

Religiosity and Pastoral Theology

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ŽUFFA, J.: Religiosity and Pastoral Theology. *Studia Aloisiana*, 4, 2013, 3, s. 57 – 67. Reflection of values and life-style changes in the society is important in the process of identification of “sighs of time”. This paper analyses the religiosity in Slovakia and neighbour countries based on the “Aufbruch” survey done at the University of Vienna. The research measures religiosity of people in 14 countries. Values of religiosity are divided into three dimensions, namely personal religiosity, contents of faith and relationship with the Church. In this study we compare the chosen values from the research in the year 1997 and 2007. Based on the survey results, it is possible to create three groups of people with different religiosity status: orthodox-religious, cultural-religious and seculars.

The chapter “Short historical excursus” continues with analysis of some historical facts in the Slovak society after the political changes in 1989 and their influence at the religiosity. The development of Slovak society and the Catholic Church in Slovakia is described by the periods of personal development: childhood, puberty, teenager and post-teenager period.

The last part of the paper concludes some opportunities for pastoral theology to work with actual topics in the “adult time” of society and the Church. The most important result tends to be the necessity for Church to be a strong discussion partner in the Europa-values discussion, and the wish to remain the “Agency of hope” also for people who do not see themselves as members of the Church.

Keywords: religiosity, pastoral theology, values, society and church, qualitative research

Introduction

There is a well-known answer of Jesus to Pharisees, when they asked him to show them a sign from heaven: “When evening comes, you say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red, and in the morning, today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” (Mt 16,2-3) If we want to analyse the religious diversity of society in Slovakia, only the numbers from Statistic office are not sufficient for the analysis. It is not true anymore

that more than three-fifths, or according to the last census in 2011, 62% of the population believes in all contents and values of the Catholic Church. Just the simple observation of the society provides us with the result stating that the number of people living according to Christian principles is decreasing.

In the following text, we try to study the religiosity of people not only according to their answer to simple question: In which Church or religious community do you belong to?

Religiosity can be measured by how it is reflected in the thinking and behaviour of the individual. Analysis of religion, religiosity or spirituality is considered to be possible, as it is part of man's subjective consciousness and manifested in its beliefs and attitudes. Our analysis is based on complex data and research methodology implemented in the survey called Aufbruch, realized by Pastoral forum in Vienna in two phases, in the year 1997 and 2007.¹ The survey was conducted in fourteen post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which allows us to create multi-national comparison and to define development trends based on changes in two periods of the survey. Researchers of Pastoral forum divide religiosity into three dimensions: personal religiosity, the contents of faith and relationship with religion.² In the research, they created several indexes for each dimension – numeric expression, correlation of selected issues in a particular area. Because of the complexity of methodology of indexes creation in the survey dimensions, we present in our analysis just the final typology of religiosity. In each dimension, we select the database³ of some of the issues from the answers and compare them in Slovakia, Czech, Hungary and Poland as neighbour countries.

Personal religiosity

How people speak about their faith? What affects their religiosity? What impact does the religiosity have on individual person and its profane life? There are some aspects connected with the dimension of personal religiosity. We choose only some of the questions used in the survey.

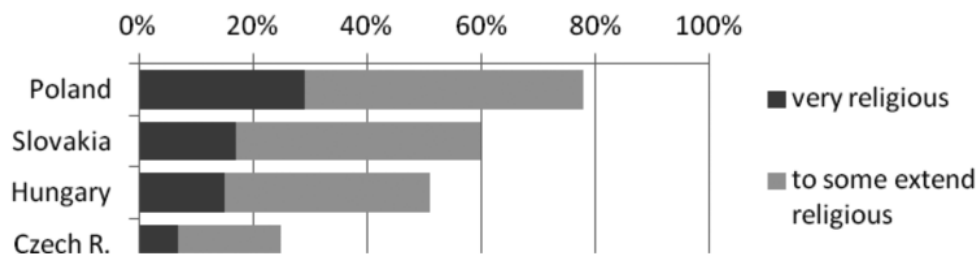
Even the result of simple question, how respondents from Slovakia evaluate their individual religiosity, shows that in the year 2007, there was 60% of Slovaks who saw themselves as extremely or partly religious (Fig. 1). Already this percentage is significantly lower than the numbers provided by the Statistic office and concerning belonging to some values.

