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The profiles of religiousness of the Orthodox youth in view of sociological research

Young people's religiousness in Poland is a significant and frequent subject of sociological study. Reflection on the youth's attitude towards religion makes it possible to try to predict future social processes from the angle of changes in the awareness and in the sphere of behaviour. Shaping religious and moral awareness is a long-lasting process, and because of its multidimensional scope it is difficult to describe. It begins in childhood and lasts for the entire human life. It acquires specific character during adolescence, since it is then that identity is being shaped most intensively due to the expanding relationships with other people and the presence of a young person in various social environments. Family, school or peer environment influences the consciousness of an individual living in the sphere of a specific religion or confession in a variety of ways. According to the opinions of Orthodox inhabitants of Poland, the parish serves a dual role, since it is the place where adolescents get to know the tradition and rules of functioning of their confession, as well as form social identity in contact with other people. It is especially important in the case of minority groups, which become aware of their psycho-cultural distinction and come to the conclusion that they should have the right to show this distinction in the public sphere. Hence the rise in awareness – according to J. Nikitorowicz – “resulted in exploring cultural pluralism and brought about distinguishing the cultural values of the group and particular care for them”¹.

The aim of this article is to try to present general profiles of religiousness of the Orthodox youth, expressed by the following indicators: declaration of faith,

¹ J. Nikitorowicz, *Bractwa cerkiewne jako czynnik integrujący wyznawców prawosławia w wielokulturowym społeczeństwie*, „ΕΛΠΙΣ”, 1999, no. 1, p. 171.

religious motivation, changes in religiousness and religious observances. I am deeply convinced that the problems discussed in this article cannot be fully resolved, but only indicated due to a relatively low level of empirical data, as well as the scantiness of theoretical analyses depicting the social aspect of the Orthodox faith in Poland. In this article I will use the data from my own research conducted in the years 2009-2013².

Declarations of religious faith

In most survey announcements or in sociological study, the issue of the declaration of faith is one of the basic elements, on which the analyses of the religiousness of the studied population are based. In Poland, due to the regularity and commonness of the conducted research and analyses, they have a rich history and are described quite coherently. As J. Baniak points out, we can speak of the "standard presentation of the levels of faith, in which the researchers took into account the following categories: deeply devout, believing traditionally (within the norm), doubting their religion, religiously indifferent, non-believer. After getting acquainted with these categories and identifying the right level for himself or herself, the respondent indicated it in the research tool (in the survey questionnaire). The sum (total amount) of the right choices in the studied population provided a general picture of the respondents' attitudes towards religious faith or lack of faith – i.e. unbelief"³. Declarations of respondents towards faith, as a significant part of global analyses of attitudes towards faith, allows only for getting acquainted with the general orientation of the respondents within the scope of their affiliation with the religious community, or the church institution. Władysław Piwowski claims that "in Poland, more significance is attached to the parameter of »faith« than in Western countries, which maintain statistics informing only about the religious and denominational structure. Until recently in our country, which was atheist and secular, the question of faith was more important than the statistics, since it was to disappear completely, at least as a mass phenomenon. That is why the indicators of the non-believers were a test of the influence of the controlled secularisation"⁴.

The surveys conducted in Poland by specialist labs, as well as by individual researchers, indicate a changing approach of young people to faith. A minor decrease

² More information on the research can be found in the following publications: *Aktywność społeczno-religijna młodzieży prawosławnej na Lubelszczyźnie* (2010), *Religijność wyznawców prawosławia w Polsce. Raport z badań socjologicznych* (2012), *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej* (2013).

³ J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki w opiniach polskiej młodzieży. Od akceptacji do kontestacji*, Nomos, Kraków 2015, p.56.

⁴ W. Piwowski, *Socjologia religii w Polsce – problemy legitymizacji dyscypliny*, „The Religious Studies Review”, 1997, no. 1, p. 31.

