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Original paper

## EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION AS A SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL CAPITAL CASE OF SPANISH CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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### Abstract

Despite decades of secularization, the influence of the Christian tradition is still felt in Europe. This article focuses on the case of Spain, a country that went from being one of the most Catholic to one of the least religious in just a few decades. This article presents the study of spiritual capital using a sample of Spanish youth. There are many spiritual resources, however an example of a clear religious and spiritual resource is the Eucharist, which is still considered »spiritual food« for most Catholics. Therefore, we measure the extent to which the Mass is still a spiritual resource in the secular Spanish landscape. We capture the younger generation's own expressions. Our results suggest that young people perceive the celebration of the Eucharist as a source of spiritual capital (experience of joy, compassion, gratitude, emotional well-being, resilience, etc.), as more than 65% of the responses refer to some of the indicators of spiritual capital. However, only 8% of students report attending the Mass regularly. The rest of the students either do not participate in the celebration of the Eucharist at all or only sporadically.

*Key words:* spirituality, spiritual capital, Eucharist, Catholic school, secularization

### Introduction

One of the many challenges facing Catholic schools in Spain today is to preserve the value of Catholicism in this increasingly secular and scientific worldview.

The metamorphosis of Spain is evident. In the space of about twenty years, Spain has gone from being one of the most Catholic countries in Europe to one in which religiosity has declined sharply.

Spain has always been a reference country in terms of Catholicity<sup>1</sup>. Today, the religious landscape in Spain looks completely different, especially if we take into account the younger generation. New tendencies towards secularization seem inevitable. On the one hand, we can observe that the younger generation is full of new ideas, full of creativity, and great energy to create a better world. However, at the same time, we observe a significant decline in values, spirituality, inner experiences. The interests of the strongest prevail. Moral conscience is deformed, among many other aspects. Therefore, starting from this reality, we investigate whether Catholicity, particularly participation in the Mass, the main Catholic celebration of faith, is related to the experience and life of young people. In particular, from the perspective of the younger generation, we will examine the extent to which the celebration of the Eucharist is still a spiritual asset in the secular Spanish landscape. Ultimately, the Mass has always been considered spiritual »nourishment and strength for Christians, enabling them to bear authentic evangelical witness in everyday life<sup>2</sup>«.

Society is awash in various capitals: material, social, emotional, intellectual, religious, etc. Nevertheless, there is one type of capital that is different from those mentioned: spiritual capital. Although the image of the Church in Spain has been heavily criticized and has lost trust, young people still have a need for spiritual experiences. They are looking for humanizing, social experiences, experiences of joy. They need the values of compassion and gratitude. They want to find ways to emotional well-being, resistance to hostile and stressful situations, and more. Hence, based on the concept of spiritual capital, we focus on these experiences.

The work of Casson<sup>3</sup> was our reference point for the research, because Casson conducted a study of spiritual capital in English Catholic secondary schools<sup>4</sup>. Thus, we have conducted a similar study for the Catholic school in Spain to investigate the situation of the Catholic school in the country that is a reference in terms of Catholic religious practices. The case of the Spanish

<sup>1</sup> Other countries of reference are: Italy, Poland, and Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> FRANCISCO, *Evangelii gaudium. The Joy of the Gospel*, Vatican, 2013, 174.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ann CASSON, Religious and spiritual capitals. The experience of the celebration of Mass in the English Catholic secondary school, in: *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 5 (2013) 2, 204-217.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

school is new, since no literature on the subject of spiritual capital could be found. Moreover, the topic of spiritual capital is of interest because it is still a relatively new area of research. Additionally, we capture the phrases expressed by the students in their own words, which adds value to the study. Being able to capture their terminology and vocabulary can help understand what the younger generation thinks, feels and needs. Finally, we support the study with an extensive and detailed statistical analysis (indicators, percentages, graphs), which also adds a new value: combining theology and economic perspective.

Our main objective is to explore the extent to which spiritual capital is still represented in the celebration of the Eucharist in the Spanish context. Do young people perceive the Mass as a source of values and experiences that can transform them? Do Catholic students with a long religious tradition, still value the Mass as an important element in their lives?

The analysis was conducted in one of the largest secondary schools in Spain with a long Catholic tradition. The results show that the celebration of the Eucharist continues to be valued by students as spiritual capital. A total of 65% of the responses included reference to some of the indicators of spiritual capital. However, only 8% of students reported attending the Mass regularly, and approximately 67% of youth do not benefit from this resource of spiritual capital deposited in the Eucharist, because they attend the Mass sporadically, i.e., only a few times a year. The rest of the students are completely disconnected from the celebration of the Eucharist. Consequently, it seems that they know the Mass only theoretically, since the participation in the celebration of the Eucharist has been decreasing among Catholic youth.