1 The survey is guaranteed by Paul Zulehner, Emeritus Professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Vienna.

2 Cf. ZULEHNER, M. P., TOMKA, M., NALETOVNA, I.: *Gott nach dem Kommunismus*. Ostfildern, 2008, p. 21.

3 In this analysis we work with the database which was provided by authors of the Survey „Aufbruch“, with permission to create own comparisons and interpretations.

Figure 1: Independently of whether you follow religious rules or not, would you say, that you are... (Aufbruch, 2007)



Based on the output of Aufbruch research, which was conducted first in 1997 and second time in 2007, we can compare the same question in the same country in ten-year interval. While Hungary and the Czech Republic went during this period through a decrease of personal religiosity, the numerical results from Slovakia and Poland speak about its growth.

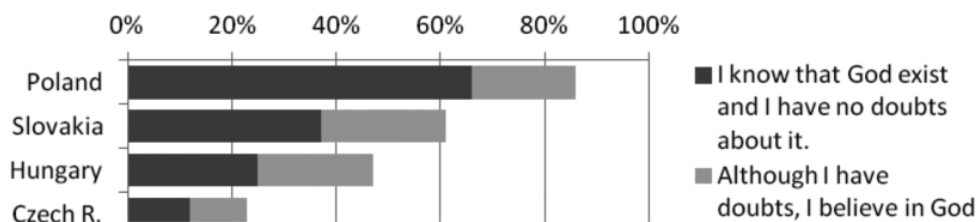
By the expectation of respondents, "In ten years people will be..." more, less, or equally faithful, we can observe different responses. All three statements were evaluated in a similar way by Hungarians. Czechs and Slovaks are more skeptical, because half of the population thinks that in ten years we will have a smaller number of believers. When talking about religiosity, the biggest number of skeptics is in Poland, specifically 70%.

The contents of faith

In Europe, the Christian religion is an integral part of history. We can list a range of topics that make up the content of faith. But which of them are still relevant for people and how they influence the development of their spiritual identity? Just the simple observation of the development in the society shows that in recent decades, this identity is increasingly linked to the full adoption of the contents of a particular religious faith. We can talk about the "religious tourism"; when a person takes contents from different religions and lifestyles according to his own choice.

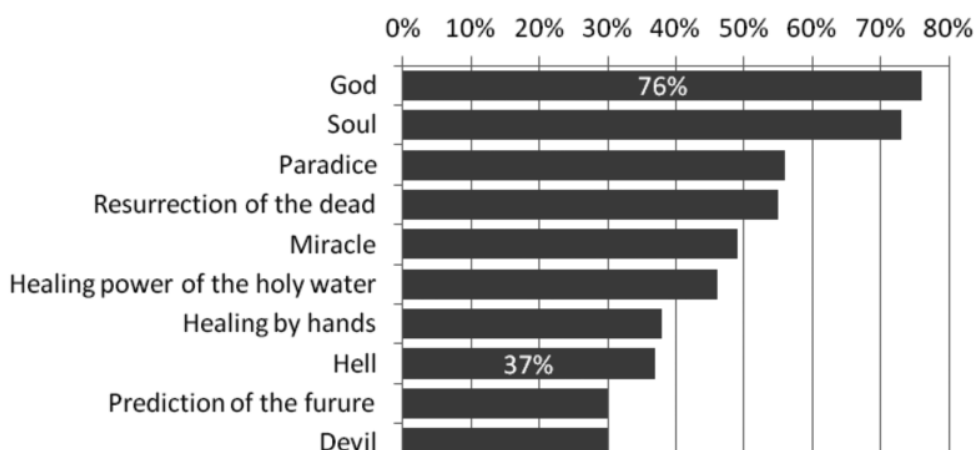
One of the most important priorities in the dimension "content of faith" is God. The positive answers about belief in God (Fig. 2) are again lower than the percentage about denominations from the Statistical Office in Slovakia. Most interesting comparison about God-believers is between Slovakia and Czech Republic with the difference of 38%. All answers show if respondents believe in any God, but does not examine the exact understanding of God, whether God is a person, just energy, or as agnostics raise the possibility – existence of the unknown. The test exact "faces" of God by respondents is possible with other questions they were not included in the Survey.

