

RELIGIOUS FORMATION IN THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH MOVEMENT IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

Throughout history, the Franciscan Order has played a significant role in preserving the national and religious identity of Croats in BiH. In this research, we tried to assess to what extent one part of it, i.e. the Franciscan youth of BiH, contributes to the religious formation of young people in the context of the current social situation. The work is based on research conducted among nearly three thousand members of the Franciscan youth of BiH. The aim of the research was to analyze the sociodemographic structure of the members, to examine their motivation for joining the Franciscan youth, to evaluate the formation and religious practice, to investigate the previous experience and to recognize potential fruits in personal religious life. Members of the Franciscan youth could freely and anonymously access the digital survey through April 2024. Out of three thousand of members of the Franciscan youth of BiH, 820 respondents filled out the survey, which makes up a sample of 27.3%. The results of the research showed that the family, although the leading factor, does not occupy the dominant place in the acquisition of religious formation among the respondents. Furthermore, although the majority of respondents comes from a rural environment, their parents do not usually have a lower level of education. Respondents in this research are somewhat more traditional in their understanding and acceptance of religion and more closed to public testimony compared to respondents from other research.

Keywords: *Franciscan youth, Bosnia and Herzegovina, religious formation, youth*

1. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - A MULTI-ETHNIC MOSAIC ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION?

Throughout history, the area of BIH has often been exposed to continuous military conquests, significant religious conflicts, persecutions of different ethnic groups and recently processes of emigration and significant demographic collapse. The specificity and variety of this small area in the center of Europe is best outlined through its three constituent nations which, each in its way, preserves a deep and rich cultural and religious tradition. According to the last 2013 population census, BIH has 3 531 159 inhabitants which are ethnically divided into: Bosniaks (50.1%), Serbs (30.8%), Croats (15.4%) and others (3.7%).¹ Turbulent past and ethnic division among the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina is best witnessed by the war in the early 90s, which ended with the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995. The signing of this agreement remains a matter of dispute among different ethnic groups, not because of the end of the war itself, but because of the establishment of an unjust peace and the creation of an unhealthy political climate that has no concrete solution.² One gets an impression - according to some authors³ - how the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District represents an artificially imposed solution that contributes to deepening the differences between constituent nations. It seems that the division that existed between ethnic groups even before the war, not only continued but expanded after its end. This attitude is not only a product of the thinking of certain authors,

¹ According to the population census from 2013, the number of individuals who link their nationality with religious identification in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a certain discrepancy among all three dominant ethnic groups: Muslims (50.7%), Orthodox (30.7%), Catholics (15.1%). Although there are minor differences between the respondents' ethnicity and national identification, it is clear that religion within all three groups represents a significant determinant of their personal national and religious identity. Cf. Agencija za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine, *Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u Bosni i Hercegovini, 2013.*, Sarajevo, 2016., 54, 68., Milan Vego, *Bosna i Hercegovina na raskrižju Daytonu*, in: *Međunarodne studije*, 2 (2002.) 1-2, 171-172.

² Cf. Pero Sudar, *Daytonski mirovni sporazum: slučaj koji plaši i izaziva*, in: *Vrhbosnensia*, 11 (2007.) 1, 174.

³ Cf. Zdenko Spajić, *Prijeperi oko izbornog zakona u BIH: može li interes osobe biti u središtu javnog diskursa*, in: *Vrhbosnensia*, 22 (2018.) 1, 101-102.; Željko Petrović, *Opći okvirni sporazum za mir u Bosni i Hercegovini kao osnova uređenja Bosne i Hercegovine*, in: *Tranzicija*, 21 (2019.) 43, 2019., 109-111.; Božo Žepić, *Prijedlozi i planovi međunarodne zajednice za Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, in: *National Security and the Future*, 6 (2005.) 3-4, 25-26.

but a statistical fact that manifests itself in the decline of the multi-ethnicity of the BiH population at the level of specific municipalities. Data from the 1991 points that to, according to Census, out of 109 municipalities, 91 had a multi-national structure, i.e. represented multi-ethnic communities. After twenty years, according to the latest Census of BiH from 2013, multiethnic diversity at the municipality level has declined significantly, and out of 141 municipalities (excluding Brčko District), two thirds of them have the absolute population of one nation or one nation significantly dominates within.⁴ Multi-ethnic stratification or ethnic grouping is not helped either by the attitudes that the members of different ethnic groups have towards each other. In a survey conducted in May 2010, it was shown that Croats have the best image in BiH, while Bosniaks and Serbs perceive each other mostly negatively. According to the research results, the reasons for mistrust between the three ethnic groups are dominantly related to war and post-war events that left deep wounds and damaged interpersonal relations.⁵

This kind of ethnic grouping and mutual negative perception between the constituent people of BiH is not helped by the demographic collapse or the rapid process of emigration of young people from the state. From the beginning of the war until the last population census in 2013, BiH lost 845 874 inhabitants.⁶ Furthermore, data from the Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which tracks the number of Catholics, newly baptized and deceased, testify that from 1991 to 2022, there was a significant loss of 427 062 Croats (Catholics) within Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷ Along with the highlighted data the reports of the Catechetic

⁴ Mirko Pejanović, Promjene etničke strukture općina u Bosni i Hercegovini prema popisu stanovništva 2013. godine, in: *Tranzicija*, 20 (2018.) 42, 6, 13-18.

⁵ The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in cooperation with Božo Skoko, conducted field research on a sample of 1,000 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina on how members of the three nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina perceive each other, what burdens their relationships and how ready they are to live together. The results of the research show that the "grievances" between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks are mostly related to the events of the war, which resulted in a feeling of significant mutual mistrust. Cf. Božo Skoko, *Što Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Srbi misle jedni o drugima, a što o Bosni i Hercegovini*, Freidrich Ebner Stifung, Sarajevo, 2011.

⁶ Cf. Agencija za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine, *Popis 2013. u BiH.*, in: <http://www.statistika.ba/> (10.7.2024.)

⁷ Statistical data available on the website of the BK BiH tell us that in 1991, 760 852 Croats lived in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while in 2022 this number will be only 333 790 Croats. For more information on negative demographic growth, see: Biskupska konferencija Bosne i Hercegovine, *Statistike*, in: <https://bkbih.ba/info.php?id=144> (10.7.2024.)

Office of the Mostar Diocese are also worrying. They indicate that in the period between 1998/1999. and 2014/2015. 1500 less students enrolled in both primary and secondary schools in the dioceses of Herzegovina. To this figure we can add a significant drop of 6 297 students enrolled in schools in the period between school years 2014/2015. and 2021/2022.⁸

The statistical data presented so far support the fact that in the last 30 years a significant demographic collapse occurred and continues to occur at the national level. Negative trend particularly affected Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina who, in search for better business, educational and life opportunities, go to work in Croatia and Western European countries.⁹ As one of the main reasons for their dissatisfaction with the current situation in BiH and the reason for emigration from the state, individuals emphasize the feeling of injustice committed by political institutions and elites through negative practices such as corruption and nepotism.¹⁰ An additional political burden, as well as an increasing feeling of being left out, for Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an unfairly set electoral system in which other ethnic groups elect their political representatives.¹¹

The current negative demographic, economic and political atmosphere in BiH speaks in contribution to how the idea of an equal multi-ethnic state is far from its full potential accomplish-

⁸ The catechetical office of the Mostar Diocese, headed by the rev. Anto Pavlović, provided us with statistical data on religious students in 42 elementary and 22 secondary schools on the territory of the dioceses of Herzegovina from 1998 to 2022. These figures include primary and secondary schools in Herceg-Bosnia, West Herzegovina and Herzegovina-Neretva counties. The data do not include students in the municipality of Rama-Prozor, as it belongs to the Archdiocese of Vrhbosnia. In the school year 1998/1999. 32 075 students were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, in the school year 2014/2015. 30 575 students, and in the school year 2021/2022. 24 278 students attended catholic religious education.

⁹ Cf. Tado Jurić, Od daytonskog do briselskog iseljavanja Hrvata iz BiH – Europski okvir za iseljavanje Hrvata iz BiH, in: *Mostariensia*, 25 (2019.) 1-2, 142-143., article available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338684966_Od_daytonskog_do_briselskog_iseljavanja_Hrvata_iz_BiH (10.7.2024.)

¹⁰ Cf. Tado Jurić, Politički aspekti iseljavanja Hrvata iz Bosne i Hercegovine u Njemačku, in: *Mostariensia*, 22 (2018.) 1, 5-6, article available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348235009_Politički_aspekti_iseljavanja_Hrvata_iz_Bosne_i_Hercegovine_u_Njemacku (10.7.2024.)

¹¹ Cf. Zdenko Spajić, Prijepori oko izbornog zakona u BiH: može li interes osobe biti u središtu javnog diskursa, 100-101.; Mark Gojak, Jednakopravnost Hrvata i održiv ključ razvoja: ključ i/ili način europske perspektive Bosne i Hercegovine, in: *Mostarensia*, 22 (2018.) 1, 140-142.

ment. At this moment, all three constituent nations are fighting for their own survival bearing in mind the extremely negative demographic growth in the last thirty years. To ensure the survival of this multi-ethnic mosaic in the heart of Europe it is necessary to work on the adoption of fair laws, the realization of individual and collective rights in order to build a common system of values among its people.¹² The first step on that path surely must be the establishment of a fruitful dialogue between ethnic groups that will represent “a school of humanity and a factor of unity that helps build a well-founded society based on tolerance and mutual respect”¹³ as pointed out by Pope Francis in his pastoral trip to Sarajevo in 2015.

2. FRANCISCAN YOUTH AS A MODEL FOR PRESERVING THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN BiH

The national and religious identity of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is inseparably linked with the Catholic church. This connection is manifested especially through pastoral care of the Franciscan Order for the entrusted believers from their arrival in this area until today.¹⁴ Through tumultuous centuries and numerous disasters, the Franciscans in BiH tried to build not only the spiritual life of believers but to contribute to their education, medical, cultural, and scientific development activities in order to preserve Croatian national identity.¹⁵ The process of inculturation of the gospel by the Franciscans among the believers of BiH was

¹² Cf. Damirka Mihaljević, Ima li Bosna i Hercegovina priliku izgraditi zajednički sustav vrijednosti?, in: *National Security and the Future*, 11 (2010.) 1, 48-49., 58-59.

¹³ Ivo Tomašević – Nevenko Herceg (ur.), *Mir vama: papa Franjo u Sarajevu 6.VI.2015*, Nadbiskupijski ordinarijat Vrhbosanski, Sarajevo, 2015., 159.; Katolički tjednik, br. 23, 14.6.2015., 22.

¹⁴ Historian Fr. Radoslav Glavaš, founder of the Croatian Support Society for Youth Education, wrote in 1896: “There is no nation whose history and destiny is so closely intertwined with any institution, as the past of the Croatian nation over many centuries is with the Franciscan order. (...) Bosnia and Herzegovina are countries whose past of 4-5 centuries is impossible to write even a page without meeting the Franciscans, as the main factors and bearers of the first roles...” Julijan Jelenić, *Kultura i bosanski franjevci*, Prva hrvatska tiskara, Sarajevo, 1912., 5.

¹⁵ Cf. Ignacije Gavran, Bosanskohercegovački franjevci i hrvatska kultura, in: *Croatica*, 21 (1990) 34, 8-15.; Kaja Mandić – Petra Tomić, Medicina bosanskohercegovačkih franjevac od 13. do početka 20. stoljeća, in: *Zdravstveni glasnik*, 6 (2020.) 1, 95-103.; Šimun Musa, Hrvatski jezik u Bosni i Hercegovini s obzirom na njegov zakonski i stvarni položaj u društvu, in: *Filologija*, 48 (2007.), 115-134.

realized through different models respecting, at the same time, current historical opportunities and challenges. Thus throughout history we have recorded numerous religious societies founded and led by Franciscans, such as: the Croatian Catholic Society (hr. *Hrvatsko katoličko društvo*), Our Lady's Society (hr. *Gospojinsko društvo*), League of Blessed Nikola Tavelić (hr. *Liga bl. Nikole Tavelića*), Young Heroes (hr. *Mladi junaci i junakinje*) etc.¹⁶ Running these, as well as other numerous associations, showed how the Franciscans of BiH tried at every time and circumstance, to find new models of religious formation that would contribute to the inculturation of evangelical values into the fabric of a culture.¹⁷

One of the new models of organized religious youth formation in BiH is Franciscan youth or Frama.¹⁸ The first fraternity of Franciscan youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded in the parish of St. Anthony of Padua Humac (Ljubuški) in 1992 by Fr. Mladen Vukšić after returning from studies in Italy.¹⁹ The National Fraternity Franciscan youth of BiH gathers young people around two regional fraternities: Bosna Srebrna with headquarters in Sarajevo and Herzegovinian regional fraternity based in Mostar.²⁰ Young people between the ages of 14 and 30 who want to deepen their Christian vocation by imitating the charisma of St. Francis from Assisi join this organization. Their religious growth and development within this organization is marked by a triple dimension: the development of Christian life in mutual brotherhood, the adoption of the Franciscan charism and active church and social apostolate.²¹ The overall

¹⁶ Usp. Draženko Tomić, *Društva koja su osnovali i vodili franjevci u Hercegovini*, in: *Hercegovina franciscana*, 5 (2009) 5, 268-280.