in the declared faith has been observed and there has been a shift from the attitudes of declared believers to attitudes of indecisiveness as well as from the attitudes of deeply devout to believing. The research carried out among young people before the matura examination by J. Mariański informs us that "in the whole population 15.6% regard themselves as deeply devout, 64.5% – as believers, 13.1% – as undecided when it comes to faith, 4.7% – as religiously indifferent and 1.8% – as non-believers (0.4% – no answer). The indicator of deeply devout and believers (altogether) in the whole studied population amounts to 80.1%. The difference between a formal denominational affiliation and the declared religious identification is 17.8%. The indicator of religious affiliation (the so-called global confession of faith) is maintained at the limit signifying the so-called cultural obviousness (80%)"⁵. When comparing the results of research from 1988, 1998 as well as 2005, S. Zaręba notices some differences. "When in 1988 the declaration of deep faith was 18%, in later years such declarations were relatively less common. At the same time it turns out that in all three surveys the answer »believer« appears substantially more often in 2005 than in 1998. Approximately, the total percentage of »deeply devout« and »believers« for three consecutive surveys were: 80%, 68%, 70% respectively"⁶. However, the research conducted by J. Baniak in Kalisz and Poznan among students of upper secondary schools and university students in comparison with the ones presented above, reveals a lower level of declaration of religious faith. "Considering the percentage of both populations altogether, it should be pointed out that 16.1% regarded themselves as deeply devout persons, 45.0% of them were believers, 13.6% amounted to doubting persons, 10% of them were religiously indifferent, 13.4% were non-believers and 1.9% refused to answer. According to the author, it is worth mentioning that "among the respondents included in the in-depth interview, persons declaring lack of faith in God constitute 12.8%, doubting – 9.6%, while religiously indifferent – 8.5%"⁷.

So far very few surveys concerning the religiousness of this denominational group have been conducted in the Orthodox environment. In A. Sadowski's research carried out in the 1980s in the Catholic and Orthodox environment of Podlasie, almost 100% religious self-identification of the respondents was established. "Generally Roman Catholics were more attached to beliefs and religious observances in comparison with the members of the Orthodox church. At the same time clear differences in proportion of the declared intensity of beliefs and religious observances are visible in two mixed environments with distinct proportions in denominational categories. In general, a denominational group in minority situation is characterised by a higher intensity of beliefs and religious observances when compared with the

⁵ J. Mariański, *Emigracja z Kościoła. Religijność młodzieży polskiej w warunkach zmian społecznych*, The Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin 2008, p. 84.

⁶ S. H. Zaręba, *W kierunku jakiej religijności? Studia nad katolicyzmem polskiej młodzieży*, Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych [Statistical Publishing Establishment], Warszawa 2008, p. 111.

⁷ J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki...*, op. cit., p.58.

situation when it constitutes the majority within the local environment”⁸. I. Borowik confirmed this suggestion in research from 2000. According to the author, “4.8% of respondents regarded themselves as very religious and the total declarations of faith among the members of the Orthodox church amounted to 46.4%”⁹. A. Sadowski called the increase in religious self-identification of the members of the Orthodox church at the end of the 1990s a qualitative leap. In this research members of the Orthodox church from Podlasie declared their faith in the following way: “deeply devout believers – 7.85%, believers – 78.80%, not really believing 9.16%, non-believers but attached to tradition – 1.57%, non-believers – 1.57%”¹⁰.

The tendency of an increase in religious declarations among members of the Orthodox church in consecutive years has been preserved. According to research from 2011, 19.3% of respondents stated that they are deeply devout, 74.4% declared themselves to be believers, 5.4% were religiously undecided, but attached to tradition, while 0.8% were indifferent to religion. Nobody among the respondents declared lack of faith. Men declared their religiousness as deeply devout more often than women by 1.8%, whereas more men than women regarded themselves as religiously undecided. In the case of age, the youngest persons more often declared deep religiousness than others. The largest difference –18.2% was present with regard to people above the age of 60. The oldest people most often declared indecision and religious indifference when compared with others. Moreover, the research conducted at the time informed about a very high level of declarations of faith among people who completed primary education. It was higher on the level of deeply devout persons with regard to respondents who completed vocational secondary education by 36.9%. The surveyed persons who completed secondary education and higher education had a similar level of attitudes towards faith, only people with higher education expressed their indecision more often by 4.6%. Generally, the larger the town, the more often their inhabitants regarded themselves as deeply devout persons. The difference between large cities and villages amounted to 16.3%. The above mentioned differences have become oversimplified in the case of summing up indicators of deeply devout persons and believers. In this case the analyzed variables did not indicate such far-reaching disparities¹¹.

According to research conducted in January and February 2009 among young members of the Orthodox church living in the Lubelskie Region, a high level of self-

⁸A. Sadowski, *Spoleczne problemy wschodniego pogranicza*, Dział Wydawnictw filii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego w Białymstoku [University of Warsaw, Białystok Branch Publishers], Białystok 1991, pp. 46-47.

⁹I. Borowik, T. Doktor, *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce*, Nomos, Kraków 2001, p. 171.