Figure 2: Which of the following statements most closely corresponds to your views? (Aufbruch, 2007)



The question about faith in God is one of the first questions we use when speaking about religion. For deeper analyse is necessary to see faiths of people in other contents. In the following graph, we present Slovaks' faith in certain matters related to religion (Fig. 3). For example it is surprising that only half of respondents believing in God believe also in the existence of hell.

Figure 3: Believe in... (Aufbruch, Slovakia 2007)



Relationship to the Church

By some survey the most widely measure of belonging to a denomination is choosing one or no possibility from the denominations list. Answers to this question allow us to create a mosaic of the post-communist European countries by the dominant denominations (Fig. 4):

- Catholic countries (Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania),
- Orthodox countries (Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Belarus),
- Atheistic countries (Czech Republic, the former East Germany),
- Pluralistic countries (Hungary, Ukraine).⁴

⁴ Cf. ZULEHNER, M. P., TOMKA, M., NALETOVNA, I.: *Gott nach dem Kommunismus*, p. 186.

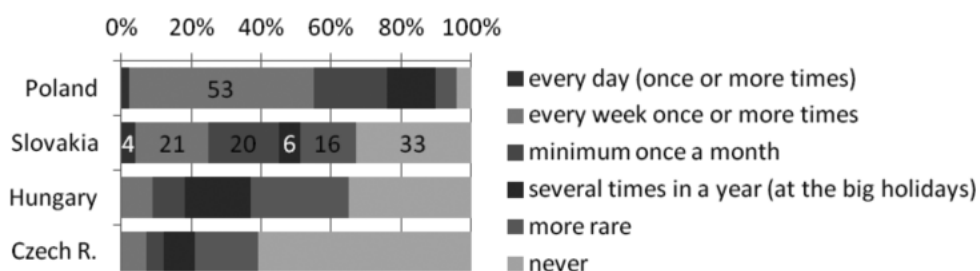
Figure 4: Which Church or religious community do you belong to?
(Aufbruch, 2007)

	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Muslim	none
Poland	88,6	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,0	10,4
Croatia	73,4	0,1	1,2	0,4	0,8	24,2
Slovakia	70,0	4,1	0,6	9,1	0,0	16,2
Slovenia	60,4	0,1	0,8	0,9	1,9	36,0
Lithuania	59,2	0,4	2,5	1,6	0,2	36,1
Hungary	36,7	1,6	0,0	12,4	0,0	49,3
Czech R.	16,6	0,0	0,2	1,0	0,0	82,2
East Germany	5,5	0,0	0,2	21,6	0,9	71,7
Ukraine	1,8	5,9	34,9	1,4	0,3	55,6
Belarus	6,3	0,1	45,3	0,4	0,3	47,6
Serbia	10,2	0,2	74,1	3,7	1,5	10,3
Romania	10,7	1,1	77,9	7,4	0,2	2,7
Bulgaria	0,9	0,1	80,6	1,1	13,4	3,9
Moldova	0,4	0,0	83,1	1,1	0,2	15,2

Compared to survey from the year 1997, significantly more respondents in Ukraine and Slovakia (10% more) is registered to some of denominations, on the other hand decline by eight percentage can be observed in Hungary, Czech Republic and Croatia.

