Religiosity and Morality of Slovakian Youth

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Abstract: Many social researchers think that countries in Central and Eastern Europe are expected quicker and rapid secularization. Therefore, it is interesting to research how the religiosity and morality of Slovakian young people is formed at the background of continual social changes. The main goal of the present paper, based especially on the own empirical researches, is the description and explanation of Slovakian youth's religiosity and morality. The study is situated in the area of sociology. Thus, it is important to underline that the analysis and its reflections are insufficient for spiritual pastors, educators, or teachers. However, it facilitates to understand the actual situation in the area of religiosity and morality of nowadays youth.

Keywords: morality, religiosity, Slovakia, youth

Introduction

Religiosity and morality are subjects of interest of many scientific disciplines, among which also sociology of religion – which is a sub-discipline of sociology – finds its stable position. This scientific discipline consists of a platform of all the requirements of the social empirical sciences and it does not represent prescriptive knowledge in any of its components (as opposed to the theology). P. L. Berger reminds that "sociological theory [...] will always view religion *sub specie temporis*, and therefore necessarily leaving open questions of whether and how it can be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*" (1997: 227).

Sociology of religion "deals with religious phenomena as much as they have a common, general, and repetitive character. It examines these phenomena in the stage of formation, course, development, and ending. It, however, does not reply to the question where religion comes from and what its nature is. These questions represent a domain of other sciences, especially philosophy. The subject of sociology of religion is, instead of this, a socio-cultural aspect of religion" (Piwowarski 2000: 25).

Obviously, when we say that someone is 'religious,' we can mean many different things. Religiosity may indicate membership in a church, faith in religious doctrines, ethical way of life, participation in religious acts, and many other things. These are not synonyms but different aspects of the same fact. A precise answer to the question of who deserves to be called 'a religious man' seems to be quite a complex problem (Stark and Glock 2003: 182). Operationalization of religiosity requires a selection of parameters and indicators of religious life. A social form of religion can be captured only through a comprehensive selection of parameters, and within them – indicators of religiosity (Piwowarski 2000: 58–59).

Classics of sociology of religion (in particular R. Stark and Ch. Y. Glock) distinguish five basic dimensions of religiosity: 1) Ideological dimension – it is closely linked with the expectation that a religious person will also have a religious belief and will recognize the truth of dogmas of their religion; 2) Religious acts – include everything people do, giving an external expression to their religion; 3) Dimension of experience – a religious person should also have immediate, subjective experience of the supernatural reality; 4) Intellectual dimension – associated with the expectation that religious people will be characterized by at least some minimum knowledge about the fundamental dogmas of their faith, their rites, holy books, and traditions; 5) Dimension of consequences (a moral parameter) – it is significantly different from the above mentioned four dimensions of religiosity. It is closely connected with the consequences of religious belief, acts, experience, as well as religious knowledge in their daily lives (Stark and Glock 2003: 183–185).

Within the frame of completion of the mentioned dimensions of religiosity, sociologists of religion focused their attention on one major platform that is expressed in the membership in a religious community or organization. This platform can be called "a community parameter". In addition to the above dimensions, it is necessary to draw our attention to the attempt of introduction into the parameters of religiosity, of the so-called global relationship to faith. It is not just about auto-declaration but also about knowledge of intensity of our religiosity (Piwowarski 2000: 61–63).

All the mentioned parameters have their importance in a certain stage. Consequently, any relatively comprehensive attempt of an analysis of religiosity must take them into account. In empirical research, the religious phenomena that are in the socio-cultural environment in some way present should be taken into account. In the social reality, in fact, there is a specific socio-cultural form of religiosity that was historically shaped, and transmitted in the process of socialization (Frankowski 2006: 24).