¹⁰A. Sadowski, *Świadomość religijna wyznawców Kościoła prawosławnego na białostoczczyźnie*, „ΕΛΠΙΣ”, 1999, no. 1, p. 168.

¹¹Cf. W. Romanowicz, *Religijność wyznawców prawosławia w Polsce. Raport z badań socjologicznych*, Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education, Biała Podlaska 2012, pp.122-123.

declarations of faith is worth emphasising. "A significant majority of respondents were believers (68.2% of women and 73.2% of men) and deeply devout persons (29.4% of women and 19.2% of men). Only 3.8% of men defined themselves as indifferent, while 24% of women and 3.8% of men as undecided, but attached to religious tradition"¹². However, the most extensive research so far conducted by the author has again confirmed a high level of religiousness among the Orthodox youth in the context of self-declarations of faith. It must be said that 74.8% of all respondents are believers, including 8.8% of those who declare deep faith. A high percentage of the surveyed (19.0%) are people religiously undecided but attached to tradition, 4.5% of them are religiously indifferent adolescents, while 1.6% of them declare lack of faith¹³. In comparison with all-Poland data acquired from adult environments we notice a decline by about 10% of declarations in the category of deeply devout and a similar increase in the undecided category. It is difficult to predict whether it is a steady trend due to lack of systematic data, but it can be assumed that it is rather connected with the age of the respondents, since they are young people and currently in the stage of shaping their religious maturity. Taking into consideration all the results of research presented so far it can be definitely concluded that at present the vast majority among the Orthodox youth in Poland are believers, while the presented data as well as direct interviews rather suggest consolidation of religiousness through increased religious awareness represented *inter alia* by religious self-identifications. The overwhelming majority of the Orthodox youth are not willing to change their denomination, religion or outlook on life, often using religion to create personal and social identity.

Religious motivations

An important issue characterising or explaining the attitude of respondents towards faith is through presenting its motives. This problem cannot be easily explained in quantitative research, since not every respondent wants to reveal his or her motives. Furthermore, the complexity and ambiguity of the problem poses difficulty in forming appropriate research questions. In sociological literature the motives of faith – or lack of faith are sought in the individual sphere – personal, as psychogenic elements or in the socio-cultural sphere, as sociogenic elements. The motivation of an individual very often results from culturally shaped family

¹² M. Gościak, W. Romanowicz, *Aktywność społeczno-religijna młodzieży prawosławnej na Lubelszczyźnie*, Białskie Centrum Kultury Prawosławnej [Biała Podlaska Orthodox Culture Centre], Biała Podlaska 2010, p. 42.

¹³ Cf. W. Romanowicz, *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej*, Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education, Biała Podlaska 2013, pp. 73-74.

environment, which directs at observing certain patterns of behaviour and specific interpretation of social reality.

“According to Czesław Walesa, raising the level of the quality of life in religious development occurs through perfecting the bond of a human being with God. From the psychological point of view, this human being then changes, because he or she feels more the object of this connection and treats life autotelically and as if from within”¹⁴. In this context the issue of the motives of faith needs to be considered from the viewpoint of “inner and outer strengths, which inspire a human being to accept and justify faith. It is not about occasional and isolated impulses, but such that stimulate and determine lasting religious attitudes, i.e. factors which human beings refer to when they want to explain why they regard themselves as believers”¹⁵. The analysis of the sources of faith among young people in the years 1988-2005 carried out by S. H. Zaręba generally revealed a decrease in common factors motivating faith, but there was no qualitative change, since the order remained the same¹⁶. However, sociological research systematically conducted in the environment of young people from Greater Poland by J. Baniak, demonstrates a broader aspect of motivation of religion. The aforementioned researcher offered respondents analogical categories of motives, but divided into two general groups – secular and religious. The juxtaposition of results reveals that respondents who have deep faith, traditional faith or have some doubts, who constituted 74.7% of the studied population, indicated many motives with religious and secular profile used to justify their faith in God. They included 9 kinds of justifications in the group of secular motives and 10 justifications for religious motives. The following elements belong to the main motives of faith of religious nature: the desire to be saved – 62.1%, saints – 61.3%, the faith of John Paul II – 52.8%. However, the basic motives with secular character are the following: your own choice – 71.6%, the need for faith – 66.6%, family upbringing – 61.3%, your parents’ example – 58.1%, your own experiences – 57.1%, family tradition – 52.5%¹⁷.