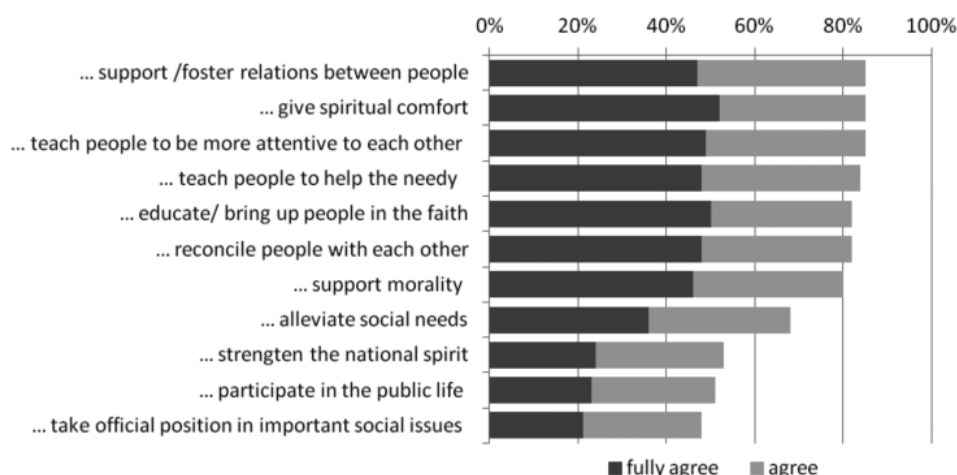
There is correlation between practicing some religion and registering to religion, but in numerical terms the registering to religion shows higher numbers. In a very simplified way, we can present practice based on the frequency of attending religious services in the church (Fig. 5). The interesting point from the figure we can see the high percentage of people attending the services in the church every day in Slovakia (4%). The number is higher than in Poland (2%), although Poland has most visitors of Church ones or more times in a week (53%).

Figure 5: Apart from weddings, burial ceremonies and baptisms, how often do you attend a religious service in a church?
(Aufbruch, Slovakia 2007)



To complement the dimension of the relationship to the Church, we present the results of questions investigating the expectations of respondents from religious communities in Slovakia (Fig. 6).

Figure 6: In my opinion, churches and religious communities exist in order to... (Aufbruch, Slovakia 2007)



The big challenge for the Church in Slovakia is based on the expectation of half of the population to show clear position of important issues in civil society. Similarly, high expectation considers strengthening of national awareness and participation of Churches in public affairs.