¹⁷ Cf. Franjo, *Evangelii gaudium – Radost evanđelja*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2013., 122.

¹⁸ The beginnings of this organization dates to 1948, when Italian Franciscans founded GIFRAC or "Franciscan Youth of Catholic Action". In Croatia, the first fraternity "Franciscan Youth" or Frama was founded on December 14, 1992 in Zagreb's Kaptol. For more information on the origin and development of Franciscan Youth in Croatia see: Ana Fruk – Ivica Janjić – Ana Matić (ur.), *30 godina Franjevačke mladeži u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb, 2023.; OFS, *Franjevačka mladež*, in: <https://ofs.hr/franjevacka-mladez/> (10.7.2024.)

¹⁹ Cf. Ivan Kaleb, *Prva i najstarija Frama u Hrvata proslavila 30. rodendan*, in: <https://www.vecernji.ba/vijesti/prva-i-najstarija-frama-u-hrvata-proslavila-30-rodendan-1592813> (10.7.2024.)

²⁰ Cf. Frama Hercegovina, *Statut Frame u Bosni i Hercegovini*, in: <http://frama-hercegovina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Put-franjeva%C4%8Dkog-poziva-converted.pdf>, art. 53. (10.7.2024.)

²¹ Cf. Frama Hercegovina, *Put Franjevačkog poziva*, in: <http://frama-hercegovina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Put-franjeva%C4%8Dkog-poziva-converted.pdf>, art. 4-5.

dynamic of this religious formation is not realized at the individual level, but within the unity of the Church and the brotherhood of the Franciscan youth. Young person who receives an invitation to this path is not left to himself but is invited to develop his/her spiritual life within the centuries-old tradition of the Church through the prism of the spirituality of the Franciscan order. The religious formation that takes place within the Franciscan youth in this way represents a kind of fulfilling the task of mediating God's word to new generations. Within this process of mediation the entire God's people is involved, not just its individuals.²²

Within the Franciscan youth of BIH, young people go through three phases or three stages of formation: a period of familiarization with the fraternity, a period of preparation for promises and a period of promises.²³ In the initial phase, young people are invited to a simple introduction to the Franciscan youth, its members and activities carried out by the organization. Through period from three to six months, candidates try to find their place in the organization and see how they can contribute to the Franciscan youth. This phase ends with the "Reception in Frama"²⁴. In the second formation phase, young people prepare to make promises and strive to harmonize their lives with evangelical values and the example of St. Francis in the lap of the local community. In the end, this phase, which lasts between one to two years, includes a deeper religious formation, more intensive participation in weekly meetings and a more active sacramental life, after which candidates approach the "Ceremony of First Promises"²⁵. By giving promises, girls and boys become fully legal members of the Franciscan youth community and can choose or be chosen for a specific service in the fraternity. The last phase of the religious formation of the Franciscan youth covers the period after the first promises. In this phase, the young person is called - on a concrete level - to witness the gospel and Franciscan values *ad extra*. Furthermore, at this stage girls and boys, with the support of communities, discern their personal

²² Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, Vatican, 2020., art. 285-287.

²³ For more information about the process of inclusion in the Franciscan youth of BIH, by degrees of religious formation, see: Frama Hercegovina, *Put Franjevačkog poziva*, art. 21-34.; Frama Hercegovina, *Statut Frama u Bosni i Hercegovini*, art. 19-22.

²⁴ Cf. Frama Hercegovina, *Obrednik primanja i obećanja u Frami*, in: <https://frama-hercegovina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/obrednik-primanja-i-obe%C4%87anja-u-frami-m-converted.pdf> (10.7.2024.)

²⁵ Cf. *Same*

calling in life. As it is a process, which inevitably has its end, joining the "Ceremony of Renewal of Promises in Frama"²⁶ is limited to the age of 30. Process through which applicants access is in many ways specific and unique to Franciscan order and can be summarized in several elements as education for: dialogue, unity, altruism, humility, action, joy, peacemaking, ecology and the spiritual dimension of a man.²⁷

This way of formation, which considers the age of the participants, includes weekly meetings, a concrete community of peers, the celebration of sacraments, pilgrimages and action towards the outside, represents a quality model of the religious formation of young people which can be applied both in urban and rural areas. Meetings of Franciscan youth and catechesis in smaller groups with developed sense of pride towards the centuries-old tradition of its own people and based on a rich Church Tradition can certainly help the development and preservation of religious identity among young Croats in BiH.²⁸

3. OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES, AND RESEARCH METHODS

The subject of this research, as well as the research conducted by the authors Mihaljević and Peračković, is the Franciscan youth as a community of young believers.²⁹ In this research we relied on a survey that was used in 2000, which is why our research goals are inseparably linked to the goals of the initial research: analysis of

²⁶ Cf. *Same*

²⁷ For more information on Franciscan spirituality as an educational tool, see: Filip Polegubić, Elementi franjevačke duhovnosti u funkciji odgoja, in: Drago Martinović – Marko-Antonio Brkić – Katarina Lasić (ed.) *Znanost-duhovnost-odgovornost. Zbornik radova znanstveno-stručnog skupa održanog 27. rujna 2014. u Bijakovcima – Medugorju*, Sveučilište Hercegovina, Bijakovci - Medugorje, 2015., 269-290.

²⁸ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, art. 331.

²⁹ No significant amount of research has been conducted on the Franciscan youth and its members in Croatia. In those cases where research was conducted, a smaller number of respondents were included and the research was conducted at the level of individual local fraternities. Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, in: *Društvena istraživanja*, 14 (2005.) 1-2, 47-69.; Filip Polegubić, *Pedagogija mladih u kontekstu formiranja osobnosti, odgoja za vrijednosti i duhovnosti*, diplomski rad, Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, in: <https://zir.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/ffri%3A605/datastream/PDF/view> (10.7.2024.)

the sociodemographic structure of members, examination of motivation for joining Franciscan youth, evaluation of formations and religious practices, research of the previous experience and recognizing the fruits in personal religious life.³⁰

The authors of the research conducted in 2000 put similar hypotheses that we modified in this research and added our own.³¹

Hypothesis 1: The majority of individuals who join Franciscan youth come from families that had a dominant influence on their religious formation.

Hypothesis 2: The origin of Franciscan youth members is mainly rural areas and their parents mostly have lower education.

Hypothesis 3: Members of the Franciscan youth in BiH - opposed to members of the Franciscan young people from Zagreb - are more traditional in their understanding and acceptance of religion and more closed for the public testimony of faith.

In conducting the research, we used the method of survey. The questionnaire and the questions asked are identical to the original survey and the survey has been digitized for easier dissemination using the Google Forms tool.³² This tool enables respondents to complete the survey in greater anonymity and in an environment that suits them the most compared to the traditional surveys.³³ No

³⁰ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, 52-53.

³¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

³² Application of digital tools, such as Google Forms, to conduct qualitative and quantitative research in the last ten years, has taken off in different fields such as medicine or higher education. Apart from the fact that it is a tool that is easily accessible and free for all researchers, it enables its users a significant number of options that are present in specialized programs such as SPSS. Of course, since it is a tool intended for a wide range of users; it is not intended to perform more complex operations possible by using specialized statistical programs. Nevertheless, this drawback has been partially removed through the possibility of transfers obtained to other platforms. Cf. Lisa Travis, One of Many Free Survey Tools: Google Docs, in: *Journal of Electronic Resources in Medical Libraries*, 7 (2010.) 2, 105-114.; Himel Mondal – Shaikat Mondal – Tania Ghosal – Sarika Mondal, Using Google Forms for Medical Survey: A Technical Note, in: *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Physiology*, 5 (2019.) 4, 216-218.; Ika Yunitasari – Ade Sudirman, The Utilization of Google Forms as Learning Media in Statistics Course, in: *Journal of English Education Studies*, 4 (2021.) 2, 16-24.

³³ Although several studies have confirmed that respondents are more relaxed when solving online surveys than surveys of the traditional type that involve physical filling of forms or verbal answering, the issue of respondents' (dis)honesty when joining surveys remains a debated area. Some research show that respondents

personal data were collected while formulating the questions which the respondents could be identified with, considering that they are mostly minors, i.e. high school students. Surveys are disseminated with the permission and through the mediation of Fr. Jozo Hrkać - regional spiritual assistant of Franciscan youth of Herzegovina - via internal communication channels of the Franciscan youth of BiH and thus reached the registered members of the Franciscan youth. Filling in the survey was carried out on a voluntary basis. The forwarded link remained active for ten days - from April 9 to 19, 2024 - after which further participation of respondents as well as completion of the survey was prevented.

In the research conducted in 2000, the authors Peračković and Mihaljević point out that there is no official record of the number of Franciscan youth members at the national level. The approximate estimation about the number of members which the authors are dealing with is between 1500 and 2000 members of the Franciscan youth in Croatia and BiH together. Their research, compared to this one, is focused exclusively on the Franciscan youth of Kaptol, which operates under the Franciscan Province St. Cyril and Methodius and a smaller number of members of the Franciscan youth „Holy Spirit“ under the Croatian Province of St. Jerome of the Franciscan Conventuals. Furthermore, the authors point out in their research that the entire province of St. Cyril and Methodius, at the time of the research, had 380 active members of the Franciscan youth who made promises and 400 sympathizers. In the results shown in the research from 2000 it is noted that the sample consisted of 70 respondents.³⁴

The database of the respondents in this research consists of 2,944 members of the Franciscan youth who are divided into 56

are more honest when there is a screen in front of them, other research indicates that respondents are more inclined to lie in front of the screen, while the third stream of research brings divided results when we talk about the honesty of the interviewee. Usp. Timo Gnambs – Kai Kaspar, Disclosure of sensitive behaviors across self-administered survey modes: a meta-analysis, in: *Behavior Research Methods*, 47 (2015.) 4, 1237-1259.; Monica T. Whitley, Liar, liar! An examination of how open, supportive and honest people are in the chat rooms, in: *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 18 (2002.) 4, 343-352.; Rachael Gibson – Ian McAllister, Online Election Surveys: Keeping the Voters Honest?, in: *Journal of Political Marketing*, 8 (2009.) 2, 105-129.

³⁴ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, 53.

local fraternities at the level of BIH.³⁵ 820 respondents participated in filling out the survey via link, which is a representative sample of 27.3% of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH. The final results of this test are presented in an anonymous and aggregated way and are directly correlated with the Peračković and Mihaljević research results. Comparing the results of these two studies made it possible to observe potential differences in the religious formation of Franciscan youth in two countries and an analysis of the religious mood of young people at the beginning of the 2000s compared to today.³⁶

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Sociodemographic characteristics

Out of 2944 members of the Franciscan youth of BIH, 820 participated in the survey questionnaire (27.3%). This allowed us to get a significant insight into their general sociodemographic characteristics at a national level. The structure of the Franciscan youth in BIH is made up of 71% women and 29% men divided into three

³⁵ The number of Franciscan youth members and the list of fraternities in BIH was given through the mediation of Fr. Jozo Hrkać. Franciscan youth BIH is organized in 56 local brotherhoods. Frama Banbrdo, Frama Brestovsko, Frama Breške, Frama Bila, Bugojno, Frama Bukovica, Frama Busovača, Frama Čerin, Frama Čitluk, Frama Čuklić, Frama Dolac, Frama Domaljevac, Frama Drinovci, Frama Fojnica, Frama Gorica – Sovići, Frama Gračac, Frama Gradnići, Frama Guča Gora, Frama Humac, Frama Jajce, Frama Kiseljak, Frama Klobuk, Frama Kočerin, Frama Kongora, Frama Kreševo, Frama Livno, Frama Ljubunčić, Frama Međugorje, Frama Mostar, Frama Nova Bila, Frama Novi Šehar, Frama Osova, Frama Ovčarevo, Frama Petričevac, Frama Podhum, Frama Podmilačje, Frama Rama – Ščit, Frama Posušje, Frama Posuški Gradac, Frama Rumboci, Frama Ružići, Frama Sarajevo, Frama Seonica, Frama Suho Polje, Frama Široki Brijeg, Frama Šuica, Frama Tihaljna, Frama Tolisa, Frama Tomislavgrad, Frama Tuzla, Frama Uskoplje, Frama Veljaci, Frama Vidoši, Frama Visoko, Frama Vitez, Frama Vitina.