Main features of the Slovakian youth's religiosity

After a brief description of the discipline itself and the basic directives in empirical studies of religiosity, I would like to introduce to the reader some summary results of the empirical research of religiosity of the Slovakian youth (on an example of the Diocese of Spiš).[1] The main focus of the sociological research was a description of religiosity of the youth in the Diocese of Spiš as well as an attempt to settle demographic and social characteristics conditioning these attitudes. In the following lines, I will very broadly introduce the aforementioned dimensions of religiosity in the researched population of young people.[2]
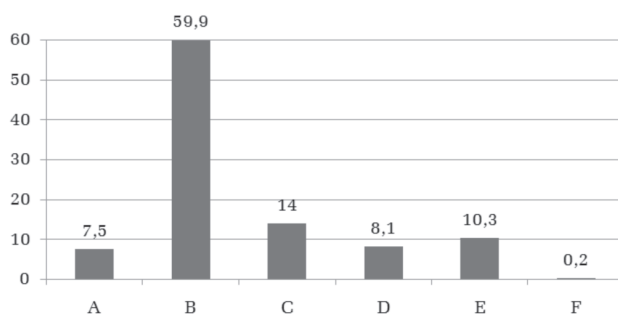
Author's computation based on his own research (2006 data)

A – Profound believers; B – Believers; C – Connected with a religious tradition; D – Indifferent; E – Unbelievers; F – No answer.

Graph 1. Global relationship to faith (in %)

Global relationship to faith:

Looking at the Slovak society, in which strong religious pluralism is perhaps only *in statu nascendi*, we can accept the view that it is rather a religiously monopolistic society. In this society, as well as in the researched youth population, more than 80% of the people declare religious faith. The most commonly given source of the religious belief in the researched youth is education and tradition in the family, and also personal discretion and beliefs. Similarly, more than four fifths of the surveyed young people speak about at least rare implementation of some vague religious acts. In assessing their own religiosity, the youth (4

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1   It was a quantitative research by means of a survey. Data collection took place in November 2006. The target group (a basic set) was the 17–18-year-old youth in the Diocese of Spiš. From the basic set, a random set was deliberately and randomly created, which consisted of 663 young people (24 classes of 8 public schools and one church school). The implemented set consists of 629 respondents, which constitutes 94.9% of the random sample.
2   Detailed results processing of the described empirical research can be found in: Štefaňak (2009a).

times) more frequently declare its decline than its deepening – it is often even without changes. If we compare the religiosity of youth with the religiosity of their parents, we can see the phenomenon of "inheritance of faith," as well as its weakening in the younger generation.

Religious practice:

In relation to religious practice, it is necessary to confirm a relatively high level of practising of religious acts in the researched youth population. Among the Catholic youth, there are 69.5% of so-called 'Sunday Catholics' – i.e. those who attend the Holy Mass at least once a month. Nearly four fifths of the researched Catholic youth receive the sacrament of reconciliation at least once a year. As to an individual prayer, we noted slightly lower indicators, whereas almost one third of the surveyed youth do not pray at all, or prays only very rarely. In connection with the customary religious acts, it can be said that some of the family customary acts (common Christmas Eve and Christmas Day meals and a visit of the cemetery at All Saints' Day) are practised widely in the families of the Diocese of Spiš. Instead, the local customary religious acts are situated at different levels – depending on the size of residence, declared relation to the religious faith, and systematic participation in the mass.

Religious knowledge:

Another dimension of religiosity is religious knowledge. Although the variable of knowledge of the Holy Trinity persons is relatively high – within the range from 82.2% to 82.5% –, knowing the names of evangelists is already weaker – less than 60% – and knowledge of individual sacraments is even weaker: from 37% to 56%. The most known is the sacrament of confirmation and the least known is the sacrament of penance. Overall, almost half of the researched youth are able to name at least five out of the seven sacraments. Finally, religious knowledge "about topical issues" – names of the current Church representatives – is situated within the range from 39% to 86%. Most often, the young people know the name of the Pope, the least often it is the name of the bishop of their own diocese.

Religious ideology:

Taking into consideration the presented indicators of the ideological dimension of religiosity, we should agree with W. Piwowarski (2005: 195), who stresses that from the confessed truths of faith respondents accept most frequently those that are abstract to them – which they count on less in their lives. On the contrary, least often they accept those religious dogmas which they "must count on" in

everyday life. The indicators of those believing in the existence of hell are in the surveyed youth somewhat lower (53.4%) compared to those believing in God (75.2%), personal God (63.9%), Trinity (61.5%), the deity of Christ (72.4%), his redeeming work (73.8%), or the after-life (74.7%). Overall, more than half of the youth accept at least six out of the seven selected religious dogmas.