Furthermore, we have confirmed that one of the reasons is the decreasing knowledge about the Eucharistic celebration. Although students have received important Catholic and religious education for many years, they still display a lack of familiarity and knowledge about the Mass; between 45% and 63% of the students surveyed did not give any answer about the different aspects of the Eucharistic celebration, and only between 17% and 27% answered correctly to the questions in the questionnaire about the basic aspects of the Mass. One cannot appreciate what one does not know.

There are at least three implications of our study. Firstly, the study fills an important research gap in the literature on spiritual capital in the Spanish context, since there are no studies on this topic based on Spanish samples. Secondly, the Church can benefit from the comprehensive analysis of the younger generation with respect to their perceptions of the Mass. The celebration of the Eucharist remains the most important Catholic celebration. Notwithstanding,

there is a clear shift away from church life, especially the Mass, among young people. Finally, the young generation can also benefit from the study, because the rejection of the celebration of the Eucharist means the loss of spiritual capital deposited in the Mass, i.e., the loss of the experiences of participation, piece, joy, solidarity, capacity for admiration, emotional well-being, values of gratitude, etc.

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, we define the concept of spiritual capital. Secondly, we develop the research hypotheses. Thirdly, we explain the sample selection and methodology. Then, we present the results. Finally, we offer the main conclusions.

## 1. Perception of spiritual capital

The concept of spiritual capital has emerged in the current literature recently, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to two trends described in the literature. Firstly, the relationship between religion / spirituality and the creation of social relationships and trust is viewed positively. Secondly, the term itself emerges as a result of the separation of spirituality from institutionalized religion and, in particular, the negative images often associated with church, religion, or institutions in general. Iannaccone and Klick<sup>5</sup>, Zohar and Marshall<sup>6</sup>, Peat<sup>7</sup>, Oh and Yoshikawa<sup>8</sup>, Rima<sup>9</sup>, Casson<sup>10</sup>, and others are the authors who view spiritual capital as a new paradigm. They refer to the field of spiritual capital as »super-capital« that combines various capitals: religious, social, human, intellectual, emotional, cultural, and psychological capital. For example, Iannaccone and Klick note: »the term is so elastic that it can be applied to all religions, but also to a wide range of nonreligious activities that are considered virtuous or

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Laurence IANNACCONI – Johnathon KLICK, *Spiritual Capital. An Introduction and Literature Review*, Spiritual Capital Planning Meeting, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Danah ZOHAR – Ian MARSHALL, *Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live*, San Francisco, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. David PEAT, *Spiritual Capital and Globalization*, Metanexus Institute: Science and Religion: Global Perspectives, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Soojin OH – Hirokazu YOSHIKAWA, Examining Spiritual Capital and Acculturation across Ecological Systems: Developmental Implications for Children and Adolescents in Diverse Immigrant Families, in: *Contributions to Human Development*, 24 (2012) 1, 77–98.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Samuel RIMA, *Spiritual Capital: A Moral Core for Social and Economic Justice*, London – New York, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ann CASSON, Religious and spiritual capitals: the experience of the celebration of Mass in the English Catholic secondary school, in: *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 5 (2013) 2, 204–217.

therapeutic<sup>11</sup>«. Zohar and Marshall present spiritual capital as a wealth through which we can improve our lives<sup>12</sup>. Peat defines spiritual capital in the context of trust, loyalty, ethics, and morality<sup>13</sup>.

Oh and Yoshikawa understand spiritual capital as a concept composed of multiple dimensions such as religious beliefs, practices, behaviours, participation, knowledge, skills, and networks that operate within and across multiple levels<sup>14</sup>. Rima explains spiritual capital as an individual's »metaphysical impulse that animates and leverages other forms of capital to build capacity for advancing the common good<sup>15</sup>«. Finally, Casson defines spiritual capital as a resource that can be acquired and exchanged. It is linked to religious tradition but recognizes the agency of the individual and can be transformed by individuals according to their needs<sup>16</sup>.

Other recent studies also define spiritual capital as a new concept. For example, O'Sullivan explains the term as »a society's capacity for authentic social change deriving from its spiritual and religious resources<sup>17</sup>«. Guest expresses the concept in terms of a flow of values from latent charisma in religious traditions, community frameworks, and social relationships<sup>18</sup>. Malloch links spiritual capital to the transcendental source of human happiness<sup>19</sup>. Baker and Smith describe the link between individual motivation and practical action, defining spiritual capital as »the spiritual values and vision for the future that we express in activities such as prayer and worship and that motivate us to make practi-

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<sup>11</sup> Laurence IANNACCONI – Johnathon KLICK, *Spiritual Capital. An Introduction and Literature Review*, Spiritual Capital Planning Meeting, 2003, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Danah ZOHAR – Ian MARSHALL, *Spiritual Capital. Wealth We Can Live*, San Francisco, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. David PEAT, *Spiritual Capital and Globalization*, Metanexus Institute: Science and Religion: Global Perspectives, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Soojin OH – Hirokazu YOSHIKAWA, Examining Spiritual Capital and Acculturation across Ecological Systems: Developmental Implications for Children and Adolescents in Diverse Immigrant Families, in: *Contributions to Human Development*, 24 (2012) 1, 77–98.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel RIMA, *Spiritual Capital. A Moral Core for Social and Economic Justice*, London – New York, 2013, 172.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ann CASSON, Religious and spiritual capitals: the experience of the celebration of Mass in the English Catholic secondary school, in: *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 5 (2013) 2, 204–217.