However, an accurate analysis of the motivation of respondents’ faith in view of a multi-confessional environment is extremely difficult to conduct, since every confession or social category perceives religion partially in a different, specific way for itself. That is why the essence of religiousness has its own identity, which many observers of social life do not notice or properly interpret. This specificity can be partially emphasised by presenting attitudes of the Orthodox youth towards the nature of their faith. The Orthodox youth from the Lubelskie Region connects its faith with family tradition, religious upbringing and the activity of the Church as

¹⁴ Cz. Walesa, *Rozwój religijny człowieka*, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL [Catholic University of Lublin Publishing House], Lublin 2005, p.58.

¹⁵ J. Mariański, *Emigracja z Kościoła. Religijność młodzieży polskiej ...*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁶ Cf. S. H. Zaręba, *W kierunku jakiej religijności? Studia nad katolicyzmem ...*, op. cit., pp. 131-134.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki...*, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

an institution to a higher degree. Among the surveyed young people, 54% of their faith is based on tradition, which is handed down and cultivated by family and the Church, while for the remaining adolescents – 46%, individual thoughts and life experiences are the basis of their religious involvement and ensure adhering to their faith. In consecutive research the already presented attitudes of the Orthodox youth towards the sources of knowledge were confirmed. Once again the respondents revealed “the importance of family tradition and upbringing in the aspect of acquiring knowledge about their religion – 40.8%. Their own thoughts and beliefs came second – 35.6%. A significant aspect for the respondents are their personal reflections, the Church, priests and Church instructions. Relatively few respondents (3.2%) indicated the impossibility of explaining the origin of the world and human beings by science”¹⁸. This general reflection already makes us aware of the focus of sources of seeking religious knowledge by the Orthodox youth. Invariably the fundamental place of acquiring knowledge about your religion is the family environment and a traditional relation with the Church.

On the basis of the presented reflections and shown empirical data, the issue of religious motivation seems to be the key element of the conducted analyses of religiousness. It is especially significant when describing the religiousness of young people, who on the one hand, inherit the picture of faith taken from their parents or local environment, but on the other hand, they are still trying to re-interpret their attitude towards faith in the context of changing circumstances and determinants. On the basis of all-Poland research and regional studies conducted in different environments, we can have the impression that religious motives have generally accepted elements. Definitely, the sphere of their own reflections and quests for explanations concerning the functioning of a human being in the world based on personal experiences belong to them, though being part of a certain inter-generational heritage, which is a continuation of family tradition.

The assessment of their own religiousness

Attitudes towards religion are not always homogeneous, very often they undergo changes due to many factors. Analysing the transformations of religiousness declared by the surveyed young people has many contexts and determinants. In its essence it concerns a conscious perception of your attitude towards religion in the context of time. It is a subjective assessment of a change in the category of an increase, a fall or a steady level. Usually this process of changes to religiousness has its intensive dimension during adolescence.

The research conducted in 2012 by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics revealed that “almost half of respondents (44.9%) assess their religiousness at a steady

¹⁸ W. Romanowicz, *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej*, op. cit., p. 60.

level (a sense of stability of religious attitudes). It is the same religiousness as before. It means that the undergoing processes do not matter much to these people. The obtained indicator is comparable to the all-Poland research from the end of the 1990s (47.1%), although it is lower when compared to the research from the beginning of the 1990s by 18.9%¹⁹.

In the research carried out by J. Baniak in the middle school environment it was concluded that "the largest percentage of respondents (more than 2/5) declared that there had been no significant changes in their religiousness in the given period, either positive (an increase in its level), or negative (a fall in its level). This assessment was more numerously revealed by girls than boys (by 5.9%) as well as students of rural middle schools rather than urban middle schools (by 16.7%). (...) a lower percentage (17.6%) claims that there had been positive changes in their religiousness, that at present it is better, so they are more devout than three years ago, when they were in primary school or in Year One of their middle school. In turn, 22.8% of respondents assess negatively their present level of their own religiousness and claim that now it is »worse« than before"²⁰.

The research among young people carried out in four cities in central Poland confirmed that "two thirds of the surveyed people noticed changes in their religious life (55.6% of respondents), more often going in the direction of leaving the previous religiousness (41.5%) than in the direction of deepening it (14.1%). Declarations concerning deepening their own religiousness – according to J. Mariański – do not have to mean a more conscious and personal religiousness in every case, they can sometimes indicate strengthening the traditional and emotional attachment to the «faith of the ancestors» or «native faith». About one third of the surveyed does not feel the evolution of their own attitudes and religious behaviours (32.3%), they sometimes clearly contradicted having allegedly changed them (stability of beliefs). Every tenth respondent could not define the dynamics of his or her religiousness (11.8%; no answer – 0.4%)²¹.