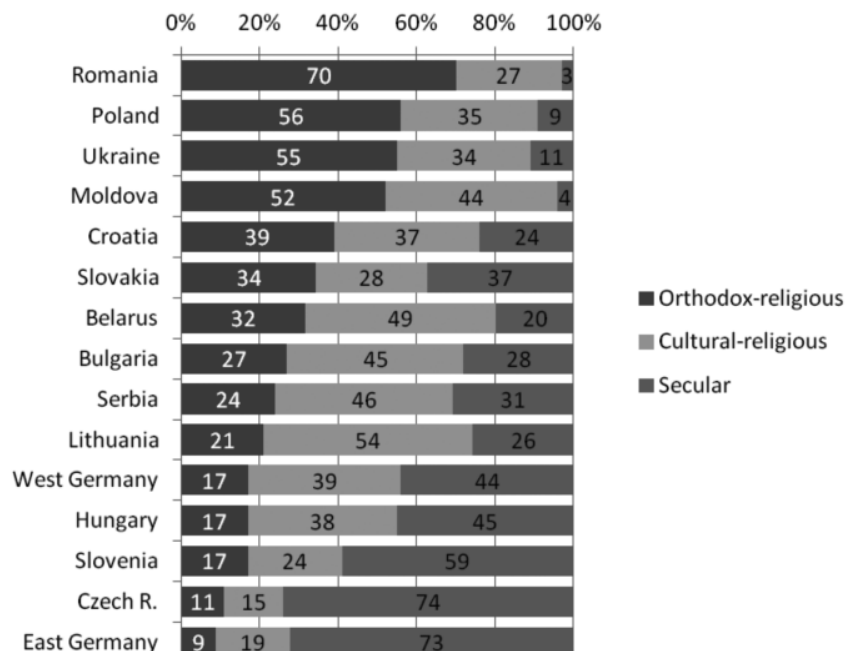
Typology of religiosity

Based on established indexes in each of the three dimensions of religiosity, it is possible to find people with similar traits and to create types that connect them. In sociology, this process is called cluster analysis and is designed to clarify the results of the data.⁵ In this way, the authors of the Aufbruch study identified three types describing religiosity of people from 17 indexes (8 dimensions of personal spirituality, 3 from the content of faith and 6 from the relationship to the Church). They are namely the orthodox-religious, cultural religious and secular.⁶ When we apply the already generated types to the data from representative samples of the countries surveyed, we can create a mosaic of religious life in the part of Europe with the post-communist heritage (Fig. 7).

5 Cf. MATULNÍK, J., et al.: *Analýza religiozity katolíkov na Slovensku : Poznatky zo sociologického výskumu*. Trnava : Dobrá kniha, 2009, p.15.

6 Cf. ZULEHNER, M. P., TOMKA, M., NALETOVNA, I.: *Gott nach dem Kommunismus*, p. 120.

Figure 7: Typology from fourteen countries surveyed⁷ (Aufbruch, 2007)



The graph shows us countries in which the largest group is the group religious-orthodox (Poland, Romania and Moldova represented mainly by the Orthodox faith), in others there are people with secular faith (Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary). Significantly, Lithuania, Belarus, Bulgaria and Moldova have many cultural-religious people living there. Other countries seem to be mixed.

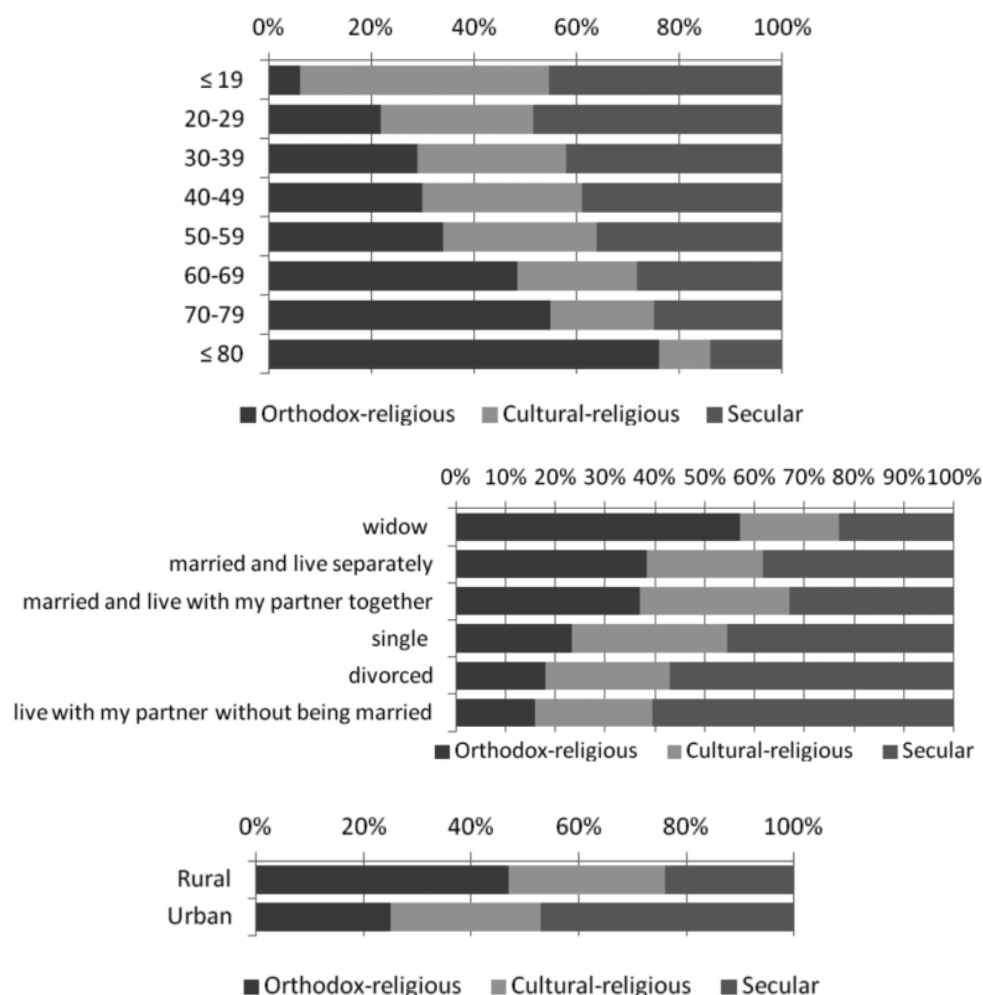
After selecting a research sample from Slovakia, we apply data sorting by age, marital or non-marital status and residence (Fig. 8).