³⁶ When correlating research results from 2000 and 2024, it is necessary to take into account the existence of certain limitations which are connected to two limiting factors. The first limiting factor is of a quantitative nature and it refers to the size of the sample of respondents and the number of "Franciscan Youth" brotherhoods in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina covered in the research. The second limiting factor is of a qualitative nature and refers to national, social and economic differences between young people from Croatia and those from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although in both cases we talk about young Catholics who share the same or similar values, their environment certainly has a specific influence on their religious formation.

groups according to their age: members over 30 years old (0.2%), members between 21 and 30 years old (2.4%) and members younger than 20 years old (97.4%)³⁷. In comparison to the research conducted among the members of the Franciscan youth in the year 2000 we notice two major differences.

The first difference refers to the distribution of the members of the Franciscan youth in BIH and the Franciscan youth in Zagreb according to gender, while the second one refers to their age structure. According to the research conducted in Zagreb, it is clear that the ratio of male and female members of the Franciscan youth is almost equal, while in the more recent research, female members predominate significantly. The more significant participation of females in religious communities is not new, as it is confirmed by both mentioned researches as well as other researches conducted in Croatia and in the world.³⁸ The specific quality in this context is the almost equal distribution of male and female members of the Franciscan youth of Zagreb in the year 2000. This pattern did not repeat in our research and it indeed represents the specific quality of one branch of this organization, as testified by the authors in the initial research.³⁹

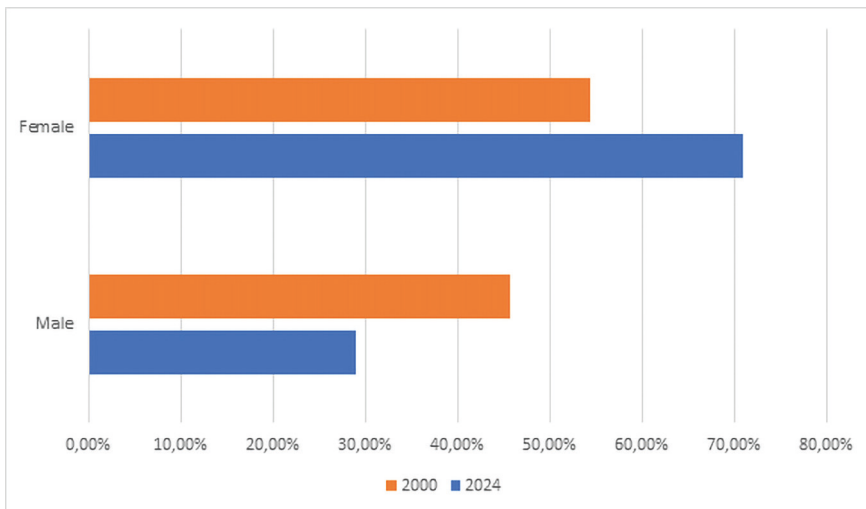
The second difference between the members of the Franciscan youth in BIH and those in Zagreb refers to the age structure of the respondents. While in a recent survey almost all members of the Franciscan youth belong to the age group under 20 (97.4%), in the Zagreb survey members of the Franciscan youth under 20 (55.7%) and members between 21 and 30 (42.9%) are almost equally represented among the respondents. The age difference between the members of the Franciscan youth in BIH and Zagreb can be seen

³⁷ Graphic images 1 and 2.

³⁸ For more information about researches that deal with the differences between male and female participation in religious life, attending religious ceremonies, the importance of faith in personal life and the image of God, see: Penny E. Becker – Heather Hofmeister, Work, Family, and Religious Involvement for Man and Women, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40 (2001.) 4, 707-722.; Nediljko A. Ančić, Religioznost i crkvenost muškarca i žene, in: Ante Čovo – Dijana Mihalj (ed.), *Muško i žensko stvori ih. Žene i muškarci u življenju i u službi Božjeg poslanja*, Franjevački institut za kulturu i mir Split, 2008, 135-163.; Marianne N. Kvande – Christian A. Klockner – Michael E. Nielsen, Church Attendance and Religious Experience: Differential Associations to Well-Being for Norwegian Women and Man?, in: *SAGE Open*, 5 (2015.) 4, 1-13.

³⁹ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež” - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, 53-54.

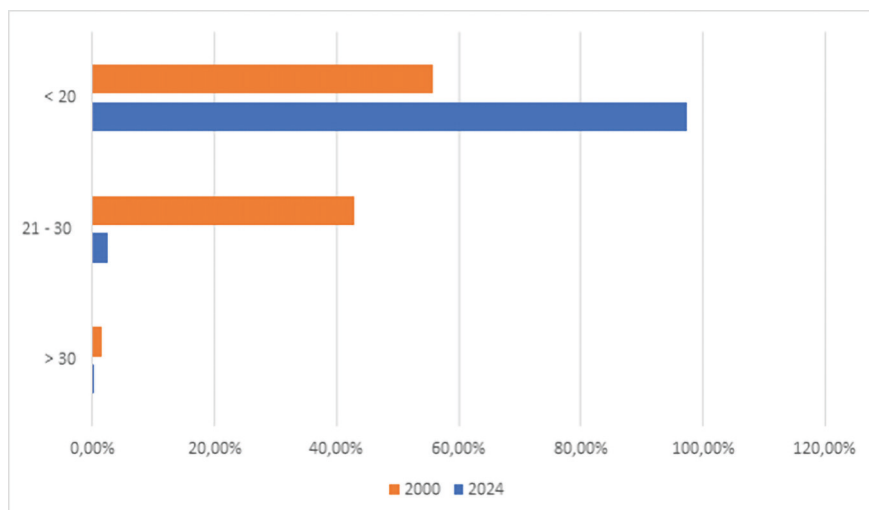
through the prism of the University of Zagreb, towards which a significant number of students from both Croatia and BIH gravitate. Based on this, the authors of the original research point to an exception in the age distribution of young people in the Franciscan youth of Zagreb in relation to the surrounding fraternities outside of town.⁴⁰ Also, the official documents of the Franciscan youth suggest that the members are called to grow and deepen their vocation in such a way that it is a stepping stone towards the Franciscan Secular Order. This, in most cases, means leaving the Franciscan youth after completing university education and entering the adult world or transitioning to the Franciscan Secular Order.⁴¹



Graphic image 1: Structure of Franciscan youth members by gender

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴¹ The transition of members of the Franciscan youth to the Franciscan Secular Order is not a necessary step in the process of belonging to this organization. Despite this, the official documents of the Franciscan youth emphasize the correlation and complementarity of these two Franciscan organizations. Youth, or the time of discernment of vocation, in the Franciscan youth is limited by the national statute to 30 years by which the member is forced to leave the organization or continue his path in faith through the Franciscan Secular Order. Cf. Frama Hercegovina, *Put Franjevačkog poziva*, art. 14-18, 22.; Frama Hercegovina, *Statut Frame u Bosni i Hercegovini*, art. 23. (10.7.2024.)



Graphic image 2: Age structure of Franciscan youth members

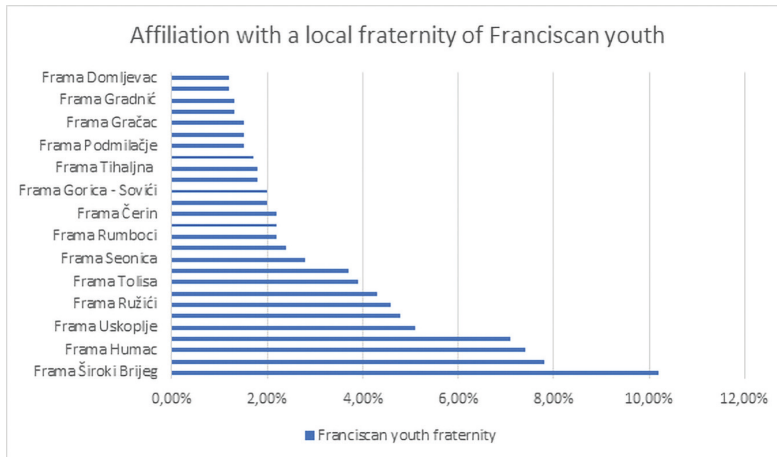
The research results from 2000 showed that 98% of the members of the Franciscan youth in Zagreb were born in the city where they also spent their childhood (90%). With this data, the authors of the original research refuted the hypothesis according to which members of the Franciscan youth come predominantly from rural areas.⁴² In our analysis of the origin of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH according to the category of rural or urban environment, we changed the set hypothesis.⁴³ We offered the subjects the opportunity to mark the local fraternity of Franciscan youth they belong to.⁴⁴ Furthermore, to be able to discern more clearly whether the members of the Franciscan youth come from rural or urban areas, we divided the local fraternities in BIH by categories

⁴² Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 54.

⁴³ In conversation with Fr. Jozo Hrkać it became clear that the majority of members of the Franciscan youth of BIH are high school students, which was later confirmed by the results of the research as seen in Graphic image 2 and Table 1. This age group of young people is generally tied to their family home which means that they are not inclined to move to the city to achieve a higher level of education yet as is the case with students or those looking for employment. Due to the mentioned reasons, as well as creating a broader picture about the extent of the Franciscan youth in BIH, we changed the original question to the possibility of choosing to belong to a local Franciscan youth fraternity.

⁴⁴ Graphic image 3.

„city“ and „village“.⁴⁵ Analyzing the data obtained according to the mentioned categories, it became clear that the majority of the Franciscan youth members come from rural areas (80.49%) compared to the number of members who come from urban areas (19.51%).⁴⁶



Graphic image 3: Affiliation with a local fraternity of Franciscan youth⁴⁷

The difference in the ratio of members from the rural area and the city is especially pronounced in local fraternities such as Sarajevo (1) or Mostar (0), whose response to this research was minimal or non-existent.⁴⁸ The largest number of respondents, who gather at

⁴⁵ When dividing the Franciscan youth fraternities into categories „city“ or „village“, we referred to the Population census in BIH conducted in 2013. and other official documents. Those fraternities that belong territorially in the category of „municipality“ were placed in the category of „village“ because they do not fulfill the legislative categories of the city. Cf. Agencija za statistiku BIH, *Popis stanovništva, domaćinstva/kućanstava i stanova u BIH*, in: <https://popis.gov.ba/popis2013/?lang=bos> (10.7.2024.); Savez općina i gradova Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, *Lokalna samouprava. Priručnik za novoizabrane općinske/gradske vijećnike*, SOG FBIH, Sarajevo, 2022, 8-9.

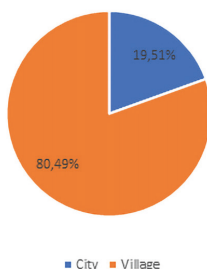
⁴⁶ Cf. Graphic image 4.

⁴⁷ As part of the research, the respondents were able to choose from 56 local fraternities of Franciscan youth in BIH. The results shown in the graph include those fraternities whose sample is larger than 1%. Although the other fraternities of Franciscan youth were not shown in the graphic image for the sake of clarity, it is important to note that they are included in the total sample.

⁴⁸ We also did not receive feedback from rural fraternities of Franciscan youth such as Banbrdo, Posušje, Kreševo, Fojnica etc, i.e. there were no respondents who participated in this research. The non-existent or low number of (un)completed

Franciscan youth meetings in the cities of BIH, do so in the fraternities of Široki Brijeg (84) and Livno (58). Judged by the statements of other participants in the research, fraternities in rural areas such as Tomislavgrad (64), Humac (61), Uskoplje (42), Kočerin (39), Ružići (38) etc., represent the biggest carriers of Franciscan youth activities in BIH. It is clearly visible, from the figures obtained in the research, that the majority of Franciscan youth members come from a rural area. This fact, as opposed to the initial research from 2000, confirms the first part of the second hypothesis according to which members from rural areas predominate in the Franciscan youth.