On the basis of his own research, J. Baniak has observed that "the largest percentage of adolescents (42.9%) stated that there were no changes whatsoever in their faith and religiousness. However, 43.7% of respondents noticed changes in their religious life going in two directions. The first direction of changes shows a positive trend, that is why 20.4% declared that their faith and religiousness had improved in that period. The second direction shows a negative trend – 22.3% of respondents think that their faith and religiousness had deteriorated in the period

¹⁹ E. Jarmoch, *Wiara i religijność*, in: L. Adamczuk and others (ed.) *Postawy społeczno-religijne Polaków 1991-2012*, Institute for Catholic Church Statistics, Warszawa 2013, p. 37.

²⁰ J. Baniak, *Między buntem a potrzebą akceptacji i zrozumienia. Świadomość religijna i moralna a kryzys tożsamości osobowej młodzieży gimnazjalnej. Studium socjologiczne*, Homini SC, Kraków 2008, p. 110.

²¹ J. Mariański, *Emigracja z Kościoła. Religijność młodzieży polskiej ...*, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

indicated. Moreover, 10.7% of the surveyed persons could not assess changes in their faith and religiousness, or indicate the direction of these changes²².

The analysis of the data collected from the Orthodox youth from four cities with the relatively highest representation of members of the Orthodox church rather indicated stability of religiousness. Practically half of respondents (47.8%) declare a stable level of religiousness, 35.6% of the surveyed young people notice changes in their religiousness, including 21.3% who indicate its increase and 14.3% – its fall. The remaining adolescents did not want to give their opinion on the subject (16.1%) or spoke of an unspecified change (0.4%). Despite the lack of statistical significance, it is worth mentioning that young people from villages more often declared an increase in their own religiousness than their peers from large cities (by 7.7%). Also an increase in religiousness is higher among women than men (by 1.4%), whereas men are characterised by a higher stability of religiousness and more often than women (by 17.2%) declare its stable level²³.

The Orthodox youth from the Lubelskie Region take a very optimistic stance on such a question, since they notice their “increase in religiousness – 51.6%. A stable level of religiousness is declared by 41.3% of respondents, 5.7% indicate its fall and 1.4% notice a change in the nature of religiousness, while nobody gives more detailed information or suggestions concerning these changes²⁴.

Declarations of religious observances

Ritual behaviours are an inherent element of religiousness among believers and directly motivate them to confessional activity. Already the classics of sociology of religion claimed that another kind of religious experience, that is worship, is strictly connected with the doctrine of a given religion. “In a broad sense all action which results from religious experience and is determined by it should be regarded as its practical expression, that is worship. However, in a narrow sense an act or acts of devotion through faith are referred to as worship²⁵.

Religious observances interpreted lexically mean “individual and collective social activities, which are the consequence of the professed religious faith and church involvement, characterised by a various type of ritualisation, which mediate between the sacred and the profane. They involve both intellectual and emotional references to the object of faith, such as the complex collection of cultural and social factors, diversified in time and space, which reveal an individual and group religious

²² Cf. J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki...*, op. cit., p. 76.

²³ Cf. W. Romanowicz, *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej*, op. cit., p. 64.

²⁴ M. Gościk, W. Romanowicz, *Aktywność społeczno-religijna młodzieży prawosławnej...*, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁵ J. Wach, *Socjologia religii*, PWN, Warszawa 1961, p. 53.

piety. On the one hand, religious observances are very closely connected with the institutional model of religiousness, i.e. Church matters and on the other hand, with general cultural patterns typical of a given community"²⁶.

According to J. Baniak "the general level of taking part in religious observances by the middle school youth diverges from the expectations of the Church quite significantly. Although compulsory religious observances are systematically fulfilled by a considerable percentage of respondents, there is a much larger percentage of those who fulfil them unsystematically or rarely. There is also a large group of those respondents, who have completely given up the fulfilment of religious observances. However, there is a very low level of fulfilling optional observances. A large percentage of the respondents do not know them, while even a larger percentage does not notice the sense of their fulfilment in the current conditions of life"²⁷.