Religious experience:

In the area of religious experience, the youth of the Diocese of Spiš is characterized by medium religiosity variables. This is confirmed by the percentages obtained such as: linking a sense of life (often primarily) with faith (58.6%) and belief in God's assistance in difficult life situations (65.3%). In the case of experiencing the feeling of God's closeness in the lives of the studied youth, a relatively low variable of positive responses (28.3%) was shown. However, we must think about the difficulties in understanding and describing religious experience as well as the "threat" of further specific answer, which could have encouraged the respondents to choose the corrective response "hard to say".

Religious community:

Secularization mostly affects the community character of religiosity. Even in the researched youth we noticed strong individualization processes. Although they see the Catholic Church as a community of believers in particular (53.9%), only 22.1% consciously present so-called church religiosity (guided by the doctrine of the Church). A significant percentage of the surveyed young people define their own religiosity with the statement: "I am a believer in my own way" (54.4%). However, it must be said that the obtained empirical results – in a socio-cultural context of the Slovak society – speak about the selective religiosity ("I am a Catholic, but...") rather than strictly religious individualization as 58.7% of the surveyed identify emotionally with the Church at various levels. The individualization of the studied youth is indirectly referred to by a low level of involvement in religious associations and movements, as well as the observed gap between the views on the need for priests in the society and the desire to have a priest in their own families.

Ethical dimension of religiosity:

Overall, the researched youth of the Diocese of Spiš is characterized by a relatively high indicator of verbal acceptance of each of the Ten Commandments. The average variable of resolute or moderate acceptance of these basic but rather general moral standards is 75.6%. The most often accepted moral norm is the

prohibition to kill and the command to honour one's own parents; the least often accepted is the prohibition to take God's name in vain and to keep the feast days holy. For much more specific standards of marital and family morality and euthanasia, a significant decline in their acceptance is seen. An average indicator of their unconditional acceptance is 42.2%. It is notably increased by a denial of rape and marital infidelity, and reduced by low acceptance of the prohibition of premarital cohabitation and use of contraceptives. As to the attitudes of the surveyed youth to various moral authorities, it can be said that in addition to the unquestionable authority of conscience the family's and friends' "well-disposed" advice is the most popular. The moral authority of the Church is not sought for according to the responses of the surveyed youth.

Finally, it might be asked: "What is the religiosity of the Slovakian youth at the beginning of 21st century?" In general, they are believers and they verbally acknowledge it willingly. However, the declared faith is often selective, picky. It seems that it is this characteristic which is prevailing in the religiosity of today's Slovakian youth (not only of the youth and not only of Slovakian youth). Independent variables, which most often divide individual categories of the surveyed youth in religious and moral attitudes, are actual habitation, number of siblings, and gender.

Main features of the Slovakian youth's morality

After presenting the Slovakian youth's religiosity, I would like to present to the reader some summary results of the empirical research on the morality of the Slovakian youth (also on an example of the Diocese of Spiš).[3] The main goal of the mentioned research was to describe the school-leaving youth's moral values in the Diocese of Spiš and the effort to point out those demographical, social, and religious features which differentiate those values. The presented part also arises and remains in the area of empirical sociology that would like to describe and explain reality. It (in this shape) can be and is useful for other scientific fields as well as for those who work with the young generation as pastors, educators, and especially as parents.[4]

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3   It was a quantitative research by means of a survey. Data collection took place in November 2011. The target group (a basic set) was the 18–19-year-old youth in the Diocese of Spiš. From the basic set, a random set was randomly created, which consisted of 1,225 young people (45 classes of 10 public schools and two church schools). The implemented set consists of 1,127 respondents, which constitutes 92% of the random sample.
4   Detailed results processing of the described empirical research can be found in: Štefaňak (2013).
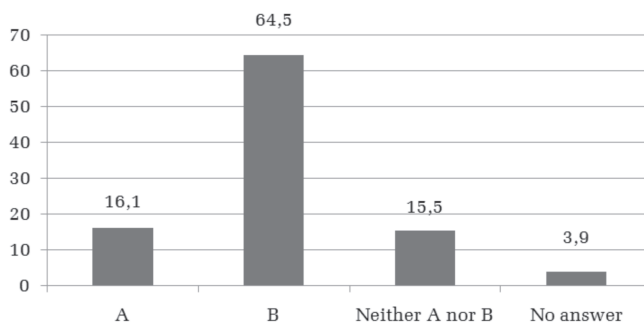
A – There are once and for all established rules to distinguish between good and evil; B – There are no once and for all established rules to distinguish between good and evil.