<sup>17</sup> Michael O'SULLIVAN, *Spiritual Capital and the Turn to Spirituality*, in: Michael O'SULLIVAN – Bernadette FLANEGAN (eds.), *Spiritual Capital. Spirituality in Practice in Christian Perspective*, London – New York, 2012, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mathew GUEST, *In Search of Spiritual Capital. The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource*, Aldershot, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Theodore MALLOCH, Spiritual capital and practical wisdom, in: *Journal of Management Development*, 29 (2010) 7/8, 755–759.

cal contributions to society<sup>20</sup>«. Lastly, O'Sullivan connects spiritual capital to interiority, to serve and spread beauty, intelligibility, truth, goodness and love<sup>21</sup>.

For the purposes of this study, we propose our definition: Spiritual capital as a resource that can combine various religious practices and personal experiences that have the capacity to change people, influence society, and lead to a coherent and authentic way of life.

## 2. Eucharistic celebration and its connection to spiritual capital. Research hypotheses

There are many spiritual resources, such as prayer practices, meditation, and participation in a faith community, study of theology, religious celebrations, and more. Some of them are directly related to the material objects of faith, such as stamps, medals, crucifixes, images of the Virgin Mary. Others relate to the social dimension of spirituality. Processions or feasts of saints are examples of such a spiritual-social dimension. There are also spiritual resources related to the cultural aspect, such as religious paintings, music, and architecture. However, an example of a distinct religious and spiritual resource is the Eucharist.

The celebration of the Eucharist is still considered »spiritual nutrition« for most Catholics. There are many celebrations, but the Mass is still a centre of the Catholic Church. The Eucharist has little direct monetary or nutritional value and may even be considered completely irrelevant. Nevertheless, its contribution to society, to the spiritual well-being of the faithful, strengthens the authority of the Christian tradition. The value of receiving a small piece of bread and a sip of wine become crucial and spread within a religious world, as Woodberry notes<sup>22</sup>. The celebration of the Eucharist »nourishes and strengthens Christians internally and enables them to bear authentic evangelical witness in daily life<sup>23</sup>«.

Therefore, our first hypothesis, which is also the main objective of this article, examines whether the celebration of the Eucharist continues to be spiritual capital for Hispanic Catholic school youth today. In other words, we have investigated whether participation in the Mass provides humanizing, social

<sup>20</sup> Chris BAKER – Greg SMITH, *Spiritual, Religious and Social Capital – Exploring Their Dimensions and Their Relationship with Faith-Based Motivation and Participation in UK Civil Society*, Edinburg, 2010, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Michael O'SULLIVAN, *Spiritual Capital and Authentic Subjectivity*, in: Rebecca GISELBRECHT – Ralph KUNZ (eds.), *Sacrality and Materiality*, Göttingen, 2015, 45-53.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Robert WOODBERRY, *Researching Spiritual Capital. Promises and Pitfalls*, John Templeton Foundation, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> FRANCISCO, *Evangelii gaudium. The Joy of the Gospel*, Vatican, 2013, 174.

and joyful experiences. We have focused on whether the Eucharist leads adolescents to solidarity, recognition of social injustices, and a sense of personal responsibility. We have examined whether the celebration of the Mass changes people, instils moral values, creates emotional resilience to adverse and stressful situations, and leads to emotional well-being. We have investigated whether the Eucharist can help them discover the values of gratitude, compassion, feeling loved, and sharing. Thus, our first hypothesis is as follows:

**H1:** *The Eucharistic celebration still contains elements that are perceived by young people as a source of spiritual capital.*

It is also observed that young people of our Catholic school participate less in the parish activities, with the consequence that they move away from the life of the Church. Although they have received a Catholic and religious education, the general impression shows that participation in the Mass has decreased among the students of the school. Therefore, it is one thing to recognize that the Mass can be a source of spiritual capital, and another thing to live it as spiritual capital, to put it into practice. Consequently, in this second hypothesis, we evaluate the frequency of students' participation in the Eucharist, raising several questions. Do they perceive the celebration of the Eucharist as something theoretical, or is it an important part of their lives? Do they benefit from participating in the Mass as an effective depository of spirituality and a source of important values? Hence, our second hypothesis is as follows:

**H2:** *The frequency of participation in the Mass has decreased among Catholic school students, even though they have important religious roots. As a result, it seems that the young generation does not benefit from the spiritual capital deposited in the celebration of the Eucharist.*

Finally, in Spanish society we can observe an overwhelming decline in traditional religious beliefs and knowledge in recent decades. The parameters for measuring and understanding the wealth of today's society are mainly influenced by scientific knowledge, given that the results of scientific research are effective, sound and accompanied by a high degree of reliability. It is believed that this confidence is capable of solving, if not all, then almost all problems that humanity may face<sup>24</sup>. For example, Inglehart et al. conducted a survey between 2007 and 2019 in which they confirmed that the majority of countries (including

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gloria PÉREZ, Scientific knowledge and the cankers that go with it, in: *Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca*, 23 (2011) 2, 19-43.

Spain), 43 out of 49, have become less traditionally religious<sup>25</sup>. However, »the need for spiritual experience is not unique to religious people, but is present in all people<sup>26</sup>«. People are looking for transcendence. They are »searching for ways of transcendence<sup>27</sup>«. »God is not dead<sup>28</sup>«, comments Bermejo.

People are looking for spirituality »in some way«; nevertheless, general trends indicate a decreasing role of traditional religions, and as a result knowledge of the basic aspects of religion, including aspects of the Eucharist, is decreasing. This can affect students' positive image and understanding of the Eucharist. A familiar statement says, »If something is unknown it cannot be appreciated«. Negative or indifferent attitudes toward aspects of religion or the Church continue to increase and undoubtedly have an impact on the students. We have found statements among students such as, »the Mass means nothing to me«, »I get bored during the Mass«. People who do not have a religious culture cannot appreciate the meaning of the Eucharist and may not recognize the value of participating in the celebration. One must also have some basic culture to be able to appreciate a sculpture or a painting. It is possible to stand before a work of art and not appreciate it.

On the other hand, our students have been at our school since they were 3 years old and receive religious instruction there. Being immersed in the Catholic space, students should have enough knowledge to combat modern society's current disinterest in religious aspects. Therefore, our third hypothesis is as follows:

**H3:** *Knowledge of the Eucharist has been declining among young people, but students should have sufficient understanding and familiarity with the celebration of the Eucharist.*

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ronald INGLEHART – Jon MILLER – Michael DENNIS – Stephanie JWO – Gergely ROSTA, *Religion's Sudden Decline, Revisited. Foreign Affairs*, London, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Violeta GORODISCHER, *Buscadores de fe. Un viaje a la espiritualidad contemporánea*, Buenos Aires, 2012, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Vicente VIDE, Senderos de trascendencia en tiempos de increencia, in: *Revista de Espiritualidad*, 288 (2013) 1, 343-363, 344.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Diego BERMEJO, *El retorno de Dios en la condición posmoderna, posmetafísica y globalizada*, Diego Bermejo (ed.), ¿Dios a la vista?, Dykinson, 2008.



### 3. Sample and methodology

#### 3.1. Sample selection and analysis period

Our research has taken place in a Catholic school because the experience of teaching religion in Catholic secondary schools is deeply rooted in Christian Spain. We have chosen one of the largest schools in Spain<sup>29</sup> with currently more than 2,700 students. The school has more than 60 years of history and tradition.

We have analysed young people of the school community of a secondary, undergraduate, middle and high school. Our sample includes students aged 12 years (1<sup>st</sup> ESO: secondary school) to 22 years (graduation from professional training). The 1<sup>st</sup> ESO students are teenagers who are already independent of their parents to some extent as they make their first important decisions: choosing a school to begin secondary education; taking their first assessments; beginning to develop their vision of the world. Our sample ends at age 22. This is the last course offered at the school (high school students). In the following years, students begin their work experience or continue their studies at university. Our sample includes a total of 461 students. Our analysis has been conducted for the 2019-2020 study period. Table 1 displays the distribution of students in the sample across the different levels.

**Table 1.** *The number of students in the different levels.*

Level	Age	Number of students
1 <sup>st</sup> ESO	12-13 years	36
2 <sup>nd</sup> ESO	13-14 years	38
3 <sup>rd</sup> ESO	14-15 years	56
4 <sup>th</sup> ESO	15-16 years	96
1 <sup>st</sup> Bachelor/ undergraduate	16-17 years	59
2 <sup>nd</sup> Bachelor/ undergraduate	17-19 years	116
Professional training	19-22 years	60
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>461</b>

#### 3.2. Methodology

The methodology used in this work is based on the questionnaire. The use of questionnaires has become essential for a variety of different studies (see, for

<sup>29</sup> The name of the school has been anonymised.

example, Alreck and Settle<sup>30</sup>; Esomar<sup>31</sup>), since contemporary political, economic or social organizations use this technique as an indispensable tool instrument to get to know the behaviour of their interest groups and make decisions about them<sup>32</sup>. In the studies of spiritual capital, several questionnaires have also been developed focused on the measurement of beliefs, spirituality, and religiosity, see for example Guest<sup>33</sup>, Baker and Smith<sup>34</sup>, Golparvar and Javadian<sup>35</sup>, to name a few.