Long-term research on the religiousness of young people in Poland carried out by S. H. Zaręba informs "about the steady fall in the interest of adolescents in the only optional observance, which was analysed, namely private prayer. Resigning from everyday prayer towards an occasional one or brought about by a situation, and sometimes even omitting it, confirms the assumption of developing superficial religiousness, confined to external manifestations of religiousness. A stable decline in the percentage of people who follow religious observances (systematically and unsystematically) is noticeable, and at the same time an increase in the percentage of those who rarely follow religious observances"²⁸. From this perspective the analysis of the frequency of participation in church services by members of the Orthodox church carried out by I. Borowik indicates their lower participation in religious observances. "Among the members of the Orthodox church, 5.6% follow religious observances more than once a week, 37.6% take part in church services once a week, 32% declare their presence once a month, while 24.8% – a couple of times a year"²⁹. However, the research conducted in the Lubelskie Region in 2009 among the Orthodox youth from upper secondary schools and universities is different. According to the data, "about 75% of the Orthodox youth regularly follow religious observances, while 16.0% irregularly. Nobody from the respondents defined himself or herself as a non-practising person"³⁰.

The above presented indicators of religious observances among the Orthodox youth in the Lubelskie Region might show a strong relationship between the Orthodox youth and their Church as an institution, which legitimises their identity. When speaking of the institutionalisation of religion, we mean some sort of handing

²⁶ W. Świątkiewicz, *Praktyki religijne*, in: M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, J. Mariański (ed.), *Leksykon socjologii religii*, Verbinum, Warszawa 2004, p. 311.

²⁷ J. Baniak, *Między buntem a potrzebą akceptacji i zrozumienia...*, op. cit., p. 233.

²⁸ S. H. Zaręba, *W kierunku jakiej religijności? Studia nad katolicyzmem...*, op. cit., p. 215.

²⁹ I. Borowik, T. Doktor, *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce*, op. cit., p. 171.

³⁰ M. Gościak, W. Romanowicz, *Aktywność społeczno-religijna młodzieży prawosławnej...*, op. cit., p. 43.

down religious experience, religious attitudes, contents, which occur under the influence of certain institutions, e.g. the Church, family, school. Such understanding of institutionalisation is expressed in some behaviours, rituals and depends on the passage of time. Hence we can experience establishing new religious movements, the development of denominations, as well as certain changes in traditional religions. Such notion of religiousness from its theoretical perspective is adequate and justified, although in social sciences, where empirical research is essential, it is difficult to operationalise it. Therefore, most often this term is narrowed and then we are researching rather a "model propagated by the Church and expectations connected with it"³¹ than the essence and a wide context of religiousness.

When analysing the Orthodox religious observances in the context of a multi-confessional environment, you should not use the same assumptions as in the case of Catholics in Poland. This observation has many premises to accept it and take into consideration during research and verification of the collected research material. First of all, theology and the teachings of the Orthodox Church are not oriented to a precise definition of orders and prohibitions as well as the way of ensuring that the faithful follow them in their conduct. The ideology of Eastern Christianity strongly emphasises the transformation of a human being, and his or her deeds to a lesser extent. It is the transformation of a human being that influences his or her activity as well as the attitudes of individuals and communities, and not forming a relation with the sacred through deeds. In this context religious observances are an inner need of an individual resulting from the desire to participate in an event, uniting the whole universe in the Divine Liturgy. Another more prosaic aspect of following religious observances by members of the Orthodox church is the cultural custom and acceptance of the irregularity of fulfilling religious observances. Probably it was reinforced as a result of complicated historical events, when Eastern Orthodox churches were very often closed or even demolished, while the participation in church services was an act of great courage of the members of the Orthodox church. Another obstacle was a very rare network of churches and until recently also a limited number of priests, who served in a few churches at the same time. Hence, more general categories of answers were proposed in the cafeteria questions: *regularly practising, irregularly practising, rarely practising, only for traditional holidays, I follow only fundamental observances due to custom and external pressure, I do not follow observances whatsoever.*

When analysing the frequency of fulfilling religious observances by the Orthodox youth, we should notice that young people attend church less regularly than adults. Direct comparisons emphasise a decrease in observances when compared with adults, especially in the group of regularly practising. In this case the difference is 34.4%. However, a larger percentage of adolescents (by 8.5%) practises irregularly. Generally, it can be concluded that more than 2/3 of young people fulfil religious

³¹ W. Piwowarski, 1977, s. 24

observances quite regularly, while the remaining percentage rarely follows observances – 20.9% or not at all – 5.2%. It should also be pointed out that 6.5% of the surveyed adolescents treat religious observances as maintaining the tradition³². When looking at religious observances of the Orthodox youth, it should be concluded that in this dimension of religiousness despite the decrease in the regularity of practising, the Orthodox youth does not make a significant change by avoiding religious observances. They still predominantly attend church quite regularly, expressing their attachment to the Church and tradition.