The ratio of Franciscan youth members according to categories „city“ / „village“



Graphic image 4: The ratio of Franciscan youth members according to categories „city“ / „village“

While analyzing the level of education of the members of the Franciscan youth in BIH and their parents, we also found data that are somewhat congruent with those from the research conducted in 2000. The research by the authors Peračković and Mihaljević showed a significant share of higher education among the respondents (17%), the respondent's fathers (38.6%) and mothers (37%), which refuted the second part of their second hypothesis according to which the parents of the Franciscan youth members are dominantly of lower education.⁴⁹ Analyzing the data about the level of education of the members of the Franciscan youth in BIH and their parents, we noted that the level of education in all cate-

surveys in some rural or urban areas must not be taken as a sign of their inactivity, given that the survey was conducted voluntarily.

⁴⁹ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 54.

ries is slightly lower compared to the first research.⁵⁰ The number of members of the Franciscan youth of BIH that completed associate or university education totals only 4%, while in the case of their fathers (29.4%) and mothers (32.9%) this percentage is slightly higher. Although the level of education of the parents of the members of the Franciscan youth BIH is lower than it is the case in the first research we still can not assert that the parents who have lower status of education are dominant. The majority of parents of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH completed their high school education (mother 55.3%, father 59.1%) which refutes the second part of the second hypothesis according to which a lower level of education prevails among the parents of the Franciscan youth members.

Table 1: The level of education of the members of the Franciscan youth and their parents (2000./ 2024.)

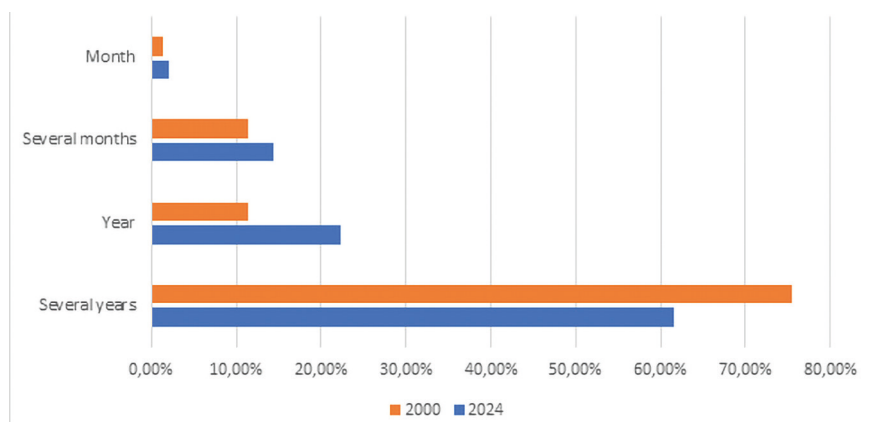
Level of education (2000./2024.) (expressed in percentage)		Uncompleted primary school	High school	Associate degree	University or academy	Masters or PhD	TOTAL
Level of education	Respondent	16.8%	66.2%	6.2%	10.8%	0%	100%
		17.7%	78.3%	0.7%	3.3%	0%	
	Mother	12.9%	48.6%	11.4%	25.7%	1.4%	100%
		9.0%	55.3%	10.6%	22.3%	2.8%	
	Father	2.9%	52.9%	15.7%	22.9%	5.7%	100%
		8.7%	59.1%	11.1%	18.3%	2.8%	

The last question regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents referred to the period of their affiliation with the Franciscan youth of BIH.⁵¹ Most of the respondents (61.5%) have been members of the Franciscan youth for several years, while

⁵⁰ Table 1.

⁵¹ Graphic image 5.

a smaller part has been involved for a year (22.3%), a few months (14.3%) or approximately for a month (2%). Compared to the previous research from 2000, the dynamic of young people's involvement in Franciscan youth did not change significantly. Although there was a decline in the percentage of those involved for more than one year (-15%) in favor of those involved for one year (+11%) or less (+4%), members with a long-term status in the Franciscan youth still predominate. Their long-term involvement in this church community testifies to the fact that it is an environment that provides young people with a significant amount of (religious) security and stability on their path of maturing and growing up.⁵² This fact carries a special weight especially when we consider that this is predominantly a high school population who are surrounded by numerous negative offers and challenges every day. Their long-term affiliation with the brotherhood of the Franciscan youth can therefore be observed through the prism of „rootedness or putting down roots“⁵³ in the uncertain present and as a pledge for a more secure future.



Graphic image 5: Period of affiliation with the Franciscan youth

⁵² Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 54.

⁵³ Cf. Papa Franjo, *Bog je mlad. Razgovori s Thomasom Leonciniem*, Verbum, Split, 2018., 26-27.

4.2. Motivation and activities

Relying on the questionnaire from 2000 we asked our respondents about the reason for their involvement in the Franciscan youth of BIH.⁵⁴ We can classify the offered answers into three categories: the need for spiritual content, the search for meaning in life and social needs.⁵⁵ The most common answers given by the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH do not correspond completely with those given by the members of the Franciscan youth of Zagreb. While in the Zagreb research categories „strengthening in faith“ (28.6%), „spontaneously“ (27.1%), „the search for self“ (24.3%) and „meeting friends and like-minded people“ (22.9%) are dominant, in the research conducted in BIH the reasons for the respondent's involvement in Franciscan youth are somewhat different. Among our respondents the following categories dominate: „strengthening in faith“ (23.9%), „meeting friends and like-minded people“ (22%), „meeting God“ (12.4%), and „due to curiosity“ (11.1%).

The reasons for joining the Franciscan youth – within both researches – indicate two important realities. Young people in the Church nowadays are primarily looking for consolidation i.e. certainty in their faith. On the path of (religiously) growing up, young people are exposed to numerous doubts and questions, and there is a possibility that through regular religious formation (religious education and parish catechesis) they did not receive adequate resources that would help them feel more secure in this area.⁵⁶ In this path walking together we are called – as individuals and as a community – to be more personally involved i.e. to be like Christ who accompanies the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Our walk with young people should imply establishing a dialogue that will take into account the circumstances of our interlocutor, will not be intrusive, but will not give up on the Truth. Through getting to know what is written in the Scriptures about Christ, we are called to lead young people to a final encounter with Him around the communion of the Eucharistic table.⁵⁷ Other social reasons for joining the respondents to Franciscan youth show us - as the Church

⁵⁴ Graphic image 6.

⁵⁵ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 55.

⁵⁶ Cf. Josip Šimunović, *Župna kateheza i školski vjeronauk – između očekivanja i stvarnosti*, in: *Riječki teološki časopis*, 26 (2018) 1, 5-27.

⁵⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, *Komunikacija u službi istinske kulture susreta. Poruka pape Franje za 48. svjetski dan društvene komunikacije* (1.6.2014.), in: <https://>

- the importance of maintaining an open and friendly atmosphere within our community. In both researches, the category „meeting with friends and like-minded people“ was ranked second in terms of importance among young people, and is one of the main reasons for joining Franciscan youth. That does not mean that we should build „echo chambers“⁵⁸ that allow us to confirm already well-known religious attitudes and formulations. On the contrary, as a community, we are called to permanently keep the door open for young people⁵⁹ to upgrade their faith, help them discover new talents and deepen mutual fellowship.⁶⁰ Therefore it is necessary in the Church to constantly raise awareness of the fact that generations of young people – who are currently in some form of religious formation – represent future animators and carriers of various activities.

The majority of the respondents in our research, as was the case in the research from 2000, participate in the activities of the Franciscan youth once a week (82.3%) while the rest of the respondents attend meetings twice a week (18%).⁶¹ Comparing the obtained data, we can see that there is a small increase (+9%) in attendance at meetings twice a week with respondents from the Franciscan youth of BIH compared to the respondents from the previous survey.

Despite the somewhat more frequent attendance dynamic of respondents from the Franciscan youth of BIH to meetings of local fraternities, their activity, i.e. active participation in particular meetings is slightly weaker compared to the respondents from the previ-

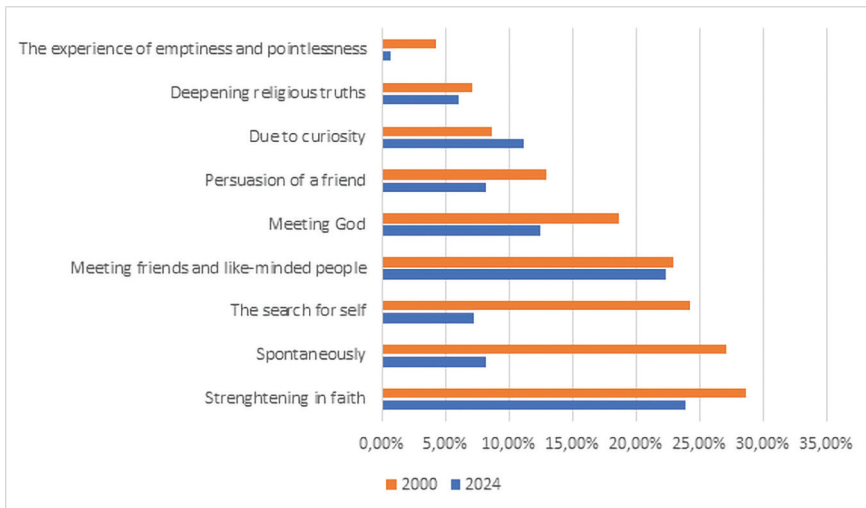
ika.hkm.hr/novosti/komunikacija-u-sluzbi-istinske-kulture-susreta-2/ (10.7.2024.)

⁵⁸ Although the term „echo chamber“ is primarily used in the context of the Internet and social networks, it can also be applied at the level of interpersonal and social relations. In „echo chambers“, an individual or a community is subject to a vicious circle of information in which they receive content that confirms previously adopted thinking or a known system of values. When confronted with a different way of thinking, an individual or a community feels threatened and rejects the information as „fake news“, returning to the safety of their own camp, i.e. the „echo chamber“. For more content about this phenomenon see: Amy R. Arguedas – Craig T. Robertson – Richard Fletcher – Rasmus K. Nielsen, *Echo Chambers, Filter Bubbles, and Polarisation: a Literature Review*, in: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:6e357e97-7b16-450a-a827-a92c93729a08> (10.7.2024.); Ivan Živanović, How does Social Media feed Our Beliefs?, in: *Psyche*, 5 (2022) 1, 212-252.

⁵⁹ Cf. Papa Franjo, *Evangelii Gaudium – Radost Evandjelja*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2014., br. 46-47.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ivica Jagodić, Pastoral mladih – Frama u Vukovaru, in: *Catechesis*, 30 (2008) 1, 66-67.

⁶¹ Graphic image 7.



Graphic image 6: Reasons for joining Franciscan youth

ous research.⁶² The members of the Franciscan youth – according to the self-assessment of respondents – participate more actively in all activities (+23.8%) compared to the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH. The fundamental reason for the discrepancy in different levels of participation of members of the Franciscan youth can be observed through the age difference of the respondents.⁶³ The Franciscan youth meetings are organized in the form of workshops conducted in small groups with predetermined topics.⁶⁴ This form of work enables the inclusion of all participants according to their moods and abilities. Possible obstacles in these meetings, as well as the reason for lesser or greater (in)activity of respondents, may include a feeling of shyness in younger respondents⁶⁵, different cog-

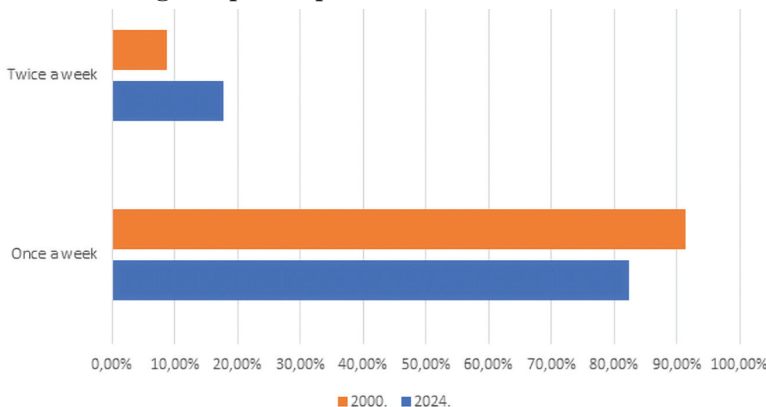
⁶² Cf. Graphic image 8.

⁶³ Cf. Graphic image 2.