The last graph proves the life experience in many points:

- The older the people are the more important role the religiosity plays in their life. Numeric expression may be partly undermined by the fact that the graph shows us the state in 2007, after aging of the young generation, the numerical expressions of religiosity in all age categories listed below will be likely lower, but based on comparison with older data, we can say with certainty that the trend of the religiosity growth during aging will not change.
- Difficult life situations (e.g. death of a life partner) play a significant role in preserving or rediscovery of religiosity.
- The process of secularization of the community is much stronger in cities.

⁷ Results from the parts of Germany are listed separately, in order to show the significant effect of different historical background of eastern and western part.

Figure 8: Typology according to the selected categories of respondents (Aufbruch, Slovakia 2007)



Short historical excursion

When talking about religiosity in our region, we will use a short excursion of the largest "religious service provider" in Slovak society, the Catholic Church, and its development in recent years. In 1989, one social stage ended. This stage significantly formed the context of life of the Churches in Slovakia. We consider completion of this stage to be such a significant change that creation of a mosaic of further functioning of the Church can be likened to stages of development of human life.⁸ This allows us to capture the situation of the Church in Slovakia in recent years.

8 Porov. ŽUFFA, J., PUPÍK, Z.: Katolicizmus „made in Slovakia“. In: *Communio Missio*, 2013, no. 1. http://issuu.com/institutcommunio/docs/communio_missio

Childhood

Child is being perceived as disoriented individual. For the whole community, the period after 1989 was the period of "searching for oneself". It contained great contradictions, which made it more difficult to understand the context with which we had very weak or no experience. The upheaval brought a strong enthusiasm about the freedom people fought for, and for the whole community the Church became a symbol of moral credit brought from the period of normalization. Contradiction came shortly after, when two years of experience of the freedom of speech shook public's confidence. The example is the release of the short story „(azda) Posledná večera“ [(perhaps) the Last Supper]. At the time of freedom, the public was confronted with the release of parody on elimination of sanctity of the Church institution for the first time. This period of childhood has entered the history with a distinctive building of churches, development of publishing activity, translation of books. Large investments have been made possible by support from abroad. Priests were sent abroad to study, in order to be able to take place in the new seminaries and other Church structures. It was necessary to quickly create a mechanism for financing the Church. Here we can see diversity achieved in models, such as funding from the State in the Czech Republic, where, according to the number of parishes, funding allows to employ many laics in the Church, in different parish services. Compared to Slovakia, here the model of financing has strengthened the position of the clergy.