Graph 2. Criterions of moral good and evil (in %)

The first parameter of morality describes opinions related to the criterions of moral good and evil, people's general attitude to moral norms, their attitudes towards the Decalogue, and their relations to moral authorities. Empirical indicators report that the majority of school-leaving youth think that there are no once and for all established rules to distinguish between good and evil (64.5%) and presents a teleological or extremely compromising attitude towards moral norms (74.5%). It is interesting that while the majority of the respondents recognize the obligatoriness of the commandments of the Decalogue in their lives (the average rate is 59.3%), at the same time, they declare that the majority of the people do not recognize them as binding (the average rate is 18.9%).

The second parameter of morality communicates about daily, final, and primary values in human life. School-leaving youth accepted values that are connected especially to love, personal and family happiness, emotional security, and reciprocated contacts with others. It seems that young people prefer the affiliation values that are connected with privacy and stability. Respondents recognized that values represent 'small meanings,' 'concrete meanings,' which are lying within reach of hands, achievable 'here and now'.

The pro-social and selfish values represent the third parameter of morality. The analysis communicates that selfish attitudes are a bit more popular than pro-social values. An important indicator of pro-social orientation is a willingness to provide assistance to others. Regarding this aspect, we can say that school-leaving youths are pro-social in this respect, even if they do not always realize such value in practice. Opinions of teachers, however, point to a considerable degree of selfish orientation of adolescents.

The fourth parameter of morality communicates about values connected to the human dignity. Firstly, I would like to underline that in sociology it is

important to distinguish between the concepts of 'personal dignity' and 'social dignity'. If we speak – on the basis of the referred empirical research – about the understanding of freedom as a basic component of human person and dignity, there was discovered that school-leaving young people understand freedom a little more in terms of subjectivism (50.6%) than in terms of objectivism (44.4%). In total, almost two thirds of the respondents saw an opportunity to humiliate human dignity in some private cases or interpersonal relationships – at least in certain circumstances.

The fifth parameter of morality describes the values of marriage and family life. Family – despite the undoubted change – remains one of the most important values in everyday life which very often gives meaning to the human life. This is no longer, however, an unconditional and obvious acceptance of the traditional family – tolerance towards different forms of family life is slowly growing up. The majority of school-leaving youth declares that their family relationships are positive.

The problems of moral education in the family are presented in the sixth parameter of morality. A first duty of parents is to educate their children well, but parents – in the opinion of the respondents – do not need to give everything to their children because parents have their own lives and we should not require too much from them. The duty of children, in turn, is the love and respect for parents, regardless of their advantages or disadvantages. The family relationships of the researched young people are a bit better with the mothers than with the fathers. The school-leaving youth with the mothers, more often than with the fathers, shared their views, especially in relation to social, moral, and religious questions.

In total, it can be concluded that Slovakian school-leaving youths more often accept moral standards that are more abstract, while more rarely accept standards that are more practical (especially in relation to the marriage and family morality). Moral values and attitudes of young people are most often divided by religious features, then by gender, number of siblings, and extent of actual habitation (from different demographical, social, and religious features). Related to the declared school standing and the presented economic situation of the family, there are a bit less important differences.

Considering the lack of similar empirical research, it is impossible to compare the moral values of young people of the Diocese of Spiš to young people of other dioceses or regions in Slovakia. This can be made in regard to youths from the northern side of the High Tatras. It seems that Polish youths generally approve the analysed moral values a bit more frequently than Slovakian youths – especially in regard to pro-social values, values connected to human dignity, and basic moral orientations.