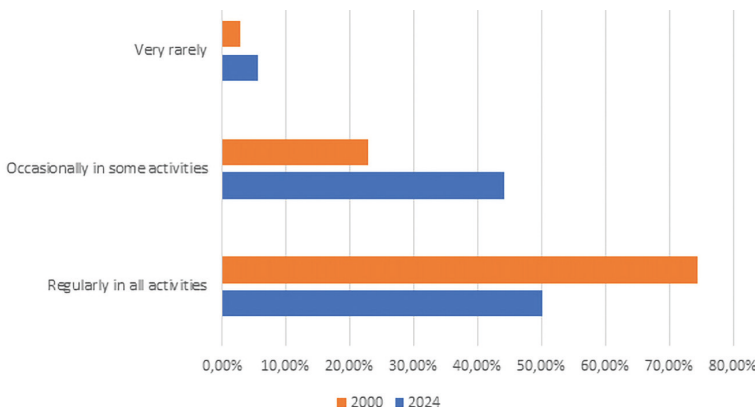
⁶⁴ The examples of specific workshops of the Franciscan youth of BIH can be found in two documents published on official websites: *Franjevačka mladež BIH, Savjetnik za zabavne susrete*, in: <http://frama-hercegovina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Priru%C4%8Dnik-za-zabavne-susrete.pdf> and *Franjevačka mladež BIH, Nacionalni priručnik za formaciju (radna verzija)*, in: <http://frama-hercegovina.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Priru%C4%8Dnik-radna-verzija-2.pdf> (10.7.2024.)

⁶⁵ Cf. Mengdi Chen – Marjolein Zee – Deborah L. Roorda, Students shyness and affective teacher-student relationship in upper elementary schools: A cross-cultural comparison, in: *Learning and Individual Differences*, 86 (2021.), 5-8.

nitive abilities, family, social, educational and other circumstances.⁶⁶ To be able to detect more clearly the reasons for more active participation of students in the meetings of the Franciscan youth, compared to the high school population, it is necessary to conduct additional research in the future that would analyze the internal dynamic among the participants and the animators.



Graphic image 7: The dynamic of participation at Franciscan youth meetings



Graphic image 8: The dynamic of participating in the Franciscan youth activities

⁶⁶ Amartia Putri – Dede Lipiah – Nurul Hidayati – Ina Magdalena, Teacher understanding implications on the differences of elementary school students, in: *Progres Pendidikan*, 2 (2021.) 3, 167.

While assessing the prevailing atmosphere at the Franciscan youth meetings the respondents were able to choose two answers. The atmosphere at the meetings of the Franciscan youth significantly coincides with the data obtained in the research from 2000.⁶⁷ According to the assessment of respondents in both researches, the atmosphere at the meetings is mainly „spiritual, sisterly and fraternal“ and „friendly“. It is interesting to note that the „praying atmosphere“ at the meetings of the Franciscan youth of BIH, according to the respondents, totals only 1.5%, while among their fellows from Zagreb, this category is significantly higher i.e. 25.7%. In order to examine the decline in the „praying and apostolic atmosphere“ it is necessary to conduct additional researches that will analyze the internal dynamic between the participants and the animators of the Franciscan youth meetings.

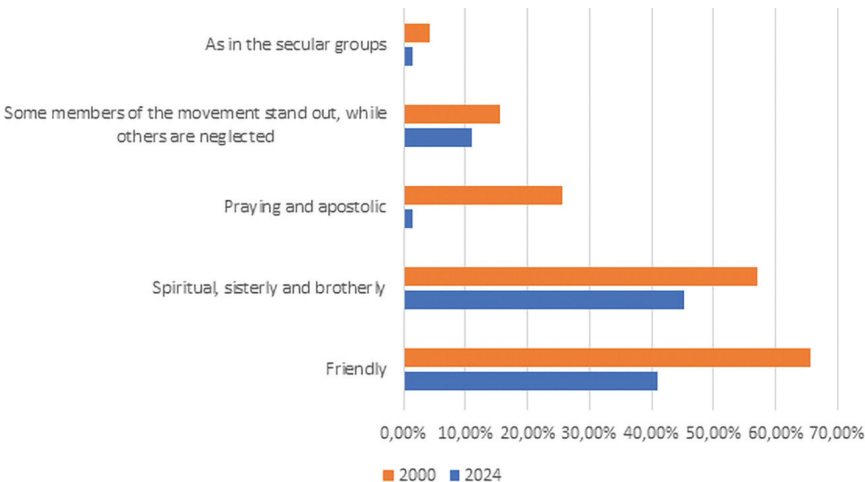
As in the case of the previous question, when assessing the dominant characteristic of the Franciscan youth, the respondents were able to choose two answers. The answers „helps people get to a personal encounter with God“ (58.7%), „builds unity among participants“ (49%) and „helps build the community of believers in the Church“ (32.8%)⁶⁸ remained still at the top as in the 2000 research among the respondents.⁶⁹ A minor change happened in the perception of the Franciscan youth as a project directed at „evangelization appropriate to the contemporary secularized world“ (-10%) compared to the initial research. This decline, to an extent, can be correlated with the decline in the previous question in the category „praying and apostolic atmosphere“ at Franciscan youth meetings.⁷⁰ The data obtained within both questions and surveys somewhat suggests that a possible change occurred in the mission and the vision of Franciscan youth through the perception of its members. The decline in the apostolic and evangelization atmosphere among the Franciscan youth in the last 20 years or so, did not happen by strengthening the negative factors in the atmosphere or identity of this organization. According to the data obtained, the organization became more intrinsically oriented, i.e. focused primarily on the religious formation of the members, the formation of unity within the organization and the strengthening of unity within the Church.

⁶⁷ Cf. Graphic image 9.

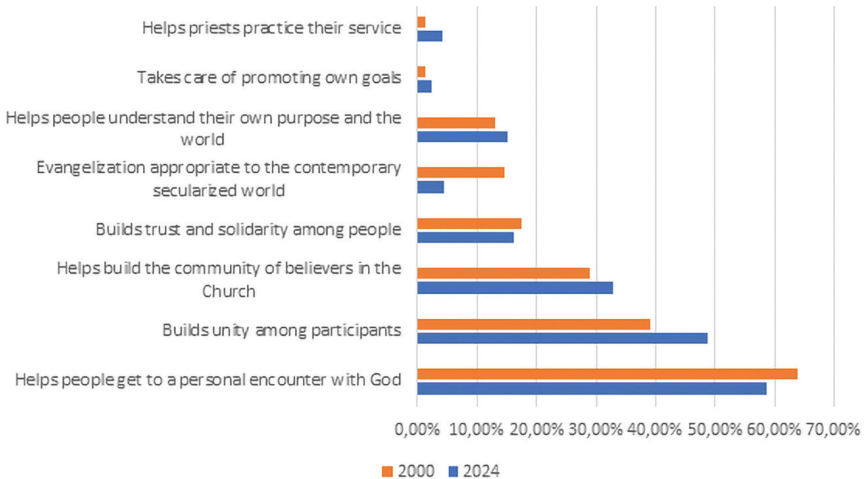
⁶⁸ Graphic image 10.

⁶⁹ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 56-57.

⁷⁰ Cf. Graphic image 9.



Graphic image 9: The prevailing atmosphere at Franciscan youth meetings



Graphic image 10: The dominant characteristic of Franciscan youth

4.3. Formation and religious practice

When evaluating the formation and faith practice of our respondents, we started from the assumption that the members of the Franciscan youth dominantly come from families that influenced their motivation to join this movement. Analyzing the influence of external factors, their participation in formal religious

education, receiving the sacraments and their personal spirituality, we aimed to give a broader religious picture of our respondents.

The external factors that mostly influenced the formation of the religious attitude of the members of the Franciscan youth are significantly different when comparing the respondents from Zagreb and those from BIH. In the research conducted in Zagreb, the top three places are taken by categories „family“ (39.7%), „community of believers“ (13.2%) and „a direct gift of God's grace“ (11.8%).⁷¹ On the other hand, the data obtained in the research among members of the Franciscan youth of BIH show that the top three places are occupied by categories „family“ (30%), „priest“ (19%) and „friends“ (15%)⁷². In both surveys the category „family“ took the primary place of influence in the formation of religious attitudes of the members of the Franciscan youth, but not to such an extent to be dominant which refutes the first hypothesis. Despite this it is interesting to note that - as a secondary source of religious formation - there was an increase in categories „priest“ (+14.6%) and „friends“ (+5%) and a simultaneous decrease in categories „family“ (-9.7%), „community of believers“ (-7%), „your movement“ (-6%) in comparison to the initial research from 2000. The existing dynamic, to an extent, speaks in favor of the fact that nowadays individuals can have a more significant influence on the religious formation of adolescents and young people than communities do.⁷³

A dominant majority of our respondents is under 20 years old (97.20%) and they completed high school education (78.3%).⁷⁴ From the obtained data referring to the attendance at religious education of the members of the Franciscan youth BIH, it is notable that the

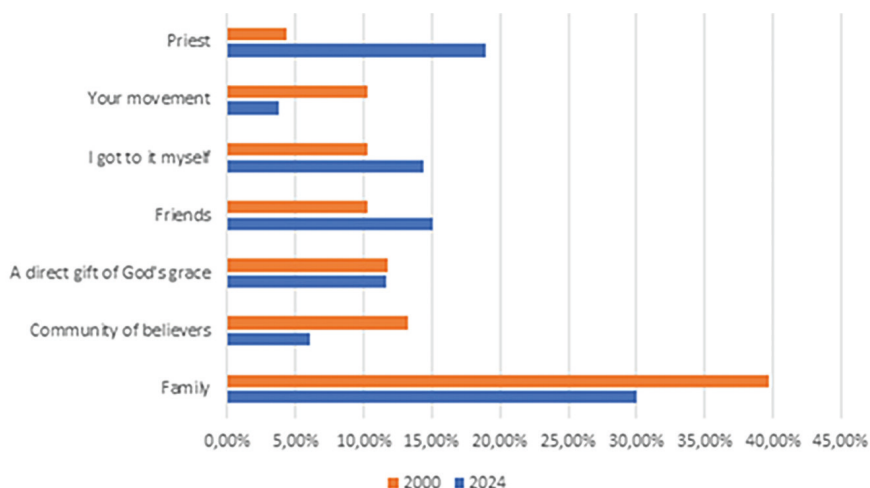
⁷¹ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, 57-58.

⁷² Cf. Graphic image 11.

⁷³ Numerous studies have been conducted on the contribution and influence of external factors such as family, friends, school, parish etc., on the religious formation of young people, but the authors did not reach unanimous conclusions. The general attitude is that all of the mentioned factors, in a certain way, contribute to the religious formation of young people and that no single category can be distinguished as prevailing or dominant. For more information on this topic see: Sara E. Holmes, A qualitative inquiry into Christian faith transmission in the family context, in: *Practical Theology*, 16 (2023.) 5, 604-617.; Eleonora Patacchini, Social networks and parental behavior in the intergenerational transmission of religion, in: *Quantitative Economics*, 7 (2016.) 3, 969-995.; Jesse Smith, Transmission of Faith in Families: The Influence of Religious Ideology, in: *Sociology of Religion*, 82 (2020.) 3, 332-356.

⁷⁴ Cf. Graphic image 2 and Table 1.

majority of them attended (or currently attend) this type of religious formation until the end of high school (64.5%).⁷⁵ The percentage of those who attended religious education only until the sacrament of confirmation (14.8%), first communion (2.2%) or in elementary school (7%) includes one fourth of the respondents from Franciscan youth. The obtained data significantly coincides with the research from 2000, but it should be taken into account that an older group of members of the Franciscan youth participated in the research.⁷⁶



Graphic image 11: Who influenced the formation of religious attitude of the Franciscan youth?

The intensity of Bible reading by members of the Franciscan youth of BIH is somewhat lower than that of their brethren from Zagreb.⁷⁷ Our respondents mostly read the Bible „periodically“ (44.1%), while a smaller number of them does so „on occasion“ (16%) or „only in troubles and hardships“ (7.3%). The number of those who read the Bible „every day“ amounts to 10%, and the number of those who „never“ read it is 22%.⁷⁸ Although we can only speculate

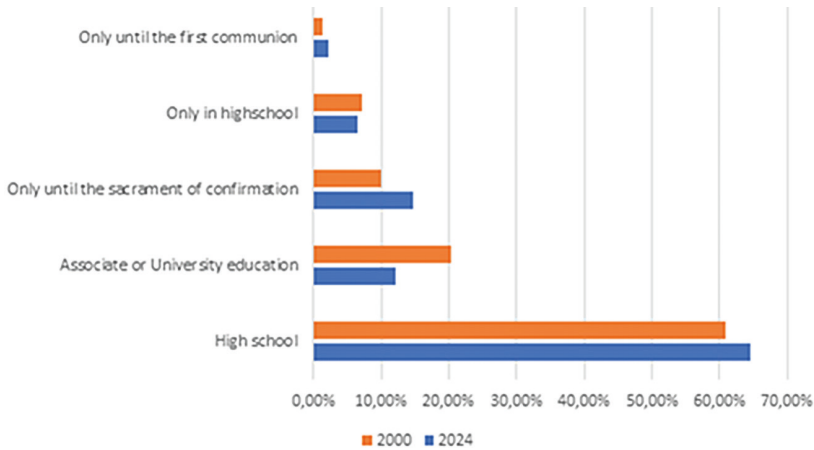
⁷⁵ Graphic image 12.

