
- “It is a possibility to discover something more.”
- “It is a contact with reality.”
- “To feel and understand different things on a spiritual level – it is beyond our mind.”
- “Spirituality is a view from the mountain – from a distance.”
- “It means overcoming my attachments to this world.”
- “It means that our life is more than just the material world.”
- “All that is immaterial: thoughts, emotions, relationships ...”
- “Searching for the truth.”
- “Understanding the fact that a person does not live by bread alone.”

Six point four percent of the respondents believe spirituality is “a person’s essential dimension, his or her fulfilment and integrity”. These people verbalised this as follows:

- “It is an essential element of my personal identity.”
- “Personal fulfilment.”
- “I would not be fulfilled without it.”
- “It is contact with my essence.”
- “It is what makes me human.”

Other meanings of spirituality follow, such as “enacting values, the commandments, especially those of love” (5.3%).

- “To try to live by God’s commandments.”
- “It means that you know how to forgive, that you are compassionate, full of mercy, honest.”
- “It means that you are peaceful, tolerant, that you live by biblical principles.”
- “Love.”
- “Moral values.”
- “To live according to core values; kindness.”

Other people understand spirituality as “peace, quieting” (4.7%). They wrote:

- “Peace.”
- “Calmness.”
- “Inner peace.”
- “To find balance in this material world.”

- “Calmness in the midst of unrest.”

Three point eight percent of the respondents understand spirituality as “self-relationship, personal growth, inner life”. They indicated:

- “Spirituality means accepting yourself, self-reflection of your own thoughts.”
- “Self-awareness.”
- “Working on yourself.”
- “To encounter your essence on a daily basis.”
- “It means inner life.”
- “Spirituality means personal growth and improving yourself.”

The fewest of all respondents find spirituality only as “interpersonal relationships, community” (2.2%). They defined it like the following:

- “The essence of living and co-living in this world.”
- “Spirituality means to live in peace with my relatives.”
- “The ability to understand others and the ability to empathise with their situation.”
- “Above all, interpersonal relationship and values in general.”
- “The fullness of life and closeness with myself and my neighbour.”
- “Relationship.”
- “To grow in my relationships (at home, towards strangers and the different).”
- “To empathise with my neighbour.”
- “Honest life and good interpersonal relationships.”
- “Deeper life in a family and the society.”

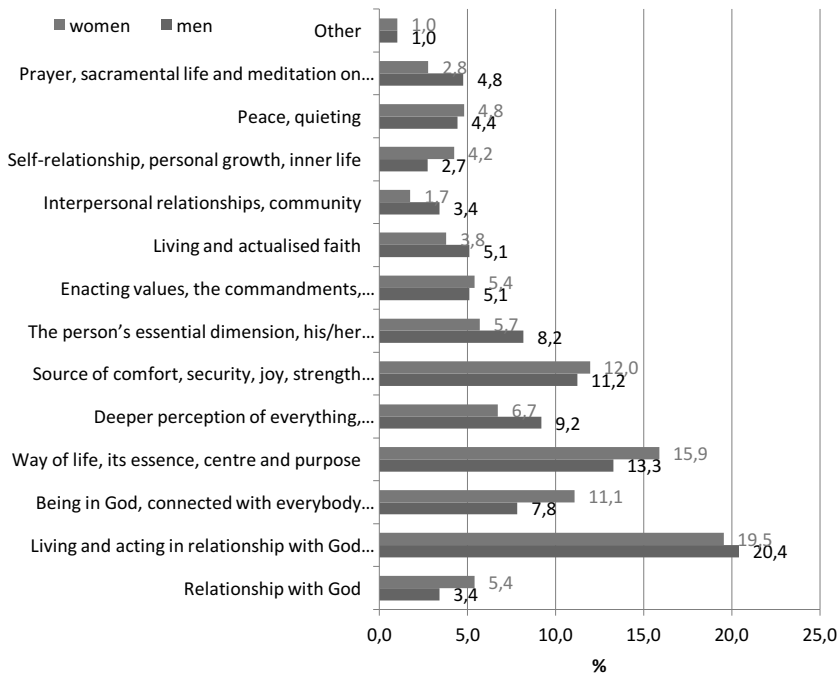


Chart 3: What does spirituality mean to you personally? (women and men)²¹

When we compare the understanding of the spirituality of men and women, as seen in Chart 3, we see that there is no essential difference, as they differ only by about 2%. Slightly larger differences occur with comparisons concerning the status of different groups of people (Chart 4).