In the conclusion of this part, I would like to shortly introduce the main types of school-leaving youth's morality. Particular groups were identified according to the

procedure of two-step grouping in the nominal scale by the statistical programme SPSS. There we can distinguish two types of morality: A) canonical – principal morality (34.6%); B) teleological – relativistic morality (65.4%). People with the canonical orientation accept basic patterns, standards, and values as constant; their reactions towards new situations are based on their rules. People with the teleological orientation reject stable moral principles when making their decisions.

Religious and moral formation in Slovakian families

In western culture, significant changes are recorded in terms of family life. Sociologists point out a growing instability of marriages and family, which is caused by the processes of the de-institutionalization of traditional family structures and also by a pluralism of forms of family life and the plurality of so-called new models of life. A recent sociological research in the western world (especially Great Britain and the USA) points out the decline of marriage. These fears are based on two sources. One is the increase in divorces and the other one is the fact that marriage is slowly becoming 'out-of-fashion'. There is a growth in the number of co-habiting unmarried people and an increase in the number of children brought up outside of standard marriage (Scott and Marshal 2005: 383). These facts have a direct or indirect connection to religiosity and morality and to the duties of believer parents to raise their children in faith.

One of the duties of a believer family is the religious and moral formation of their children. It is especially in religious documents, where the duty of believer parents is underlined to bring their children up in the faith.[5] This general formulation includes different activities – from common prayer and attending mass, through the reading of the Holy Scripture and spiritual literature, to discussions and explanations of particular truths of faith and morality. In terms of sociology of the family, in terms of sociology of religion and morality, but also in the field of Church life, we may ask to what extent current families come after these duties. In general, we may assert that there is a weakening tendency in this respect and that these tasks are left to professionals – priests, catechists, or religious media.

At this point, I may briefly mention that in Slovakia there is currently a prevailing trend of the so-called selective religiosity, which is by some scholars, not without reason, called 'common religiosity'. P. M. Zulehner (2003: 391) calls persons who associate themselves with the mentioned type of religiosity 'Christians of choice'. This umbrella term of Christians of choice has its reason. The most important characteristic feature is the performance of selection. There are differences in the subject of this selection and the type of the 'purchased

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5   Compare: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1998, 325.

church product'. These persons are marked by their consent with the fact that the Church may impose certain norms and prohibitions, and these impositions are even expected from the Church. At the same time, the Church is robbed of its right to enforce a behaviour, which is in accordance with the norms. Many Catholics select from the treasure that type of faith which corresponds to their subjective needs. Such selective attitudes to religion and morality are most of all the result of de-institutionalization, which may, in the future, lead to religious individualization and to indifference or even disbelief (Mariański 2007b: 41).

The issue of the relationship between family, religiosity, and morality may be reflected from various angles. We may deal with the issue of individualization of religiosity and morality and their effect on the individualization of marriage-family forms; we may deal with the issue of the influence of religiosity on marriage-family morality; we may deal with the position of the family within religion or the issue of the position of religion in the family, etc. I would like to touch on the last topic. The presented part wants to provide an answer (even if only a partial one) to the following questions: What is the position of religion in the family or how does the family influence the religiosity and morality of children and youth? What is the influence of the family on the religious education of children, on their knowledge and opinions in religions issues? Is it a dominant or rather a marginal influence? These questions are answered through the case of the Slovakian youth.

To get a more evident picture of this influence, it will be compared to the most prominent 'competition' of the family in this respect – priests, catechists, and peers. We asked the researched Slovakian youth: "What influence do your family, priests, catechists, or peers have on your opinions concerning religious issues?" The sociological research of Slovakian youth confirms that the family has a significant influence on religious knowledge and opinions; it is stronger than the influence of priests and much stronger than that of religious education in school. Even the influence of peers is somewhat stronger than that of catechises (see Štefaňak 2009a: 148–151). If we consider the very high and prominent influence, the result is as follows: family – 61.7%, priests – 40.7%, peers – 33.7%, catechises – 31.7%. The answers of the youth in this survey show that family is a decisive element in the issue of forming religious and moral knowledge and opinions of the young generation.