⁷⁶ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 58.

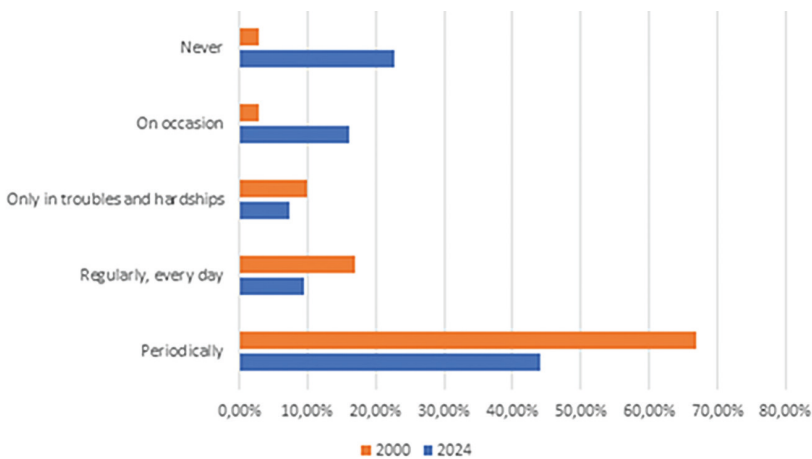
⁷⁷ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 58-59.

⁷⁸ Graphic image 13.

about the reasons for this dynamic or leave this question for further research, it is important to mention that in official manuals for the Franciscan Youth of BIH formation there are teaching units in which members work with the Bible, specific Bible texts and have short games based on it.⁷⁹



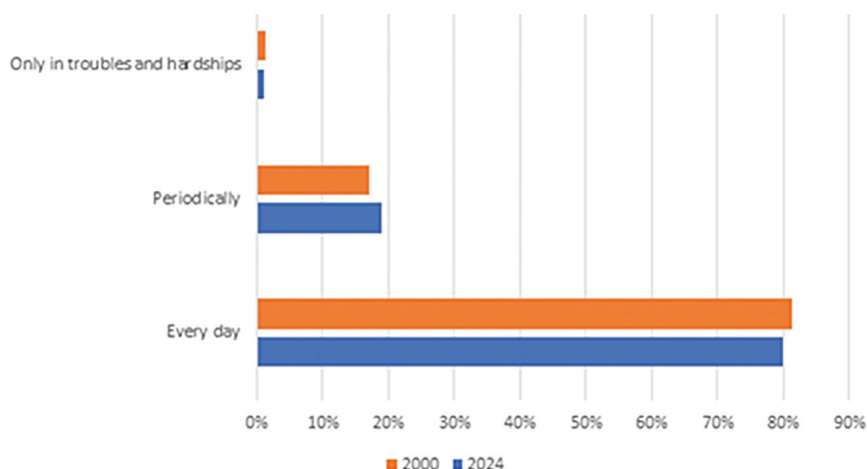
Graphic image 12: The attendance of the Franciscan youth members at religious education



Graphic image 13: The intensity of Bible reading of the Franciscan youth

⁷⁹ Franjevačka mladež BIH: *Nacionalni priručnik za formaciju*, 21-26., 70-75., 76-82., 87-94., 107-110.; Franjevačka mladež BIH: *Savjetnik za zabavne susrete*, 14-16., 27-28., 33-34., 57., 58., 61.

The data collected among the Franciscan youth of BIH about the frequency of praying⁸⁰ completely coincides with the data obtained in the research from 2000.⁸¹ The respondents from our research mostly practice prayer „every day“ (80%), while a smaller part does so „periodically“ (19%). The number of members who pray „only in troubles and hardships“ is statistically irrelevant in this research (1%). This dynamic of the frequency of praying testifies to the fact that, for the young members of the Franciscan youth, it represents an important element of faith through which they strive to build their personal relationship with God. It would be interesting, through future research, to conduct deeper research on the nature, form and contribution of prayer to the life of young people, considering that researches of this kind are rarely conducted among young adolescents.⁸²



Graphic image 14: The frequency of praying of the Franciscan youth members

⁸⁰ Graphic image 14.

⁸¹ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 58.

⁸² For more information about the influence and the contribution of prayer in young people's lives see: Jacques Janssen – Maerten Prins, *The abstract image of God: the case of Dutch youth*, in: *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 109 (2000.) janvier – mars, 31-48.; John P. McKinney – Kathleen G. McKinney, *Prayer in the lives of late adolescents*, in: *Journal of Adolescence*, 22 (1999.) 2, 279-290.; Jennifer G. Nance – Mary T. Quinn-Griffin – Rita McNulty – Joyce J. Fitzpatrick, *Prayer Practices Among Young Adults*, in: *Holistic Nursing Practice*, 24 (2010.) 6, 338-344.

The next aspects of the religious practice of the Franciscan youth that we analyzed in this research are the dynamic of attending mass⁸³ and their reasons for attending it.⁸⁴ When comparing the results about the dynamic of attending mass with the results from the previous research, we observe a significant overlap among the respondents, with a minor decline in the frequency of this practice. That is to say, the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH are somewhat less frequent (-13%) in attending the holy mass daily, compared to the respondents from Zagreb. A significant majority of our respondents (93%) attends the holy mass on „Sundays and church holidays“. It is possible to speculate, to an extent, about the possible reasons for this discrepancy based on the reasons for their attendance at the holy mass.

In the research conducted among the members of the Franciscan youth of Zagreb, attending mass represents something that is mostly done „out of belief“ (69%)⁸⁵, while with our respondents from BIH this category takes a second place (25%)⁸⁶. The dominant reason, that the respondents in this research chose as the foundation for their attendance at mass, is the belief that it is a part of „the command of God and the Church“ (69%). The reasons „out of custom“ (5.9%) and „for spending time with friends who attend mass“ (1%) were chosen by the minority of respondents.

If we compare the decline in the dynamic of daily mass attendance of the Franciscan youth of BIH compared to the members from Zagreb and the motivation for this trend, we can draw certain assumptions. The reasons for attending mass of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH are predominantly extrinsic. Also, we may assume that they are conditioned to an extent by external factors such as „the Ten Commandments“ or „the Five Precepts of the Church“ that the respondents adopted at the religious education at school or the parish catechesis.⁸⁷ Of course, when making these assumptions, it is necessary to take into account that these are mostly high school students who are significantly younger than the respondents from Zagreb and are consequently at different stag-

⁸³ Cf. Graphic image 15.

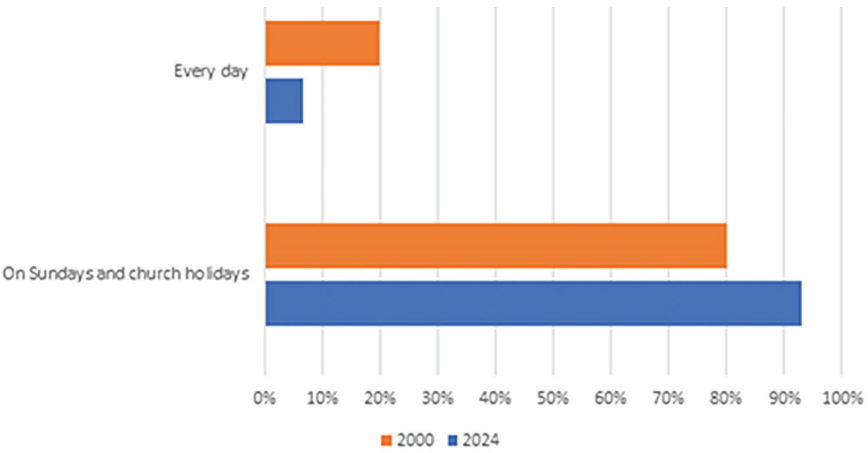
⁸⁴ Cf. Graphic image 16.

⁸⁵ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 60.

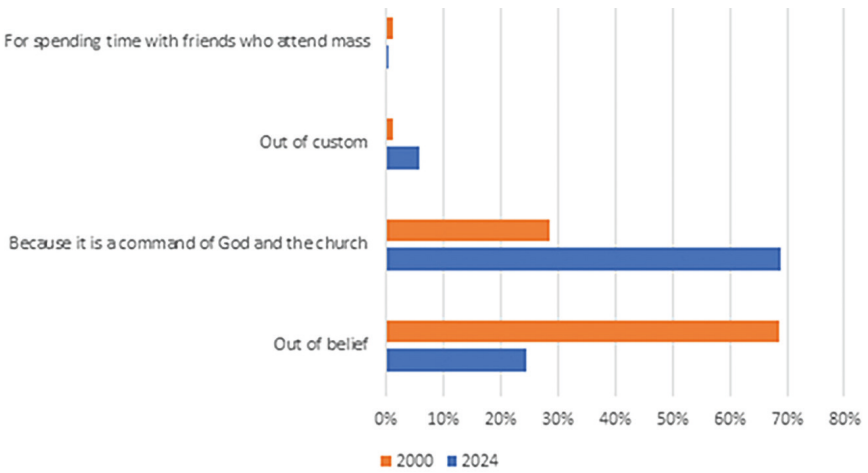
⁸⁶ Cf. Graphic image 16.

⁸⁷ Cf. Graphic image 12.

es of their faith journey.⁸⁸ The reason „because it is a command of God and The Church“ for attending the mass does not in any way diminish the value of their regular Sunday attendance and it is a commendable indicator of their desire to be active members of the Church.



Graphic image 15: Franciscan youth members' attendance at mass



Graphic image 16: Franciscan youth members' reasons for attending mass

⁸⁸ Cf. Graphic image 2 and Table 1.

When we observe going to the sacrament of confession by the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH we note that the majority of our respondents go to confession „for major holidays“ (40%), „when needed“ (33%) and „monthly“ (22%).⁸⁹ Compared to the previous research it is clear that there was a significant decline in attending confession monthly (-28%), and a growth in the percentage of those who do it for major holidays like Christmas, Easter or The Assumption of Mary (+35,7%). This dynamic of going to confession additionally speaks in favor to the assumption that the motives of the Franciscan youth are of an extrinsic nature i.e. they are based on respect for and following the church regulations.

Similarly, we also observed the frequency of receiving the holy communion of our respondents. The data obtained within this category significantly coincide with the research from 2000 although there are certain differences.⁹⁰ Although both groups of respondents receive holy communion mostly „on Sundays and holidays“ (72%) there is a difference between those who do it „every day“ and those who do it „on occasion“. Members of the Franciscan youth more often receive holy communion „on occasion“ (22.8%), while the members of the Franciscan youth from Zagreb do it „every day“ (23%).⁹¹ Although the scope of this research⁹² does not allow us a deeper analysis of the current trends in mass attendance, its perception in the life of the respondents and the dynamic of approaching the sacraments of confession and communion, leads us to the assumption that the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH have a traditional approach to the sacramental life that is based on the commands of God and the Church. When comparing all of the mentioned elements of the sacramental life of our respondents i.e. members of the Franciscan youth of BIH, we note that the majority of them attend the mass „on Sundays and holidays“ (90%), receive communion „on Sundays and holidays“ (72%), but mostly goes to

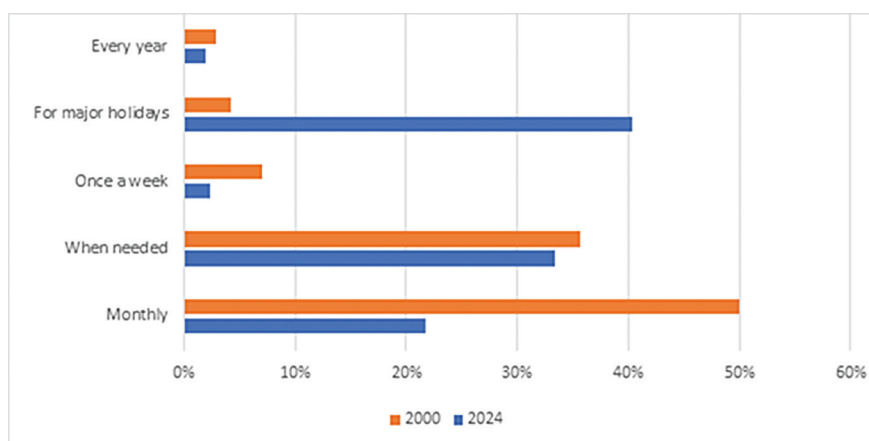
⁸⁹ Graphic image 17.