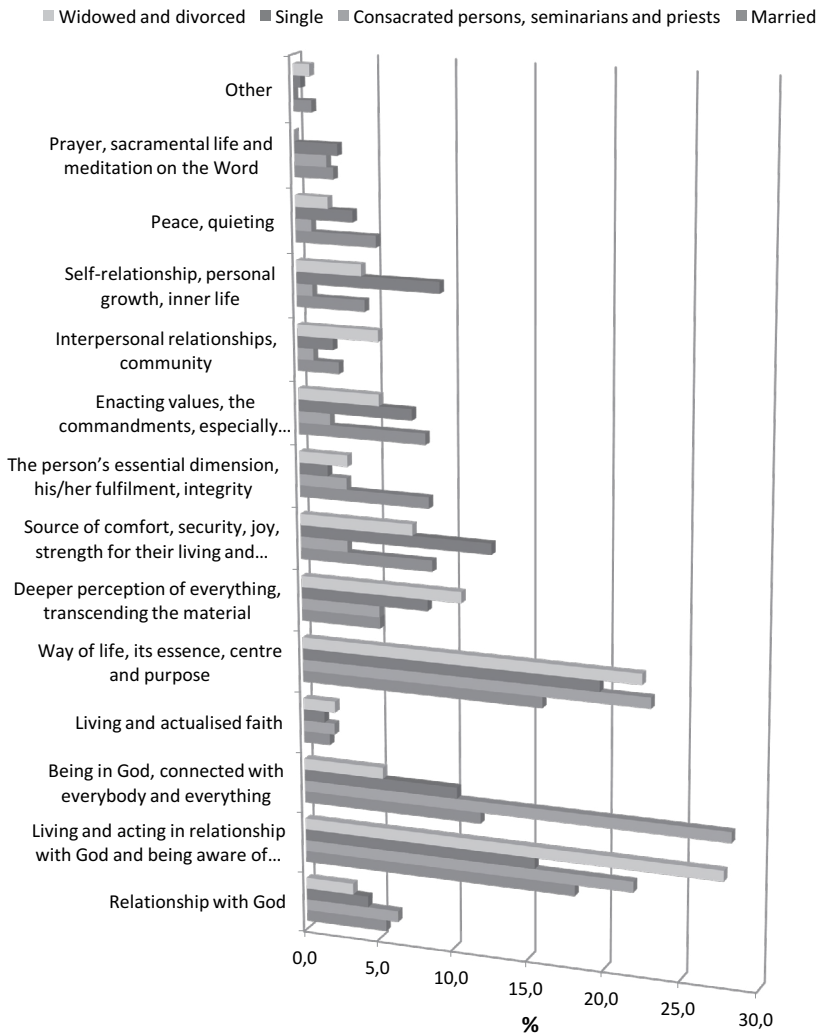


Chart 4: What does spirituality mean to you personally? (married, consecrated persons, single, widowed and divorced)²²

We see more differences in these responses. They also inform us to some degree about the life of the respondents. Spirituality more of a living relationship with God and in Him with everybody and everything is defined as such by seminarians, religious priests, diocesan priests, the widowed and the divorced alike. Singles see spirituality as a self-relationship and a source of comfort, security, etc. Married couples are more prone to seeing spirituality as peace, quiet, a human's essential dimension, fulfilment and integrity.

3. The Pope's Understanding of Catholic Spirituality as an Exhortation for Slovene Catholics

Considering the survey analysis of how Slovene Catholics understand spirituality through understanding it within secular spirituality and the teachings of Pope Francis in his documents²³ about Catholic spirituality, we can discover that the analysis shows that almost one-half of the respondents feel spirituality is directly linked to their relationship with God, i.e., in the context of their Catholic faith. Most of them understand spirituality as “living and acting in relationship with God and being aware of his love and grace”, while fewer of them think spirituality is “being in God connected with everybody and with all”. We can conclude that about 30% of the Catholics who took part in the survey feel their spirituality is alive; and it comprises different dimensions of their lives and actions, not only their inner lives and administration of the sacraments. It would be worrisome if most of them described spirituality only as a relationship with God. If we say that spirituality is only a relationship with God, this can be understood in various ways, as it depends on our image of God and what that relationship means to us. It can be abstract and narrow – and Pope Francis warns us against this²⁴ –, or it can be deep with an impact on our feelings, thinking, decision-making and speaking.