Moreover, the young people subject to the original sociological survey were asked the following question: "What is the religious atmosphere in your family?" The majority of the respondents declared a rather religious atmosphere in their family (46.3%). A large percentage responded in terms of the atmosphere being only a little religious (32.6%) or that it is religiously indifferent (15.7%). Only a small percentage of the respondents stated that the atmosphere is very religious (2.9%) or that it is anti-religious (1.7%). In total, about half of the respondents stated that in their family there is a religious atmosphere, whereas the other half

described their family as a little religious or religiously indifferent (see Štefaňak 2009b: 188–190).

What was surprising in this respect was the high statistical dependence between the declared religious atmosphere in the family and specific indicators of religiosity of the respondents. The statistical correlation between the religious atmosphere in the family and the declared relation to faith ($p < 0.0005$; $V = 0,359$),[6] frequency of attending mass ($p < 0.0005$; $V = 0,444$), frequency of receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation ($p < 0,0005$; $V = 0,387$), frequency of private prayers ($p < 0,0005$; $V = 0,281$), or the declared attitudes towards abortion ($p < 0,0005$; $V = 0,264$) are significant, which supports the hypothesis that religiosity is very much the result of family environment.

On the basis of the results of the original research, it may be stated that religiosity is, to a large extent, passed on to the youth in the family. On the other hand, it needs to be noted that the religious influence of the social environment is not perfect and complete. Not all deeply religiously rooted youths come from religious families and not all youths leaving faith behind come from religiously indifferent families. Nonetheless, the religious atmosphere of the family has a strong influence on the formation of religious attitudes and practice of youth (Mariański 2007a: 195). Despite the fact that there is religious education in schools, religious media and Internet pages, the family still remains the most important element in this respect.

A very important indicator of the religious life of believers is the process of change in religiosity. The investigation of such changes is a dynamic research which describes religious reality and its understanding from the viewpoint of the individuals. The relationship of people with their faith may be in a certain timeframe stable or it may be subject to change in two respects: in terms of weakening of religiosity or in terms of its strengthening. If the change is in the negative direction, this may lead to a complete breakdown of religious faith in a given individual (Jarmoch 2006: 46–51).

In this context, it is interesting and useful to perceive the self-evaluation of religiosity of the current young generation in comparison with the religiosity of their parents. In traditional societies, in which religion permeated all spheres of social life, elementary socialization functions in moral, ethical, and religious fields were fulfilled by various social institutions (especially family, Church, school, government, and others). It seems that even if we observe significant changes in this area, the key socialization role (also in terms of religion and morality) is still played by the family, especially by the closest, nuclear family. It is the parents who significantly form the attitudes and value systems of their children, whereby they consider family to be the most important – the so-called 'significant other' (Górny 2007: 319).

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6   Cramér's V is a measure of association between two nominal variables.

The evaluation of own religiosity and that of the parents' enables us to perform an initial diagnosis as to the extent of keeping with the faith of the fathers and the extent to which it is strengthened or weakened by the coming generation. It needs to be kept in mind that these are subjective evaluations of young people and, important as they may be, they are not a guarantee of objective results. Even though we do not have a self-evaluation of the religiosity of the parents to compare with that of their children, we may still state that the religious attitudes of the parents have a strong influence on the children.

There is a high percentage of researched Slovakian young people who declare to be about as religious as their parents or, especially in comparison with the religiosity of the mother, slightly less religious. About one third of the researched youths assess their religiosity to be on the same level as that of their parents. One third of the respondents think they are less religious than their mothers and one seventh to be less religious than their fathers. On the other hand, only one tenth of them assess their religiosity to be higher than that of their mothers. In comparison, the same indicator is twice as significant with respect to the fathers. Finally, it needs to be stressed that a significant number of respondents had difficulty to compare their own religiosity with the religiosity of their parents (Štefaňak 2009a: 108–114).

To conclude the description of the individual correlations with the religiosity of the parents, it needs to be said that faith is to a large degree subject to inheritance, as males often consider themselves to be as religious as their fathers (32.2%) and females as their mothers (37%). Therefore, young males, just like females, tend to assess their religiosity lower than that of their fathers (males) or mothers (females). It is possible that a part of this decrease can be explained by the age of the respondents, but we cannot rule it out entirely. The presented empirical indicators point to the fact that in a time of social modernization, faith is not only a matter of inheritance and socialization within the family, even though the influence of the parents is doubtless.