In literature, we find several scales for measuring spiritual capital based on questionnaires. Some of them use unique questions, others apply more specific questions, still others identify the items on levels of spirituality, including multidimensional instruments, see for example the studies of Kass et al.<sup>36</sup>, Idler et al.<sup>37</sup>, and others. Thus, different authors use different measures, as there is no single measure of spiritual capital. Considering the diversity of these studies and the current secularization context in Spain, in our work we will analyse spiritual capital using the following eight indicators:

1. The meaning and purpose of life. This indicator presents the meaning of life, confidence in life, and the ability to make decisions.
2. Self-transcendence. It measures the sense of connection to the presence of God, the sense of love of God, the connection to transcendence, the capability for admiration, the appreciation of beauty, and the appreciation of silence.
3. Well-being. This indicator focuses on the experience of joy, the ability to feel peace, harmony, strength, and love.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pamela ALRECK – Robert SETTLE, *The survey research handbook*, Boston, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. ESOMAR, *Interviewing market and opinion research*, Amsterdam, 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Daniel HALL – Keith MEADOR – Harold KOENIG, Measuring religiosity in health research: review and critique, in: *Journal of Religious Health*, 47 (2008) 2, 134-163.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mathew GUEST, *In Search of Spiritual Capital. The Spiritual as a Cultural Resource*, Aldershot, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Chris BAKER – Greg SMITH, *Spiritual, Religious and Social Capital – Exploring Their Dimensions and Their Relationship with Faith-Based Motivation and Participation in UK Civil Society*, Edinburgh, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Mohsen GOLPARVAR – Zahra JAVADIAN, The Spiritual Capital Scale. Development and Psychometric Properties, in: *Journal of Research & Health Social Development & Health Promotion Research Center* 5 (2016) 4, 25-35.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jared KASS – Richard FRIEDMAN – Jane LASERMAN – Patricia ZUTTERMEISTER – Herbert BENSON, Research Note. Health Outcomes and a New Index of Spiritual Experience, in: *Journal for the Science Study of Religion*, 30 (1991) 2, 203-211.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ellen IDLER – Marc MUSICK – Christopher ELLISON – Lind GEORGE – Neal KRAUSE – Marcia ORY – David WILLIAMS, Measuring Multiple Dimensions of Religion and Spirituality for Health Research. Conceptual Background and Findings From the 1998 General Social Survey, in: *Research on Aging*, 25 (2003) 4, 327-365.

4. Sense of unity. It assessed the ability to perceive what unites, what leads to cooperation, what is a common goal.
5. Social commitment and service. It measures the ability to share, to help others, to care for the neighbour, the poor and the needy. It assesses the capacity for service, for solidarity.
6. Resilience. This indicator assesses the ability to overcome dramatic and sad circumstances, adverse and stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one, an accident, depression.
7. Contribution to the values for the society. The feelings of gratitude, mercy, humane attitude, compassion, and other values are measured here.
8. Social link / social bonding. The connection to the community, group and social belongings is determined here.

The above indicators were determined using the following scales: Ironson Woods Spirituality Religiousness Scale<sup>38</sup>; Means-Ends Spirituality Questionnaire<sup>39</sup>; and SpREUK Spiritual Scale<sup>40</sup>.

### 3.3. Questionnaire design

We have limited the number of questions to seven, with six open-ended questions and one closed-ended, because long questionnaires can cause people to abandon them prematurely, as several authors note, see, e.g., Wilson and McClean<sup>41</sup>, Carter and Williamson<sup>42</sup>. Thus, the common mistake of asking too many questions should be avoided. This is especially important when we focus on young people.

We have chosen open-ended questions mainly to avoid on the one hand, the questionnaire suggesting the available answers and, on the other hand, the

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Gail IRONSON – George SOLOMON – Dean CRUESS – Julie BARROSO – Margaret STIVERS, Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept, in: *Academy of Management Review* 27 (2002) 1, 17–40.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Kathleen RYAN – Basil FIORITO, Means-Ends Spirituality Questionnaire. Reliability, Validity and Relationship to Psychological Well-Being, in: *Review of Religious Research*, 45 (2003) 2, 130–154.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Arndt BUSSING – Thomas OSTERMANN – Peter MATTHIESEN, The SpREUK Questionnaires as Tools to Measure Spiritual/Religious Attitudes of Patients Dealing with Chronic Diseases, in: *European Journal of Integrative Medicine* 1 (2008) 1, 29–30.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Noel WILSON – Sally MCLEAN, *Questionnaire Design. A Practical Introduction*, Newtown Abbey, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Madalin CARTER – David WILLIAMSON, *Questionnaire Design*, United Kingdom: Staffordshire University Business School, 1996.

items themselves suggesting what the study is looking for. In addition, open-ended questions help to capture the phrases expressed by students in their own words, which is of additional value to the study. Being able to capture their terminology and vocabulary can help understand what the younger generation thinks, feels and needs<sup>43</sup>.