The fact that very few – only 3.4% – regard spirituality only as prayer, sacramental life, meditation and so on is also important.²⁵ It shows that there are not many Slovene Catholics who find spirituality only in the above, and are satisfied with it. This is in accordance with the teaching of Pope Francis, who emphasises that prayer has an irreplaceable position in our lives, but it should also not mean withdrawal from actual relationships and mission.²⁶

Very few of the respondents express their spirituality as a relationship with the Triune God. Pope Francis emphasises that Catholic spirituality is based on the revelation of the Trinity and our belief in it; therefore it is a trinitarian spirituality.²⁷ We should, of course, take into account that Catholics often use only the word *God* while they think of the Trinity. However, more respondents believe in God than in the Holy Trinity, which shows that it is difficult to understand and live a conscious relationship with God, who exists in Three Persons, in the actual spiritual life.

In addition, God's creation and our relationship to it is very rarely mentioned in connection with spirituality. This shows that the Slovene Catholics who took part in the survey are not sufficiently aware that they cannot live their spirituality to the fullest unless they are responsible for the creation and take care of it. From the Christian point of view, it is unacceptable to separate the relationship to God from the relationship to creation and vice versa, something Pope Francis states very clearly.²⁸ Similarly, this is true of the relationship to society, politics, economy, etc.²⁹ It was evident from the answers that a large majority do not see these as closely bonded with spirituality. As if spirituality was not that which enables and inspires a Catholic to live and act in these areas in the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the Father so that it becomes a place of more in-depth cooperation with the Trinity and a real sign that a person's spirituality is not somewhere in the clouds but incarnated and actualised.

These responses did not fully reflect the answers from the previous survey questions on the understanding of sacrifice in Christian spirituality. The analysis of these questions clearly showed that, despite different conceptions

related to sacrifice, most respondents believed that sacrifice in the sense of giving up and self-giving love plays a significant role in their spirituality.³⁰

It is also important to note that more than half of very religious Slovene Catholics do not understand spirituality as directly connected to their relationship with God. Of course, we should take into account that most of these respondents regularly attend Sunday mass, some of them on weekdays as well, and that they pray regularly. This may be the reason why they did not write that spirituality is, in fact, a personal relationship with the Trinity, and life and action with God and by God in all areas of life. Alternatively, it could also be a sign that they proclaim the faith in the Trinity and live a classical Christian life, which consists of personal and communal prayer, mass, confession, the sacraments, an aspiration for life according to the Commandments, but not more. In this way, most of the spiritual remains on the outside. On the inside, however, they subconsciously understand their spirituality in a rather secular way. When a person is asked to briefly say something on a topic that they do not think of or speak about often, one usually tells what is on their mind. Finally, we should be aware that spirituality is a taboo among Catholics as well. Very few discuss it and share their experiences of spirituality. The analysis of the answers has shown this as very few of them directly mentioned that spirituality and their spiritual life is a topic of their conversations.

We can definitely interpret the statements about understanding spirituality, where no direct relationship with God is mentioned, in the context of either a personal Catholic faith or in the context of secular spirituality. We could get similar answers to these given by a great number of Catholics from people who do not belong to the Catholic or any other religion. We can see that by reading different online interviews, or articles in magazines that discuss

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Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013). Available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed on 15 November 2018); Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'* (24 May 2015). Available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (accessed on 18 November 2018); Pope Francis, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016). Available at: https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf (accessed on 18 November 2018); Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018). Available at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html (accessed on 19 November 2018).

24

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 262.

25

See Chart 2.

26

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, nn. 156–162.

27

Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, nn. 237–240.

28

Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, nn. 202–240; Roman Globokar, “Krščanski antropocentrizem in izkoriščevalska drža človeka do naravnega okolja” [“Christian Anthropocentrism and Man’s Exploitative Stance toward the Natural Environment”], *Bogoslovni vestnik* 78 (2018) 2, pp. 361–364.

29

Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, nn. 189–232.

30

Cf. I. Platovnjak, “Žrtvovanje v krščanski duhovnosti”, pp. 256–262; I. Platovnjak, “Christian Spirituality as Sacrifice?”, pp. 28–38.

secular spirituality. The same is true of books written in the spirit of secular spirituality.

