



Summary



In the last decades the Catholic Church has seen an intensive development of spiritual and religious life, not so much in its official structures as in the lay and ecclesiastical movements, whose members are mainly young adults, students, intellectuals and middle-aged people.

From a general sociological point-of-a-view the most important question is the following: What has caused this emergence and growth of esoteric and spiritual practices and new religious and ecclesiastical movements, which the seismograph of religious and spiritual behaviour had not at all expected? According to the author the answers lie in the radical secularization of both the modern world and its religious institutions. Thus, the world's excessive profanity, viz. the radical secularization brings to antisecularization, a revolting reaction of those who do not want to live in a world without "substance nor sense". The radicalism of secularization and excessive worldly-mindedness cannot hold out. After the temptations of secularization, religion is being revived again.

The existential question of the meaning of human life as a whole cannot be suppressed for a long time without serious consequences. This is what preceded antisecularization on a global social level: *complete undermining of foundations, sweeping away of religious matters from the modern world, faith in science, linear progress, false promises of a social utopia, destroyed beliefs in "great stories", colossal and spectacular collapse of big ideologies and their transformation into ways of thinking.*

Global loss of sense, disappointment with the profane and everything that was worshipped as religious ("science", "progress", ideologies...) have led to an intensive search and unquenchable thirst for an inner personal experience of the Holy. This question is central to the new religious revival of both the esoteric groups and the new ecclesiastical movements, promising an inner direct personal experience of "someone completely different".

Contemporary ecclesiastical movements emerge and grow in an ambience of a secularized world and a civilization of consumption. They appear at the same time with the “decline of the holy”, secularization and weakening of institutional religion. Excessive profanity of the world combined with secularization of religious institutions appeasing with such a world, regularly bring about a new spiritual and religious revival, a renewed search for direct religious experience.

This completely unexpected religious revival and interest for personal religious experience, mainly among students and young adults, has not only surprised the researchers of religious behaviour, but also the Church hierarchy. These pentecostal movements in the Church spread faster and affect the world much deeper and quicker than the missions organised by the Church.

With the yielding of strict repressive measures towards religion and the Church in the former communist country and with the opening of the Church towards the world after Vatican II Council, an intensive charismatic and prayer movement started also in Croatia in the late 60's. There arose, first among students, some spontaneous prayer groups, biblical circles and teachings, ecclesiastical movements of the Focolari, Cursillistas, the youth of Taize... The ecclesiastical movements grow from the faithful, they do not have a strict structure nor a formal membership; they are not formed through statutory, canonical nor legal acts; they have not become organisations nor have they developed from theological reflection; they have not been established through an act or the will of the Church hierarchy.

In the Catholic Church, and thus, in the local Catholic Church of Croatia, we do not speak of new ecclesiastical movements in terms of an unprecedented phenomenon in the Church history. It is rather a “stress shift”, a “revival”, a “coming back to the sources” and a rehabilitation of an authentic dimension of christian life in a dechristianized and secularized world. This “stress shift” and emphasis on a specific dimension of a faithful's life are always related to a socio-historical and socio-cultural context, which, in such circumstances, was neglected.

The qualities and basic features of a member of a new ecclesiastical movement are the same as well in our local as in the universal Church. There is a growing interest for authentic religious matters: *the meaning of human life as a whole, contemplative and mystical elements, christocentric ecclesiasticity, personal religious experience, gifts of the Holy Spirit, reading of the Holy Scripture, spontaneous prayers said aloud, not too structured liturgical cult, come back to the experience of the early Church, the Church Fathers, saints and mystics.*

What makes one ecclesiastical movement different from another is not the content but rather the method which leads to personal religious experience and the experience of the Holy. Members of new ecclesiastical movements want to transform themselves, groups or communities into radical Christians; the transformation of “structures” follow implicitly and indirectly.

The new ecclesiastical movements have many postmodern features: stress on the personal, communitarian, experience, a(nti)institutional, apolitical, a(nti)ideological, super or sub-rational and so on...

Assessing the role and importance of new ecclesiastical movements in the local Catholic Church in Croatia, we can say that by stressing personal religious experience, personal and communitarian aspects, freedom and sensibility in the even strictly ritual liturgical Church life, they represent a corrective phenomenon for the official Church, as not to fall into the trap of “truth objectivism” (the so-called theological rationalism). They keep her awake, ready to go with the modern word, to “be in the world, but not of the world”.

On a global social level members of new ecclesiastical movements contribute to the growth of personal freedom, individualism, interconfessional and interreligious dialogue, ecumenism, tolerance with others and different ways of thinking. These are the values of the contemporary (post)modern society.

Members of new ecclesiastical movements in the world and in our country are identified as members of renewal prayer groups. Prayer reflects the search in religion, the way to gain personal religious experience. The empirical part of this research shows that regular personal and liturgical prayer is the cornerstone for religious behaviour, values and attitude according to ethical and moral norms and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The results suggest a high conformity of members of ecclesiastical movements with the Church doctrine and its ethical and moral norms, which is understandable and could be expected since the research covered selective groups in the Church.