Finally, we have included a final question to quantify one aspect of interest (the last question). Based on the documents: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*<sup>44</sup>, *Missale Romanum*<sup>45</sup>, and the literature on the Eucharist: Gerken<sup>46</sup>, Borobio<sup>47</sup>, and some recent literature: Buenafuente<sup>48</sup>, García Ibáñez<sup>49</sup>, we have selected the questions of interest for the Eucharistic celebration to create the questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the questionnaire.

**Figure 1.** *The questionnaire for the celebration of the Eucharist.*

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please, fill out the questionnaire.

1. What does the word »Eucharist« mean?
2. What is the essence of the Eucharist? In other words, why is the Eucharist so important to the Catholic Church?
3. What does it mean to receive communion?
4. Who instituted the Eucharist and when?
5. During the celebration of the Eucharist we see different colours that the priest wears during the celebration. Do you know what these colours mean?
6. Name other names that relate to the Eucharist.
7. How often do you participate in the Eucharist? Choose one of the answers:
  - a) Once or less than every two months.
  - b) Once a month.
  - c) Every Sunday.

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING**

**Source:** *The author.*

<sup>43</sup> We have »quoted« the expressions of the students.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. JUAN PABLO II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Vatican, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. MISSALE ROMANUM INSTITUTIO GENERALIS, Vatican, 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Alexander GERKEN, *Teología de la Eucaristía*, Madrid, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Dionisio BOROBIO, *Eucaristía*, Madrid, 2000.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ángel BUENAFUENTE, *Eucaristía, plenitud de vida*, Madrid, 2012.

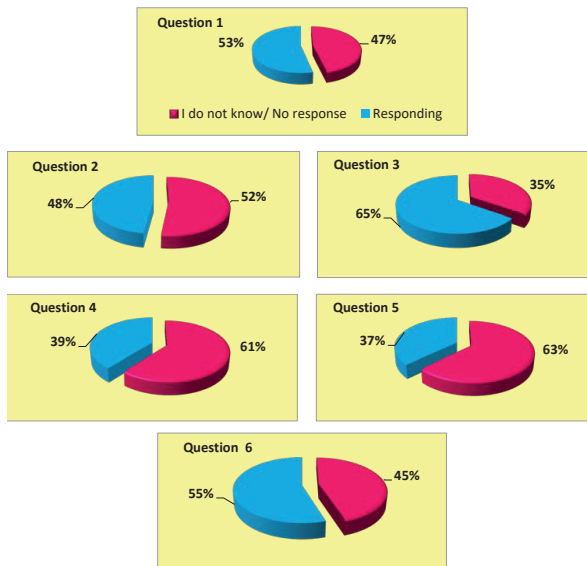
<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ángel GARCÍA IBÁÑEZ, *La Eucaristía, don y misterio*, Pamplona, 2017.

#### 4. Results

After collecting the data, we used SPSS, a statistical tool, for the analysis. In addition, we applied the method of meta-analysis<sup>50</sup> to process the responses in terms of the selected indicators.

The initial results demonstrate that between 35% of students (for question 4) and up to 63% (question 6) did not answer the question (see Figure 2). This may suggest two possible interpretations. Firstly, we can understand this as a lack of interest in the topic among the youth. Secondly, it could indicate a lack of knowledge among the students (our third hypothesis relates to this question). It is a significant percentage because the questions in the questionnaire were mainly open and all students were taught Catholic at least in the last years, since 99% of secondary students come from primary schools with religious preparation. For the purpose of further analysis, we have excluded all unanswered responses to various questions.

**Figure 2.** *The percentage of unanswered questions.*



Source: *The author.*

<sup>50</sup> Meta-analysis is a methodology for the systematic and quantitative review of research, for details; see for example Juan BOTELLA – Hilda GAMBARA, *¿Qué es el meta-análisis?* Madrid, 2002; Soyeon AHN – Allison AMES – Nicholas MYERS, *A Review of Meta-Analyses in Education. Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses*, in: *Review of Educational Research* 82 (2012) 4, 436-476.

#### 4.1. Results H1: The presence of the spiritual capital in the celebration of the Eucharist

In order to assess the presence of spiritual capital in the celebration of the Eucharist, we have analysed the responses to the first three questions of the questionnaire (Q1, Q2 and Q3). For these questions, we have identified aspects related to our eight indicators of spiritual capital based on the responses received. In Table 2, we present the results.