The fact that understanding spirituality as “a way of life, its essence, centre and purpose” takes first place is quite significant. This answer often takes first place in secular spirituality as well. Every human primarily searches for a meaningful life, a life that would help them to be aware always of what is essential, so they do not live a dispersed life.³¹

Spirituality as “a source of comfort, security, joy, strength for living and activity” comes in second. This answer shows that every person needs to find a source of comfort, security, joy and strength for living and acting.³² This is also very often the reason why non-religious people search for spirituality.³³ Each person needs this, especially in a time of trouble and distress.³⁴ It is, of course, dangerous if spirituality is reduced to this exclusively, as it can lead to the spirituality of materialism, searching for comfort and security, against which the Pope warns us.³⁵

The third place understands spirituality as “a deeper perception of everything, transcending the material”. It is very important and valuable to everyone, including the non-religious, as it helps them see and understand themselves, others and all things and situations in their lives more deeply. However, for Catholic spirituality, it can show us the danger of Gnosticism, against which the Pope also warns.³⁶ This kind of spirituality can remain on a level of mind, thinking, valuable enlightenment and ideas; and it does not become actualised in everyday life.³⁷ This kind of spirituality is not incarnated, it does not humanise a person, and it does not enable one to enter a specific relationship, especially with their fellow men, the poor, and creation. Pope Francis stresses that those who adhere to such spirituality are not aware that they cannot establish a genuine relationship with God unless they have real relationships with other people and creation.³⁸

This understanding of spirituality is followed by “man’s essential dimension, his fulfilment, and integrity”. Similar perceptions of spirituality – more self-centred – are “peace and quiet”, “self-relationship, personal growth, and inner life”. These perceptions are very often a valuable part of secular spirituality.³⁹ Every person is in search of this; it is essential for them. However, in the context of the Catholic faith, this understanding is imperfect as it can convey a spirituality of individualism. The Pope, again, is critical of this view.⁴⁰

Further, “enacting the values, the commandments, especially those of love” seems to be very valuable at first glance, as it shows that quite a few people find spirituality as something concrete – they try to live by their values, the commandments and love. However, in the context of the Catholic faith, it means that for these Catholics, faith and spirituality are pelegianistic; that is, everything depends on the person, their will and actions. They are not aware of the fact that everything is a gift and grace; and that they can live out their values and love because of God and His grace. They are like branches on the vine that bear a fruit because of their firm connections with the vine. Pope Francis explicitly warns us against pelegianism.⁴¹

While spirituality among Slovene Catholics could also be understood as described above, the advice of Pope Francis is helpful. He encourages us to focus on the following in Catholic spirituality:

- 1) Enhancing the awareness that Catholic spirituality actually denotes an integrally lived Catholic faith in the spirit of the good news in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴²

2) Striving for a deeper personal relationship with the Trinity on a personal and communal level within the Catholic Church, but also being open to all other Churches and religions, to the religious and non-religious, to the whole of creation. Catholics are called to live their relationship with the Triune God by giving love in all dimensions of life and work within the actual world and time; they can build a supportive communion with everybody and everything.⁴³

31

Cf. J. Dyson, M. Cobb, D. Forman, “The meaning of spirituality”, pp. 1185–1186; M. Mason, “‘Spirituality’ – What on Earth is it?”, pp. 1–3; W. G. Huitt, J. L. Robbins, “An Introduction to Spiritual Development”, pp. 1–9.

32

Cf. Tomasz Huzarek, “Knowledge Argument versus Bundle Theory according to Derek Parfit”, *Scientia et Fides* 5 (2017) 2, pp. 237–250, doi: <http://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2017.027>.

33

Cf. M. Mason, “‘Spirituality’ – What on Earth is it?”, pp. 3–6; W. G. Huitt, J. L. Robbins, “An Introduction to Spiritual Development”, pp. 8–12.

34

Cf. Barbara Simonič *et al.*, “Čustvena avtonomija in spoprijemanje s stresom v povezavi z religioznim soočanjem ob ločitvi” [“Emotional Autonomy and Coping with Stress in Correlation with Religious Coping in the Face of Divorce”], *Bogoslovni vestnik* 78 (2018) 1, pp. 225–226.

35

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 89–90.

36

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 40.

37

Cf. Piotr Roszak, “Revelation and Scripture: Exploring the Scriptural Foundations of sacra doctrina in Aquinas”, *Angelicum* 93 (2016) 1, pp. 191–218.

38

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 176–237; Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si’*, nn. 101–136.

39

Cf. W. G. Huitt, J. L. Robbins, “An Introduction to Spiritual Development”, pp. 12–19.

40

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 262.

41

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 53.

42

Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 2, 7–8, 89, 124; Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si’*, n. 216.