⁹⁰ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 60.

⁹¹ Graphic image 18.

⁹² The category “on Sundays and holidays”, established in the survey from 2000, does not allow us to distinguish sufficiently between those respondents who, for example, regularly receive communion on Sundays and those who do so during important religious holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Assumption, etc. In this way, two groups of believers - with different dynamics of access to the sacraments - are classified in the same category.

confession „for major holidays“ (40%) and „when needed“ (33%).⁹³ Because of this discrepancy, as well as the decline in the percentage of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH who approach confession monthly (-28%)⁹⁴, it is necessary to speak more about the importance of this sacrament for the formation of the complete person of faith.⁹⁵ All of the mentioned factors confirm the first part of the third hypothesis, according to which the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH, compared to their fellows from Zagreb, are traditional in understanding and accepting faith.

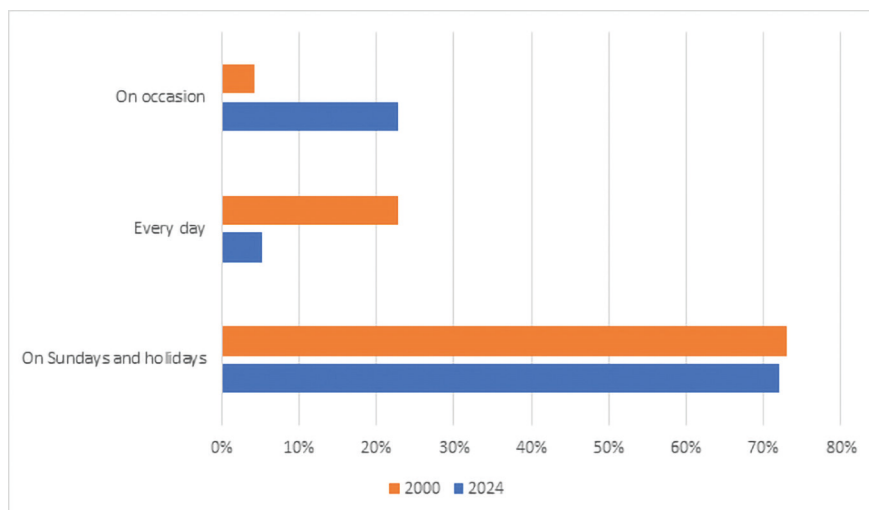


Graphic image 17: Going to confession by the members of the Franciscan youth

⁹³ Cf. Graphic images 15, 17, 18.

⁹⁴ Graphic image 17.

⁹⁵ A number of Croatian authors wrote about the importance of proper preparation of children, young people and adults for the sacrament of confession and its role in the complete religious formation of an individual. Although the theological areas from which the authors observe the mentioned sacrament are different, what is common to all of them is the noticed gap between what the Church requires and the attitude of believers towards the sacrament of confession. For more information on this topic see: Alojzije Čondić, Svećenik pred izazovom pastoralne ispovijedi, in: *Služba Božja*, 56 (2016.) 1, 22-41.; Josip Šimunović, Priprava djece za sakramente prve ispovijedi i pričesti, in: *Diacovensia*, 24 (2016.) 4, 585-605.; Anton Tamarut, Teološko-pastoralna aktualnost sakramenta ispovijedi, in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 77 (2007.) 3, 695-726.; Jure Jurić-Šimunović, Ispovijed u odgojnom procesu čovjeka – vjernika, in: *Služba Božja*, 40 (2000.) 2, 201-216.



Graphic image 18: Members of the Franciscan youth receiving holy communion

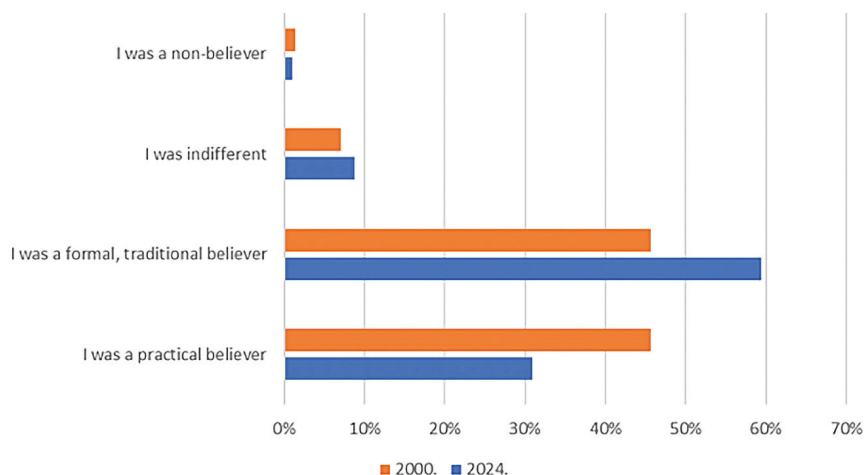
4.4. New experiences and fruits of the Franciscan youth of BIH

In order to adequately evaluate the new experiences and fruits that the respondents received through formation within the Franciscan youth of BIH, it was necessary to evaluate the former religious experience at the beginning, as the authors Peračković and Mihaljević did in the research from 2000.⁹⁶ In the initial survey in Zagreb, an equal percentage of respondents (45%) believed that they belonged to the „formal, traditional believers“ or „practical convinced believers“ before joining the Franciscan youth. The results of this research show how our interviewees in Franciscan Youth BIH came from a somewhat more conservative or traditional background environment - according to their self-assessment.⁹⁷ The majority of respondents think that they fall under the category of „formal, traditional believers“ (59%) before joining the Franciscan Youth of BIH, while a slightly smaller percentage says they were „practical convinced believers“ (31%). The lowest percentage are those respond-

⁹⁶ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 61.

⁹⁷ Cf. Graphic image 19.

ents who were „indifferent believers“ before joining the Franciscan youth (8.8%) or „non-believers“ (1%).



Graphic image 19: Religious experience before joining the Franciscan youth

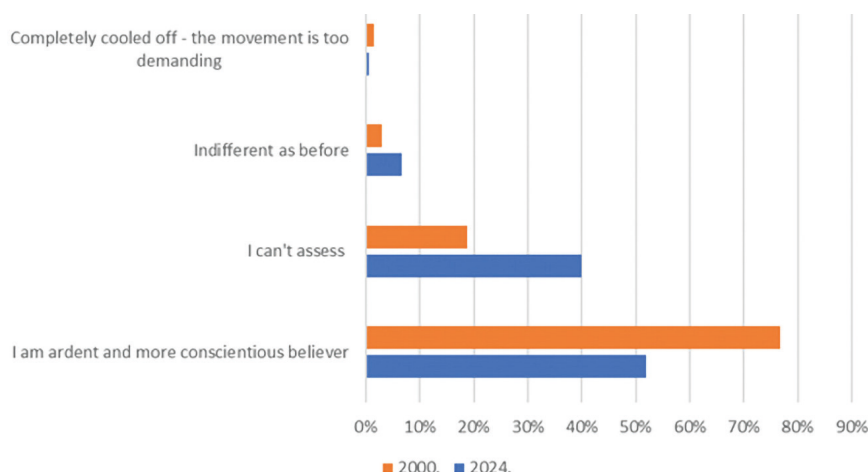
After joining the Franciscan Youth - and participating in the multi-year religious formation⁹⁸ - half of the respondents believe that they have become „more fervent and conscientious believers“ (52%).⁹⁹ Although these are positive and encouraging data that suggest that the religious formation in the hands of the Franciscan youth of BIH will bear good fruit, it is necessary to maintain a dose of caution. A positive self-assessment of the religious progress of members of the Franciscan youth of BIH is a bit lower in the category of „ardent and conscientious believers“ (-25%) and we can also notice a growth in their indecisiveness, i.e. the category „can't assess“ (+21%) compared to the previous research.¹⁰⁰ Of course, when interpreting any of the data, it is necessary to take into account the age and cognitive differences between the respondents in these two studies. We assume that the student population, which prevailed in the first survey, can evaluate their religious experience more objectively than the Franciscan youth of BIH who are still in high school.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Cf. Graphic image 5.

⁹⁹ Graphic image 20.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 61.

¹⁰¹ The official documents of the Franciscan Youth of BIH recommend the inclusion of people between 15 and 30 years in the organization, and the data obtained in



Graphic image 20: Current religious experience of Franciscan youth members

The change that members of the Franciscan youth of BIH notice the most after joining the organization is a „more purposeful life“ (40%) and a greater „caring more for the needs of others“ (30%).¹⁰² In comparison to the previous research¹⁰³ we see how these two categories replaced the positions and a decline is evident in the category „I care more for the needs of others“ (-22%). If we add to this decline the growth in the categories „I don't know“ (+9.1%) and „the same as before“ (+13.1%) we get the impression that the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH have a bit more difficulty distinguishing concrete contributions of Franciscan youth than their brethren from Zagreb.

When analyzing the attitude of members of the Franciscan youth of BIH towards difficult life situations, we observe positive trends.¹⁰⁴ Most of our respondents receive difficult life situations „with faith and hope“ (64%), while a smaller part points out that such temptations „bring into question God's goodness“ (7.10%) or

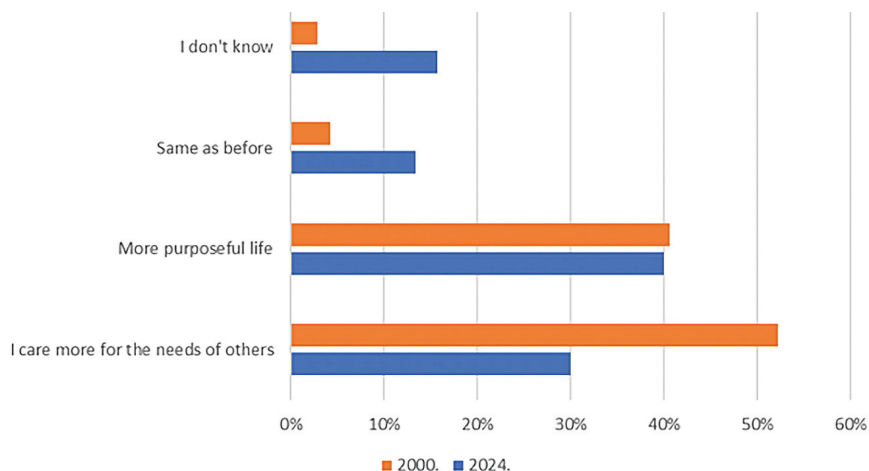
our research suggest that at the level of BIH predominantly we have high school population. Cf. Frama Hercegovina, Put Franjevačkog poziva, art. 23.; Frama Hercegovina, Statut Frame u Bosni i Hercegovini, art. 20.; Graphic image 2. i Tablica 1.

¹⁰² Graphic image 21.

¹⁰³ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Graphic image 22.

„drive them to despair“ (3%). The collected data, to a significant extent, overlap with the data from the research conducted in 2000.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, these results confirm that quality formation - based on faith - can significantly contribute to the development of a positive outlook on the world despite the tragedies that can occur during a lifetime.¹⁰⁶



Graphic image 21: Life changes of Franciscan youth members

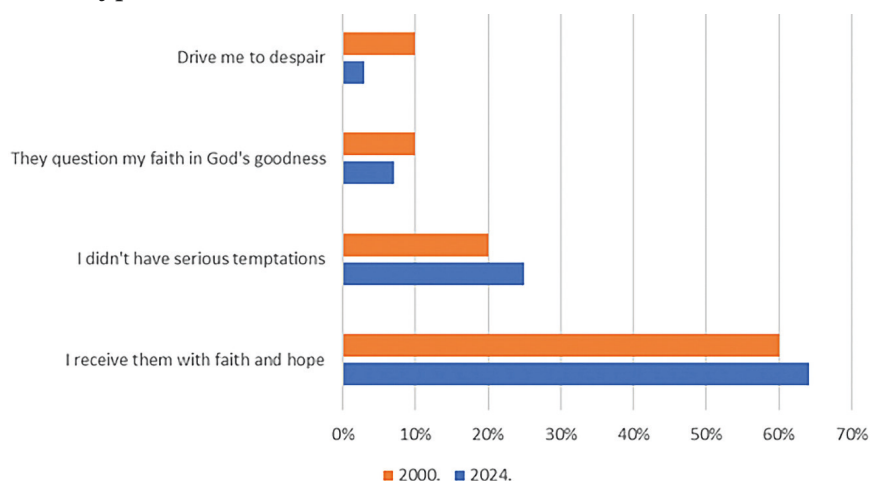
When asked about the public testimony of their religious beliefs, members of the Franciscan youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina are somewhat more reserved than their brethren in Zagreb.¹⁰⁷ Most of our respondents (61%) points out that their religious beliefs are witnessed with their life or is confessed in public way. A smaller number of respondents „do not talk about their religious beliefs“ (20.9%), while the remaining number of members of the Francis-

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁶ For more information on the influence of religion and religious formations when coping with difficult life situations and tragedies in young people see : Emmi Rinne – Pekka Raiha – Arniika Kuusisto – Arto Kallioniemi, *The Meaning of the Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of the Youth: The Case of Finnish Christian School Students*, in: *Journal of Youth and Theology*, 23 (2023.) 3, 124-150.; Jo-Ann Vis – Amy Battiston, *Faith-Based Trauma Intervention: Spiritual-Based Strategies for Adolescent Student sin Faith-Based School*, in: *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 33 (2014.) 3-4., 218-235.