Puberty and adolescence

Pubertal period is full of fascination concerning unlimited possibilities. At the same time, the young person needs to defy parents and authorities. Adolescent is getting to know new relationships and new cultures. He is an idealist. The process of globalization, the development of techniques and first possibilities of virtual reality are included in this phase. Slovakia's accession to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Union gave us the feeling of great opportunities and, on the other hand, caution. The dreams came true through the opportunity to travel and explore. From the globalization point of view, the pride was supported also by the hockey championship. Different new development projects and new automakers even showed that our country can no longer manage with its own labour capacity, but will need to start importing them. During this period, the Church started to take care of many new activities and projects. This period also included many priest and monastic professions. The average age of priests declined, increase in the number of priests working with the youth was apparent. Centres for youth were created at different levels, namely at diocesan level and universities, and pastoral care of children has become a part of almost every parish. Many traditional movements and associations have been restored, and the largest increase was observed in the charismatic movement. Their emphasis

on spirituality, personal prayer, singing, emotional preaching, and public appearance impressed many and not only young people in Slovakia. On the other hand, the Church has been increasingly confronted with the plurality of opinion, which, on multiple platforms, led to defence mechanisms through the search for an external enemy in secularism and western culture. One of the actions which started these defence mechanisms were also departures of several priests who returned from foreign studies and whose views were no longer compatible with the current situation and possibilities of the Church in Slovakia.

As adolescent is increasingly critical of parents and authorities, the Slovak society was becoming more critical to the Churches. After the fall of the regime, credibility of the Church was being repeatedly damaged by the release of Cibulka's lists, which raised many questions concerning cooperation with the state security agency, also by the Catholic Church.

Post-adolescence

Transition from high school to university is a powerful moment in young person's life. He is experiencing great disappointments but he is also aware of great possibilities. After 2008, financial crisis was on several discussion platforms known also as a crisis of values. Many development projects in Slovakia have been suspended, the percentage of unemployment has significantly increased. Event of the year 2012 in the life of the Catholic Church in Slovakia was dismissal of one of the archbishops. The innocent-looking issue has developed into an event which, as a litmus paper, showed that people are asking for answers more often than they used to.

Call for pastoral theology in "adulthood"

Today's Churches are asking: How to accomplish our mission in the changed world and national conditions? The Catholic Church in Slovakia is still the largest religious community. But what does it mean for the Church to remain "the agency of hope"⁹ not only for people who attend religious services, but also for those seeking answers to the meaning of life, suffering, joy, personal development etc.? This can be identified as a challenge for pastoral theologians to work on the development of services and approach to people who live beyond the traditional concept and life of Christian values of family life and thus did not have the opportunity to learn that it is possible to expect the Catholic Church to help them with their search. We will have to learn to

9 Porov. ZULEHNER, M. P.: *Verbuntung*. Schwabenverlag, 2011, p. 314.

be, in our “maturity”, global when talking about the topics and trends of the life in Slovakia as well as of the connected events at the European and global level. As part of the European Union, Slovakia will be increasingly drawn into the value creation models that will affect future generations. We will have to learn to be a partner in discussions about human values of freedom, human rights, partners’ life, medical and ethical dilemmas, the possibility of development of artificial intelligence, issues of aging, underprivileged people. If the Catholic Church wants to be a partner in the competitive process of the market of spiritualties variety, it must be able to respond to new forms of lifestyles that promote building your own “house of faith”.

Resources

- MATULNÍK, J., et al.: Analýza religiozity katolíkov na Slovensku : Poznatky zo sociologického výskumu. Trnava : Dobrá kniha, 2009.
- ZULEHNER, M. P., TOMKA, M., NALETOVNA, I.: Gott nach dem Kommunismus. Ostfildern, 2008.
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