Prayer is a specific connection of a believer with God, whereas from the sociological point of view it is described as an important element of religiousness of individuals and the community. According to a survey by the European Values Study, 34.2% of adult Polish citizens declared that they “pray to God every day, 17.9% – more often than once a week, 11.4% – once a week, 9.8% at least once a month, 8.0% a few times a week, 3.7% – even less often, 5.2% – never. However, 79.7% of respondents answered that they have moments of prayer, meditation, contemplation or something similar”³³. Generally, the research concerning this issue in the environment of adolescents indicates the need and meaning of an individual prayer in the life of a young person. However, according to J. Baniak’s research, “more than 2/5 of respondents (40.9%) at the same time concluded that individual prayer does not play any role in their personal life, it does not give meaning to this life (...) at the same time the research revealed that more than 1/2 of respondents (52.0%) say individual prayers, although this frequency is unstable and highly diversified in every environmental group. Altogether 33.9% of respondents pray every day, including only 17.5% in the morning and evening, while the rest pray either in the morning (7.6%), or in the evening (8.8%). The others pray only on Sunday (9.6%) or occasionally, that is very rarely (8.5%)”³⁴.

Statistical data from 2013 concerning the frequency of saying prayers among the Orthodox youth indicate an analogy with data concerning the Catholic youth. It should be pointed out that generally 7.6% of the surveyed adolescents said prayers a few times a day, 23.6% – at least once a day, 27.6% – once a week, 21.5% – rarely, 20.9% – never prayed, while in the case of 0.8% there was no answer. The presented indicators of saying a prayer mean that the Orthodox youth prays less often than their parents or grandparents. A trend speaking of a decrease in the frequency of praying was also present in the Catholic environment. As a result of carrying out analyses concerning separate prayers, it should be concluded that this trend remains in the case of every of the prayers. The quoted research confirms the thesis that women pray more often than men. Generally, 4-5% more women than men

³² Cf. W. Romanowicz, *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej*, op. cit., p. 74.

³³ A. Jasińska-Kania, *Przemiany postaw Polaków w jednoczącej się Europie*, Scholar, Warszawa 2012, pp. 353-354.

³⁴ J. Baniak, *Religia katolicka i Kościół rzymskokatolicki...*, op. cit., pp. 241-242.

pray a few times a day, whereas approximately 6% more men declare a complete lack of prayer. It should also be pointed out that in the case of a place of residence and financial situation of respondents, there are no considerable differences in the frequency of praying. It can be assumed that these variables do not condition a change in the attitude of the surveyed persons, so as to be described in detail.

The relationship between the attitude towards faith of respondents and the frequency of praying, frequently indicated by sociologists, is also justified in the case of the Orthodox youth. In this case the trend is quite obvious and very clear and speaks of the fact that the more devout a person is, the more frequently he or she prays. I will illustrate that on the basis of the "Lord's Prayer". Taking into consideration all declarations of young people who say this prayer once a day or a few times a day, the indicators are the following: deeply devout – 84,7%, believer – 55,3%, undecided – 36,9%, indifferent – 30,0%. It should be emphasised that nobody from the group of non-believers says this prayer³⁵.

All in all, it should be concluded that the Orthodox youth most frequently says the "Lord's Prayer" and prays with their own words, whereas they say the Jesus Prayer, the Nicene Creed or *Cariu Niebiesnyj* less readily. It should be pointed out that every third of the surveyed prays at least once a day, while another 27.6% do it at least once a week. Admittedly, the percentage of those who avoid prayers is significantly lower, but every fifth respondent stated that he or she does not pray whatsoever³⁶. Attitudes of the Orthodox youth towards religious observances show a certain inconsistency, namely the previously declared increase in their religiousness and the relatively high percentage of those declaring faith do not translate into an analogous level of following religious observances, or in particular into an individual prayer. It is difficult to predict at this moment whether it is a steady trend and whether it will remain stable in the coming years. Although there is no doubt that the Orthodox youth needs a strong relationship with the institutional Church, on the other hand, young people are not entirely devoted to it when it comes to the issue of fulfilling religious observances proposed by the Church. The institutional Church can be understood as an instrumental value, as an external aspect of religion, needed to emphasise its specificity and religious identity.