**Table 2.** Results based on the indicators for the four questions.

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	%
<b>Indicators</b>	The meaning of life		4		4	<b>0.6%</b>
	Self-transcendence	60	122	60	242	<b>38.1%</b>
	Well-being	7	17	10	34	<b>5.3%</b>
	Sense of unity			4	4	<b>0.6%</b>
	Social commitment and service	24	6	8	38	<b>6.0%</b>
	Resilience	7	13	32	52	<b>8.2%</b>
	Contribution to values	15	8		23	<b>3.6%</b>
	Social link	5	14		19	<b>3.0%</b>
		Total of the indicators				<b>65.4%</b>
Other responses		131	23	66	220	<b>34.6%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>100%</b>

Source: *The author.*

As we can see, a total of 65% of the answers contain a reference to our eight indicators. This may indicate that the Eucharistic celebration is still perceived to some extent by Catholic school students as a kind of spiritual capital. Below, we present the detailed responses of the students.

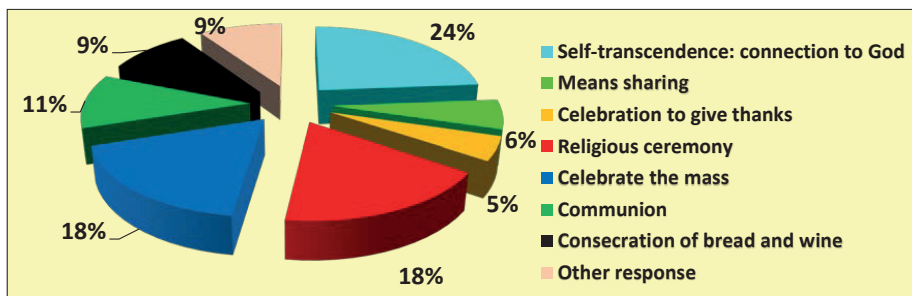
Firstly, young people at our school understand the celebration mainly in the context of transcendence, as a total of 38.1% of the responses explain that the celebration of the Eucharist leads them to »a presence of God«, »a sense of connection with the transcendent«, »an appreciation of silence«, and »a sense of awe«. About 8.2% of the students see the importance of the Eucharist in terms of resilience, that is, the ability to cope with adverse and stressful situations. They also state that »they have more strength to face these difficulties«.

In addition, 6.0% of students affirm that through the celebration of the Eucharist they learn »to share«, and »help others, especially those in need«. They are aware of social commitment. Five point three percent of young people say that celebrating the Mass »helps them improve their outlook on life because it brings them a physical sense of well-being«. For 3.6% of young people, the Eucharist »helps them appreciate and discover values, such as peace, harmony, being loved, and joy«. Three percent of young people say that the celebration strengthens their sense of community and helps them develop social bonds and a sense of belonging.

Finally, there is a small percentage of respondents that affirm that the celebration of the Eucharist helps them discover the meaning of life (0.6%) and rediscover a sense of unity (0.6%). Some detailed analyses of the results related to our four questions (Q1, Q2, Q3) are presented below to discover the richness, abundance and exuberance of the expressions used by the students.

*In question 1*, the meaning of the word Eucharist has been analysed. Figure 3 shows the most frequent answers given by the students. Twenty-four percent of all answers reveal that young people understand the Eucharist mainly in the context of God: »communication with Him«, »a dialogue with transcendence«, »listening to Him«, »receiving Him«, »praying«, »having faith«. Some answers even point to a deeper relationship with God. We find answers like »a union with God«, »surrendering to the presence of God«, »following the path of Jesus«. These results suggest that young people who are educated in a religious and Catholic school continue to see the celebration of the Eucharist as a source of connection with transcendence and the presence of God.

**Figure 3.** *What does the word Eucharist mean? (Question 1).*



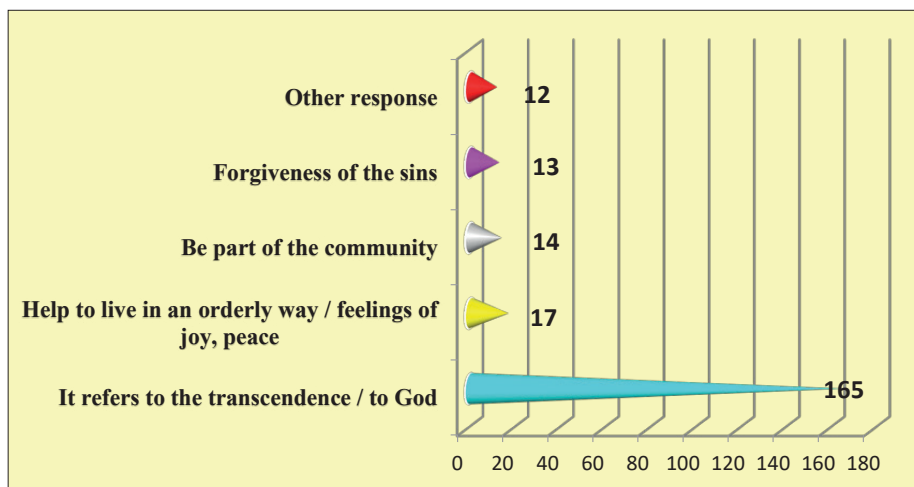
**Indicators of spiritual capital:** ■ Self-transcendence, ■ Contribution to the values for the society, ■ Social commitment and service. Other colours: the response cannot be connected to any of the indicators.