43

Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si’*, nn. 238–240; Pope Francis, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia*, nn. 214–215; Marko Ivan Rupnik, *Po Duhu. Duhovna teologija, pot Cerkve papeža Frančiška [Secondo lo Spirito. Teologia spirituale di Papa Francesco]*, Translation Center Aletti, Družina, Založba Dravljje, Ljubljana 2018, pp. 25–33, 57–82, 115–133; Ivan Platovnjak, “Občestvena duhovnost svetih bratov Cirila in Metoda” [“The Communal Spirituality of Saints Brothers Cyril and Methodius”], *Edinost in dialog* 68 (2013) 1–2, pp. 121–130. At the beginning of the third millennium, John Paul II encouraged the entire Catholic Church to make communal spirituality one of its main tasks. He considered this the only way the Catholic Church could become a home and school of a community and thus fulfil its fundamental mission in the given time and space. In his discussion, the author argues that the core elements of this spirituality may be seen in the lives, teachings, and work of the saintly brothers Cyril and Methodius. It was the choice of this spiritual journey that enabled them to perform their mission among the Slavs successfully. The author briefly discusses the core elements of their spiritual journey, which confirm the hypothesis suggested. These elements are the following: love to the Holy Trinity and the preference for a communal following of Christ rather than a solitary one; the awareness of a fundamental equality and brotherhood of all in Christ; the conviction about the need for sharing goods; respectful dialog with every person, even with an opponent; the conviction that we can only grow on the journey to sanctity with our brothers and sisters. Therefore, the saintly brothers may be considered a role model for the entire Church and provide it with spiritual support in fulfilling its mission (cf. *ibid.*).

- 3) Deepening the awareness of the irreplaceable role of the Holy Spirit in Catholic spirituality. Catholics can live their spirituality in all of their relationships and dimensions (physical, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, etc.) only in power and under the guidance of the Father's and Christ's Spirit. Only from their hearts, their spiritual cores, which are full of the Holy Spirit, can Catholics fully live their mental and physical dimensions. They can live the Crucified and Risen Christ within the Church and the world.⁴⁴
- 4) Deepening the awareness that Catholic spirituality is balanced. It includes everything that belongs in the spiritual life which bears an incarnational dimension of Jesus Christ – or it is not Catholic. Administration of the sacraments, biblical meditation, the times of quiet and silence, personal and communal prayer, active participation in a certain community within the Church and in everyday life, keen and responsible ministry to other people, especially to the poor, care for creation, common home and common good on all levels of society in the spirit of the Gospel – they are all equally important.⁴⁵ Catholic spirituality does not exclude anything and does not glorify anything as more valuable than anything else.
- 5) Developing spirituality of discipleship in the spirit of Jesus Christ – only by doing so will Catholics be able to discover the real image of God Jesus Christ. He cannot reveal Himself fully if people turn their backs on those who are different or belong to other religions, who are atheists or even assault the Church. Only those who are as a disciple “always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp”⁴⁶ can live Catholic spirituality. Only through a sincere and respectful attitude to every person, without exception, with a constant process of conversion on all levels, will Catholics be able to discover that the Trinity is present in this world. They will be able to dispel various prejudices and resentments, injustices and hatred, and will become brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, sons and daughters of the same Father in Jesus Christ, God's companions in building a new humankind and a common home.

Conclusion

Very religious Slovene Catholics who took part in the survey find spirituality very important, especially on a personal level and a bit less important on the level of relationships, society and the Church. The comparison of their perception of spirituality with the perception of spirituality within secular spirituality and the teaching of Pope Francis about Catholic spirituality shows the following:

- 1) Less than one half of very religious Slovene Catholics understand their spirituality explicitly within their relationship with God in the Catholic faith and the Roman Catholic Church, which coincides with the teachings of Pope Francis.
- 2) More than one half of very religious Slovene Catholics understand spirituality similarly to those who understand their spirituality in a secular sense of the word, i.e., the meaning of life, strength for life, actualising values, love, peace, the wholeness of life, relationships, etc. Pope Francis points out that Catholic spirituality has to find answers to the basic needs of people

- today. However, it should not limit itself to this problem only, so as not to be tempted by individualism, Gnosticism, pelegianism, consumerism, etc.
- 3) Slovene Catholics should become more aware that the Catholic faith is grounded in a deep relationship with the Trinity on a personal and communal level within the Catholic Church; openness in the spirit of discipleship to all other Churches and religions, the religious and non-religious. The spirit of the Father and the Son has an irreplaceable role in it. It enables them to use the means for spiritual life evenly as well as to actualise spirituality in all dimensions of a person's personal and communal life and work.
 - 4) A great majority of very religious Slovene Catholics did not find any correlation between spirituality and care for the poor and creation. Pope Francis stresses that we cannot understand and live Catholic spirituality fully unless we foster the importance of genuine relationship towards the poorest and the whole creation, that is the care for our common home and the common good. Therefore, his teaching encourages us to strive for social, political, economic and ecological conversion. We are called to discover the joy of love and life in communion with the Holy Trinity and the whole humankind and creation in it, to become a gift for others and take part in spreading the good news of the Gospel.