Final remarks

The chosen indicators of religiousness among the Orthodox youth shown above generally describe the attitude of this community towards religion. Due to heterogeneous methodological concepts, the presented research results should not be

³⁵ Cf. W. Romanowicz, *Świadomość religijna i moralna młodzieży prawosławnej*, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

³⁶ Cf. Ibidem, p. 78.

interpreted as representative and should only be viewed as an attempt of contributory insight into the declarative sphere of religiousness among the Orthodox youth. Until today a precise description of the Polish Orthodox faith poses great difficulty for sociologists or researchers from other fields, since one of the basic conditions for a systematic description and presenting reliable quantitative analyses is a precise estimation of the number of the faithful. The data presented in Statistical Yearbooks is substantially overstated, which some researchers pay attention to³⁷.

Another problem you need to take into consideration when describing religiousness is the increasing youth mobility connected with undertaking education or work in places far away from their local environment. This phenomenon is especially important in the case of religious minorities, which need to uphold their beliefs every day. The migration of the Orthodox youth to environments where often there is no objective possibility to continue the Orthodox tradition, leads to assimilation within the dominant culture. Under such circumstances, confessional and environmental bonds weaken, which often influences the changes in attitudes towards religion.

Taking into account the inner, as well as outer conditionings in the functioning of the Orthodox youth, you need to notice the changes in attitudes of these young people. They are multidirectional, rendering it impossible to describe or reconstruct this phenomenon as a whole. From observations and my own research as well as the analysis of data connected with the activity of the Orthodox church, we can speak of a religious revival among the Orthodox youth within the last few years. However, it is doubtful whether this religious revival translates into the sphere of everyday life. Undoubtedly, the traditional nature of religiousness dominates among the Orthodox youth.

The most numerable category of adolescents – about 65%, are young people who are more and more intensively searching for the roots of their spirituality needed for their self-identification, while they make use of tradition and the teachings of the Church when planning their activity. The Church and its offer regarding spirituality as well as its role that it plays within the scope of sustaining personal and social identity for these adolescents is its basic reference. As one of my interlocutors revealed, it is a place which allows them to *think and speak in their own way*. From the point of view of the Church, this process is the most expected and desired, while this trend can be illustrated by the shift from the quantity of believers to their quality. In the presented research, declarations of these young people towards faith and observances remain at a very high level. A similar position can be observed when comparing their own religiousness or attachment to the institutional Church.

³⁷ Cf. A. Sadowski, *Spoleczne problemy miejscowości północno-wschodniej Polski*, Białystok 2001, pp. 48-49, K. Goss, *Struktura wyznaniowa mieszkańców byłego województwa białostockiego*, „Pogranicze. Studia społeczne”, 2001, vol. X, p. 128-135, W. Romanowicz, *Wstępna diagnoza stanu Kościoła prawosławnego na Lubelszczyźnie*, „Prawosławie”, 2015, vol. I, pp. 111-113.

I refer to such a profile of adolescents as traditional and not only due to the attitude of the youth towards tradition, but first of all the way of interpretation and form of religious expectations.

The second group of adolescents – around 20%, which I define as reformers, is still searching and belongs somewhere between the followers of orthodox attitudes towards religion and the need for discovering completely new religious fields. They are characterised by expecting changes both in the functioning of the Church on the religious plane as well as opening themselves up towards the present time to a larger extent. The youth from this group does not reject the observances, tradition, which the Church propagates or its religious identification, but is more inclined to change confession or religion, it expects alteration to the language of church services or the liturgical calendar. It is more liberally oriented to observing the canons developed by the Church. The picture of a “besieged fortress” definitely does not suit these young people, as they are open to the world and recognize enormous value in the diversity of the world. However, with their openness and the need for changes, they are attached to the bearing and thinking shaped by Orthodox culture, which derives from the Orthodox Church. Individualists form the third group, that is the adolescents for which religion in its traditional form is indifferent or even unnecessary for their functioning and development. I estimate their population at around 15%. They are characterised by an individualistic attitude, while they search for assigning meaning to life outside of institutional religion. Young people are not interested in functioning within the Church. They perceive the Church as one of many specialist institutions present in social reality. They are inclined to commune with other religions, although this communion is not long-lasting, while their commitment does not signify “neophytic zeal”. Religion serves them as fulfilment and satisfaction of their spiritual needs, significantly distinct from those offered by the Church. Hence they compose their spirituality themselves, while they draw inspiration from various sources available to them, e.g. from the Internet, travels, nature etc.

Obviously, the profiles of religiousness presented above cannot be treated as something permanent and universal, since young people undergo constant transformations, just like the whole social reality they live in. It would be worth planning and conducting a series of research including the whole Orthodox youth and only then could we attempt to reach more detailed conclusions.