Abstract: Effectivity of this research is based on social and pastoral work and the reflection of values and life-style changes in the society. This paper analyses the religiosity in Slovakia and neighbour countries based on the “Aufbruch” survey done at the University of Vienna. 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 the paper, we compare some 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 excurse” 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 following 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 any religion.
Key words: religiosity, pastoral theology, values, society development

Introduction

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

If we want to analyse the religious diversity of society in Slovakia, only the numbers from the Statistic office are not sufficient for this 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 analysis of the society provides us with the result stating that the number of people living according to Christian principles is decreasing.

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\(^1\), realized by Pastoral forum in Vienna in two phases, in the year 1997 and 2007. 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 divide religiosity into three dimensions\(^2\): personal religiosity, the contents of faith and relationship with the Church. 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 database\(^3\) of some of the issues from the answers and compare them in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as neighbouring countries.

Subjective valuation of 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

---

1 The survey is guaranteed by Paul Zulehner, Emeritus Professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Vienna.
3 In this analysis we work with the database of the qualitative research which was provided by authors of the Survey „Aufbruch“ with permission to create own comparisons and interpretations.
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 Statistical office and concerning belonging to some values.

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

By the expectation of respondents, "In ten years people will be ..." more, less, or equally faithful, we can observe different responses. All the statements were evaluated in a similar way by Hungarians. Czechs and Slovaks are more skeptical, because half of the population thinks that in 10 years we will have a smaller number of believers. When talking about religiosity, the biggest number of skeptics is in Poland, specifically 70%.

**What people really believe in**

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.

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?

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 whether respondents believe in any God, but do not examine the exact understanding of God, whether God is a person, just energy, or as
agnostics raise the possibility - existence of the unknown.

Figure 2: Which of the following statements most closely correspond 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 faith in other contents. In the following graph, we present faith of Slovak people in certain matters related to the religion (Fig. 3). For example, it is surprising that only half of respondents believing in God believe also in the existence of hell, as part of religion content.

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

Connection of individuals to the churches

The most frequent criteria of measurement in surveys dealing with religiosity are questions about belonging to a denomination by 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\(^4\) (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).

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

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

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, 8% decrease 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

The number is higher than in Poland (2%), although Poland has more believers visiting church once or more times a week (53%).

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

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

Figure 6: In my opinion, churches and religious communities exist in order to … (Aufbruch 2007, Slovakia)
The big challenge for the Churches 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. 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. 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).

![Figure 7: Typology from fourteen countries surveyed](image)

The graph shows us countries in which the largest group is the religious-orthodox group (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,

---


6 Zulehner M. P., Tomka M., Naletovna I., Gott nach dem Kommunismus, Ostfildern 2008, p. 120.

7 Results from particular parts of Germany are listed separately, in order to show the significant effect of different historical background of eastern and western part.
marital or non-marital status and residence (Fig. 8).

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

The last figure 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 weakened 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.

**Historical context of last 25 years in Slovakia**

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 life⁸. This allows us to capture the situation of the Church in Slovakia in recent years.

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. At the time of freedom, the public was for the first time confronted with the release of parody on elimination of sanctity of the Church institution. 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.

---

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. Dreams came true through the opportunity to travel and explore. 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.

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. The most important event in 2012 was in the life of the Catholic Church in Slovakia 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 updated 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 of life values. The Church has to learn to be, in our "maturity", adult partner when talking about topics and trends of the life in Slovakia as well as of the connected events at the European and global level. It means 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, immigration issues, etc. If the Catholic Church wants to be through pastoral and social work 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 own "house of faith" of individuals.

**Resources:**


Zulehner M. P., Verbuntung, Schwabenverlag, 2011


**Contact of author:**

Dr. theol. Jozef Žuffa

Trnava University, Faculty of Theology, Bratislava

Department of pastoral theology

jozef@zuffa.eu

---