¹⁰⁷ Graphic image 23.

can youth of BIH can't decide on this answer (18%). Data from this survey, compared to the one from 2000¹⁰⁸, show a smaller decline (-24%) in public testimony of religious belief between members of the Franciscan youth in favor of those who do not testify or can't decide. This discrepancy, observed through the difference in the age of the respondents and their experiences connected with joining the Franciscan youth, additionally confirms that the members of Franciscan youth BIH are somewhat more reserved and closed to action towards the world which confirms the second part of the third hypothesis.



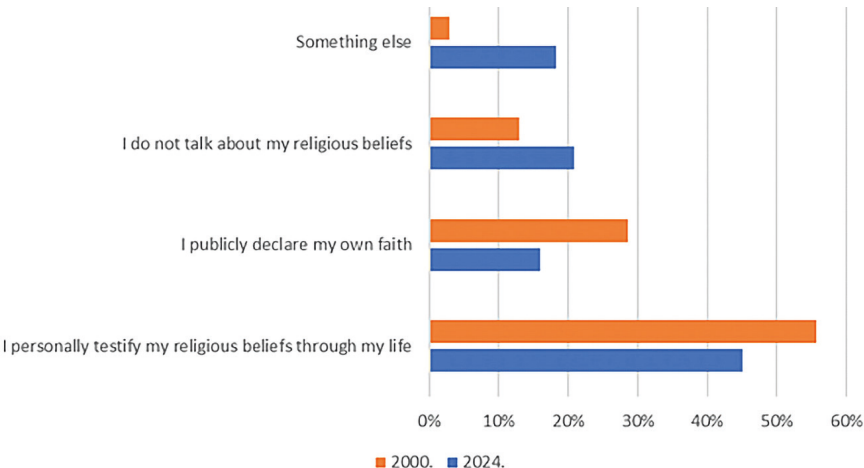
Graphic image 22: Attitude towards difficult life situations of members of the Franciscan youth

In the last segment we looked into are life values of the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH.¹⁰⁹ Respondents were given the opportunity to choose three answers. At the top of the ranking are the same values as in the case of the Franciscan youth in Zagreb: „faith in God“ (92%) and „having a happy family“ (78%). Although the categories of religion and family are at the top of the values of members of the Franciscan youth of BIH, it is interesting to note the decline, i.e. growth, in certain categories compared to the previous survey. For the members of the Franciscan youth of BIH, it is more important to have „good health“ (+15.7%) than, for example, „to feel

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Graphic image 24.

the joy of love“ (-25.9%). Furthermore, the obtained data show that the respondents are more focused on themselves, which is why we can notice a decline in extrinsic categories such as „dedicate yourself to others“ (-19.7%) and „give your time to others“ (-10%) in favor of intrinsic categories „enjoy life“ (+10.8%) or the before mentioned health categories.



Graphic image 23: Public testimony of faith by members of the Franciscan youth



Graphic image 24: Life values of the members of the Franciscan youth

5. HYPOTHESES CONFIRMATION

While conducting this research, we relied on the Peračković and Mihaljević's research. We modified their hypotheses and added our own.¹¹⁰

In the first hypothesis, we assumed that for the members of the Franciscan youth family represents the dominant place of acquiring religious formation. Although the research results showed how during the formation of a religious attitude - before joining the Franciscan youth - the family takes the primary place, this percentage is only 30%, which is not enough to confirm the set hypothesis. Other elements that contribute to the previous religious formation are priest (19%), friends (15%) and the result of personal initiative (14.4%).¹¹¹

The second hypothesis deals with the issue of the environment from which the Franciscan youth members come and the level of education of their parents. Through our research we succeeded to partially confirm the second hypothesis. Members of the Franciscan youth predominantly come from rural areas (80.49%)¹¹², but most of their parents do not have a lower educational status¹¹³. Most of the parents of members of the Franciscan youth have completed high school education - father 59.1%, mother 55.3%.

In the third hypothesis, we assumed that members of the Franciscan youth of BIH are traditional in the understanding and acceptance of religion and more closed to public testimony than their brothers from Zagreb. The data collected in both surveys suggest that our respondents approach this movement with a somewhat more traditional religious background (+13%).¹¹⁴ Although like their brothers from Zagreb, they regularly pray, go to mass and receive communion¹¹⁵ their relationship towards the sacraments rests less on personal conviction (-44%) and more on respecting the orders and regulations (+40%)¹¹⁶ After many years of formation in Franciscan youth they are less ardent for public testimony

¹¹⁰ Cf. Krešimir Peračković – Vine Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture članstva i temeljna obilježja pokreta „Franjevačka mladež“ - jedan primjer postmodernog Crkvenog pokreta*, 52-53.

¹¹¹ Cf. Graphic image 11.

¹¹² Cf. Graphic images 3 and 4.

¹¹³ Cf. Table 1.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Graphic image 19.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Graphic image 14., 15. and 18.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Graphic image 16.

of their faith (-25%) or are more undecided (+21%) than their fellow brothers¹¹⁷. Furthermore, there is a higher level of indecisiveness among respondents when distinguishing the fruits of joining the Franciscan youth (+13.1%) as well as a drop in employment for the needs of others (-22%) compared to their fellow brothers from Zagreb.¹¹⁸ Although the overwhelming majority of respondents are ready to testify publicly about their religious views with words or their lives, the number of those who do not speak about their religion or are undecided is higher than in the previous survey.¹¹⁹ All highlighted data indicate that the Franciscan youth of BiH is somewhat more traditional in its understanding and acceptance of religion and is more closed to its public testimony, which confirms the last hypothesis.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Franciscan youth of BiH represents the church movement of young lay believers side by side and under the mentorship of the Franciscan Order and the Secular Franciscan Order of BiH.¹²⁰ We can look at these two organizations as two different stages in an individual's faith formation spanning the period from adolescence and youth to adulthood and old age.

The Franciscan youth of BiH consists of slightly less than three thousand members divided into 56 local fraternities across the country. Two thirds of our respondents are women, and one third men¹²¹ under the age of 20¹²² with completed high school¹²³. Members have been involved in the community for many years¹²⁴, they go to meetings once a week¹²⁵ and try to participate actively or at least occasionally in Franciscan youth activities.¹²⁶

¹¹⁷ Cf. Graphic image 20.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Graphic image 21.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Graphic image 23.

¹²⁰ Cf. Nacionalno vijeće Franjevačkog svjetovnog reda, Statut Nacionalnog bratstva Franjevačkog svjetovnog reda u Bosni i Hercegovini, in: <http://www.svjeto-vni-franjevci.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Statut-FSR-BiH.pdf>, art. 8. (10.7.2024.)

¹²¹ Cf. Graphic image 1.

¹²² Cf. Graphic image 2.

¹²³ Cf. Table 1.

¹²⁴ Cf. Graphic image 5.

¹²⁵ Cf. Graphic image 7.

¹²⁶ Cf. Graphic image 8.

The main reasons for their inclusion in the community are strengthening their personal faith and meeting with like-minded people¹²⁷ which can be seen from the atmosphere at the meetings, which is predominantly spiritual and friendly oriented¹²⁸. Following such a perception, it is not surprising that the respondents think that the movement helps them in their personal search for God and building fellowship among members as the dominant characteristic of the Franciscan youth of BIH.¹²⁹

The formation of their religious experience was most influenced by their families and a priest¹³⁰, and attending religious studies during high school education¹³¹. A bit less than half of the members of the Franciscan youth occasionally read the Bible¹³², while the majority pray every day¹³³. Although members go to mass regularly on Sundays and holidays¹³⁴, and approach communion in a similar dynamic¹³⁵, for most of them, going to mass is not something they do out of belief, but they do it because of keeping God's and church commandments¹³⁶. We assume that similar convictions can also be applied when going to the sacrament of confession, to which the majority goes during major holidays or as needed¹³⁷.

Before joining the Franciscan youth, most of the members were formal or in a smaller percentage practical believers.¹³⁸ This experience led half of them to become fervent believers, although there is a significant percentage of those who cannot assess the impact of the organization on their religious formation.¹³⁹ While two thirds of respondents notices positive intrinsic and extrinsic changes in their lives, there is still a significant number of those who do not see or are not sure if any changes have occurred.¹⁴⁰ Regardless of a certain amount of indecisiveness among the members, most of them

¹²⁷ Cf. Graphic image 6.

¹²⁸ Cf. Graphic image 9.

¹²⁹ Cf. Graphic image 10.

¹³⁰ Cf. Graphic image 11.

¹³¹ Cf. Graphic image 12.

¹³² Cf. Graphic image 13.

¹³³ Cf. Graphic image 14.

¹³⁴ Cf. Graphic image 15.

¹³⁵ Cf. Graphic image 18.

¹³⁶ Cf. Graphic image 16.

¹³⁷ Cf. Graphic image 17.

¹³⁸ Cf. Graphic image 19.

¹³⁹ Cf. Graphic image 20.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Graphic image 21.

are ready to accept life's difficulties with a sense of faith and hope¹⁴¹, as well as publicly testify their faith¹⁴². The values towards which members of the Franciscan youth of BIH strive in life are building a personal relationship with God and founding a happy family.¹⁴³

In the complex social events taking place in BIH, we can say that the Franciscan youth forms a kind of stable spiritual stronghold for all those who join this organization. Religious formation based on evangelical values, imbued with the dialogic spirit of St. Francis and built within the church community represents a proven and high-quality model of working with young people. Although the research showed certain elements that need to be worked on in the future, the Franciscan youth of BIH is an organization that has greatly contributed to the religious formation of thousands and thousands of young people over the past 30 years. We believe that the continuation of its mission among the youth of BIH will be a safeguard for the deep-rooted religious and national identity of the Croats living in this area.

VJERSKA FORMACIJA U POKRETU FRANJEVAČKA MLADEŽ U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

Sažetak

Franjevački red je kroz povijest odigrao značajnu ulogu u očuvanju nacionalnog i vjerskog identiteta Hrvata u BIH. U ovom istraživanju nastojali smo procijeniti u kojoj mjeri jedan njegov dio tj. Franjevačka mladež BIH pridonosi vjerskoj formaciji mladih u kontekstu aktualnih društvenih prilika. Rad se temelji na istraživanju provedenom među skoro tri tisuće članova Franjevačke mladeži BIH. Cilj istraživanja bio je analizirati sociodemografsku strukturu članova, ispitati njihovu motivaciju za pridruživanjem Franjevačkoj mladeži, vrednovati formaciju i vjerničku prasku, istražiti dosadašnje iskustvo te prepoznati potencijalne plodove u osobnom vjerničkom životu. Članovi Franjevačke mladeži mogli su slobodno i anonimno pristupiti ispunjanju digitalne ankete kroz travanj 2024. godine. Od

¹⁴¹ Cf. Graphic image 22.

¹⁴² Cf. Graphic image 23.

¹⁴³ Cf. Graphic image 24.

tri tisuće članova Franjevačke mladeži BIH anketu je ispunilo 820 ispitanika što čini uzorak od 27,3%. Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su kako obitelj, iako vodeći faktor, ne zauzima dominantno mjesto stjecanje vjerske formacije kod ispitanika. Nadalje, iako većina ispitanika dolazi iz ruralne sredine njihovi roditelji nisu većinom nižeg stupnja obrazovanja. Ispitanici u ovom istraživanju nešto su tradiciionalniji u shvaćanju i prihvaćanju vjere te zatvoreniji za javno svjedočenje u odnosu na ispitanike iz sličnih istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: Franjevačka mladež, Bosna i Hercegovina, vjerska formacija, mladi