The influence of religiosity in the chosen moral values of the Slovakian youth

The societies nowadays doubt clear causal-contiguous relations between religious and moral attitudes. Many people who left religion would deserve moral acceptance. The refusal of God does not automatically become a cause of a non-moral life just as religious faith does not guarantee good moral acts. People are constantly shifting away from the opinion that everyone's moral values are being identified with a professed religion and morally good people can only be those who believe in God and visit church (Mariański 2003: 68). In this context, the object of the last part of this paper is not only a particular analysis of the

Slovakian youth's moral attitudes but also the observation of mutual relations between religion and morality.

Religion and morality are mutually interconnected. Religion defines the principles of acting and wants them to be identified as specific models of moral behaviour. People without religion have their own moral codes – in fact, amorality is very rare (MacIver and Page 1984: 158–159).

Regarding the relationship between religiosity and morality, we can distinguish two extreme opinions: identification and opposition. According to some researchers, there is not possible to think about morality without its connection with the religious system (ethical norms without religion lose their obligatory power). This opinion is attacked by other thinkers who claim that religious arguments are not necessary in acceptation of moral norms and values, i.e. moral capital is not created only by religion but also by other social institutions. However, in the education towards universal values, the role of a religion seems to be at least important (Mariański 2008: 339–342). From a sociological point of view, we can set a few interesting questions: How the relation between religion and morality is formed in the consciousness of today's people? Does religion influence – and, if so, to what extent – the attitudes and behaviour of the youth? Is it true that in secularized groups of youth morality is radically changing?

The last part of this paper considers the attitudes of young people towards two moral norms that protect life (prohibition of abortion and euthanasia). Consideration is given especially to the differences between groups of young people with various religious characteristics – for example the level of faith, participation in the Holy Mass, praying, and so on. Sociological analyses concerned with attitudes towards moral norms of Decalogue do not talk about a radical decline of acceptation of these general moral norms and values. It does not mean that there are no changes in the moral consciousness of today's people. Transition from objective morality to the morality of individual options is occurring rather at the level of more concrete moral norms.

In general, a group of 8.7% of the researched young people consider abortion to be morally permissible; for 41.7% of them, it depends on a concrete situation and 42.7% of the respondents consider abortion not to be morally permissible without conditions. Euthanasia is considered to be morally permissible by 15.8% of the young people, for 38.1% of them its moral value depends on a concrete situation, and 39.3% of them consider euthanasia not to be morally permissible without conditions (Štefaňak 2013: 330–346). It seems that today's people are highly valuing the quality of life; life itself is valued more rarely. There remains an open question: "Whose quality of life – those who leave or those who remain?"

We can also mention the differences in opinion on the basis of certain demographical and social features of youth. Statistical relations are noted especially in relation to the number of siblings and an extent of actual habitation.

Young people from bigger families and smaller localities more often consider the presented moral norms to be proper than young people from smaller families and larger localities. In the case of gender, there is a statistical relation noted only in attitudes towards euthanasia. It means that in the moral valuating of abortion boys and girls are very similar.

In the next lines, I would like to describe the relations and the influence of religiosity in the attitudes of youth towards abortion and euthanasia. For this purpose, I chose the following religious indicators: the level of faith, participation in the Holy Mass, realization of prayers, and religious atmosphere in a family.

In terms of the declared level of faith, we note statistically important relations especially in attitudes towards abortion, but also towards euthanasia. The most different group is the group of strong believers. Much more often than others, they consider the described bioethical norms to be proper without conditions – prohibition of abortion (85.1%) and prohibition of euthanasia (72.3%). On the other side, there are young people who are indifferent to religion, or unbelievers. They are characterized by very low indicators of acceptance of these moral norms. 15.5% of them accept prohibition of abortion and only 9.5% of them the prohibition of euthanasia. We can claim that awareness of one's religiosity and of its level is intensively related to attitudes towards the presented moral norms.