Ivan Platovnjak

**Razumijevanje duhovnosti među slovenskim katolicima
na temelju ankete »Žrtva u kršćanskoj duhovnosti«**

Sažetak

Uzmemo li u obzir broj župa, ženskih i muških samostana, utočišta itd., koje pripadaju Rimokatoličkoj crkvi u Sloveniji, uočljiv je visok stupanj duhovne aktivnosti. Postavljamo sljedeće pitanje: kako slovenski katolici razumiju duhovnost? U ovom radu, autor pokušava odgovoriti na pitanje najprije određujući što je duhovnost, nakon čega predstavlja analizu pitanja na koje su odgovorili slovenski katolici u mrežnoj anketi »Žrtva u kršćanskoj duhovnosti«. Nadalje, autor objašnjava do koje mjere sekularna duhovnost može biti praćena u razumijevanju duhovnosti među slovenskim katolicima te na koji način učenja Pape Franje o duhovnosti mogu vjernike potaknuti da doista razumiju duhovnosti i dublje je aktualiziraju.

Ključne riječi

duhovnost, sekularna duhovnost, katolička duhovnost, Papa Franjo, anketa, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Gaudete at Exsultate*

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Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 105, 130, 261; Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, nn. 164, 280.

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Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 259–283; Pope Francis, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation*

Amoris Laetitia, nn. 314–325; Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, nn. 202–240; Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, nn. 28–31.

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Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 128.

Ivan Platovnjak

Die Auffassung der Spiritualität unter slowenischen Katholiken basierend auf der Umfrage „Opfer in der christlichen Spiritualität“

Zusammenfassung

Berücksichtigt man die Anzahl der Pfarreien, Frauen und Männerklöster, Zufluchtsstätten usw., die der Römisch-katholischen Kirche in Slowenien angehören, ist ein hohes Maß an geistlicher Aktivität bemerkbar. Wir stellen die folgende Frage: Wie verstehen slowenische Katholiken die Spiritualität? In diesem Artikel versucht der Autor, diese Frage zu beantworten, indem er eingangs festsetzt, was Spiritualität ist, wonach er eine Analyse der Fragen präsentiert, die von slowenischen Katholiken in der Onlineumfrage „Opfer in der christlichen Spiritualität“ beantwortet wurden. Fernerhin erläutert der Autor, inwieweit die säkulare Spiritualität beim Verständnis der Spiritualität unter den slowenischen Katholiken nachgewiesen werden kann und in welcher Art die Lehren von Papst Franziskus über Spiritualität die Gläubigen beflügeln können, die Spiritualität wahrlich zu verstehen und sie tiefer zu aktualisieren.

Schlüsselwörter

Spiritualität, säkulare Spiritualität, katholische Spiritualität, Papst Franziskus, Umfrage, *Evangelii gaudium*, *Laudato si'*, *Amoris laetitia*, *Gaudete et exsultate*

Ivan Platovnjak

La compréhension de la spiritualité parmi les catholiques slovènes sur la base du sondage « Victime au sein de la spiritualité catholique »

Résumé

Si nous prenons en compte le nombre de paroisses, couvents, monastères, abbayes, etc., qui appartiennent à l'Église catholique romaine en Slovénie, le niveau élevé d'activité spirituelle est clairement visible. Nous posons la question suivante : comment les catholiques slovènes comprennent la spiritualité ? Dans ce travail, l'auteur tente de répondre à cette question, d'abord en déterminant ce qu'est la spiritualité, pour ensuite présenter l'analyse de la question à laquelle ont répondu les catholiques slovènes dans le sondage en ligne « Victime au sein de la spiritualité catholique ». Par la suite, l'auteur explique dans quelles mesures la spiritualité séculaire peut être utilisée pour comprendre la spiritualité chez les catholiques slovènes et de quelle manière les enseignements de Pape François sur la spiritualité peuvent encourager les croyants à réellement comprendre la spiritualité et à l'actualiser de manière plus profonde.

Mots-clés

spiritualité, spiritualité séculaire, spiritualité catholique, Pape François, sondage, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Gaudete at Exsultate*