The next religious indicator is participation in the Holy Mass. Especially in attitudes towards abortion, we note statistically important differences. In attitudes towards euthanasia, the relation is a bit weaker. The group of those who systematically participate in the Holy Eucharist is the most different one – much more often than others they accept prohibition of abortion (68.3%) and euthanasia (47.9%). It seems that a regular participation in the Holy Mass and listening to the Church's teachings and explanations have strong influence on forming bioethical attitudes.

Empirical indicators claim that there is a moderate statistical relation between individual pray and attitudes towards abortion and euthanasia. The most different is the group of young people who pray every day. Nearly four fifth of them consider abortion to be morally not permissible and more than one half of them consider euthanasia in the same way. On the other hand, there are young people who do not pray at all. At least in some conditions, 70.8% of them have no moral problems with abortion. In the case of euthanasia, a similar indicator shows 81.8%.

In every group, there is also an 'atmosphere' in regard to religion. That 'atmosphere' strongly or weakly influences the attitudes and the behaviour of members of a concrete group. Statistical tests claim that between the religious atmosphere in a family and the attitudes towards the described moral norms is a middle relation. The most different are young people from families with a strong positive religious atmosphere. Nearly two thirds of them accept prohibition of abortion without conditions and one third of them prohibition of euthanasia

without conditions. More than three fourths of young people from families with religiously indifferent or antireligious atmosphere, at least in some conditions, do not have any moral problems with abortion (75.4%) or euthanasia (85.6%).

Morality, which was historically, empirically, and systematically connected with religion, is being attacked many times nowadays. More and more people think that it is possible to live without God, even to live better without God and religion. However, religious and moral attitudes are always interconnected (Mądrzycki 1999: 76–77). On the basis of the presented empirical analyses, we can talk about significant positive relations between religiosity and the attitudes of youth towards the chosen moral norms that protect life in its initial and final phase. That relation is a bit stronger in the attitudes towards abortion than towards euthanasia.

The influence of religiosity in moral attitudes does not mean, of course, that it is the same in moral behaviour. In this context, we can remind the words of W. Piwowarski, a Polish sociologist of religion and morality, who writes: "Researchers are in this area interested with 'attitudes' (views, opinions) and 'declarations'. Both of them have a verbal character. It means that we do not know in which level they inform about the real behavior. However, we can accept that they communicate at least about readiness of the respondents to live according to Christian demands" (2002: 89).

Conclusion

Finally, I intend to underline that the analyses and considerations of the above research are insufficient for pastors, teachers, educators, or parents, given the fact that – as Polish classic of the sociology of religion W. Piwowarski says – "sociology of religion is not the science which could 'automatically' influence the change of directions and methods of pastoral action. However, it allows to 'understand' the current situation, showing what, how and why happens" (2000: 95).

In the situation of political, social, and religious pluralism nowadays, it is necessary to respect the common, authentic moral values with a universal character which is based on the truth about humans outreaching the operative consensus or the decision of the majority. It seems that huge world religions have to fulfil an important role in seeking and finding the *world ethos* of our 'global village'. Within the conditions of seeking the universal ethics, the common ethical principles, the common ethical code or the universal right, the role of religion does not decrease, moreover, it increases (Mariański 2006: 161–173).

If we speak about religious and moral formation or socialization, we can confirm that also in a post-modern society, family remains the most significant place where a person, due to education, learns their first religious and moral norms, learns to distinguish good from evil and to classify people, things, and

phenomena according to their importance. This takes place through observation, mimicking, identification, and modelling. The family creates its own hierarchy of values and norms, which are passed on to the next generation (Smyczek 2002: 302–303). For an effective passing on of religious and moral values and norms, the subjectively experienced quality of the family is very important. The more positive atmosphere in the family, good relationships between children and parents, and the proper educational style create the higher probability of passing on values and norms which are kept and realized within this family (Mariański 2007a, 190).

That is why in the conclusion of this paper I would like to express something that I, as a sociologist, may not have the right to, but certainly have a right to as a member of Slovakian society in which I live and which I value. Let us all want and actually work for the good of the family, which always was and will be the elementary school of humanity. For the good of human society and for the good of the generations to come, it is necessary to make sure that it is mature people who enter the bond of marriage and conceive children, who will be able to create positive family environments for a good human, religious, and moral education.

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