Source: The author.

Other common responses express the importance of celebrating the Eucharist as »a religious ceremony« (18% of responses), as a »celebration of the Mass« (18%), in the context of »communion« (11%), or as »a consecration of bread and wine« (9%). In other responses students associate the word Eucharist with social engagement and service. For them, the Eucharist means »sharing and helping people in need«. It also refers to the »values of gratitude«. In addition, some punctual answers refer to the indicator of resilience: »the Eucharist is a forgiveness of sins«, »it helps to recover and overcome negative situations«. Lastly, some students commented that the »the Eucharist is a celebration that gives peace, joy and love« (indicator of well-being and quality of life).

In *question 2* we have analysed the main elements of the Eucharist celebration mentioned by the students (see Figure 4). As we can see, a high percentage of young people (75%, a total of 165 answers), state that the key aspect of the Eucharist celebration refers to the feeling of transcendence and connection with God. Only 8% (17 students) state that the Eucharist helps them »live an orderly life«, and »experience a sense of joy and peace« (indicator of well-being and quality of life). Thirteen students (6%) also understand the celebration of the Eucharist as »overcoming difficulties through the forgiveness of sins« (indicator of resilience). A similar number of respondents indicate that the essential element of the Eucharist is »being part of a community« (indicator of social connectedness).

**Figure 4.** *What is essential about the Eucharist? (Question 2).*



**Indicators of spiritual capital:** ■ Self-transcendence, ■ Well-being, ■ Social link, ■ Resilience, Other colour: other responses.

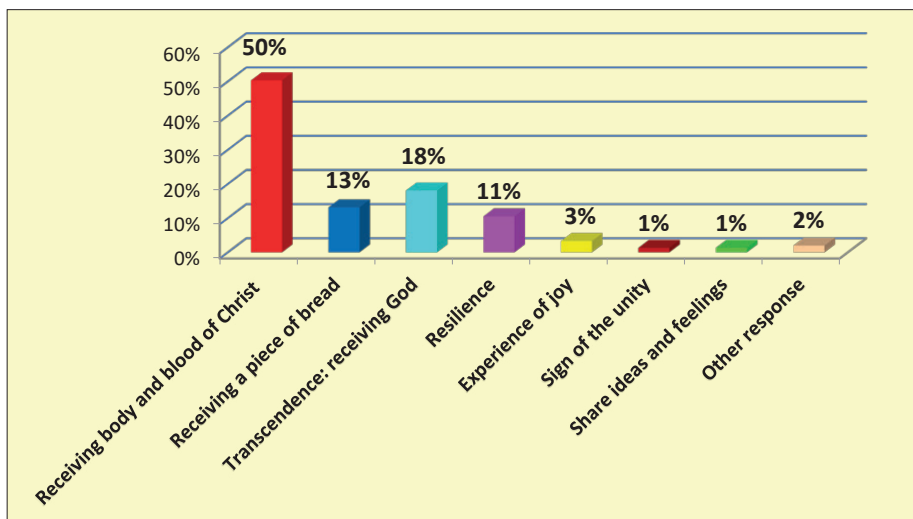
**Source:** *The author.*



In the other answers (12 answers) we can discover an additional richness that young people express when they speak about the heart of the Eucharistic celebration. In the answers we found: »one praises a God«, »we can unite with Jesus«, »God is present when we pray«, »we can have a direct connection with Him«, »we can communicate with God«, »we feel the closeness of God«. All the answers point to the need for the relationship with God.

Finally, *in question 3*, we have focused on Holy Communion, see Figure 5. Fifty percent of young students indicate that Holy Communion means »receiving the body and blood of Christ« (153 responses) and 13% of students identify Holy Communion »with a piece of bread« (40 responses). In addition, 18% of students associate Communion with the aspect of transcendence. Students respond: »communion means receiving God«, »being united with God«, »being protected by God«, »being embraced by Him«, »meeting Him«, »having an intimate relationship with Him«. It is a deep aspect of admiration and connection with transcendence.

**Figure 5.** What does it mean to receive the communion? (Question 3).



**Indicators of the spiritual capital:** self-transcendence, resilience, well-being, sense of unity, social commitment and service, other colours: other responses.

Source: The author.

Another 11% respondents indicate that the communion provides a sense of freedom. It helps them »cope with difficulties«, or »feel forgiven« (aspect of

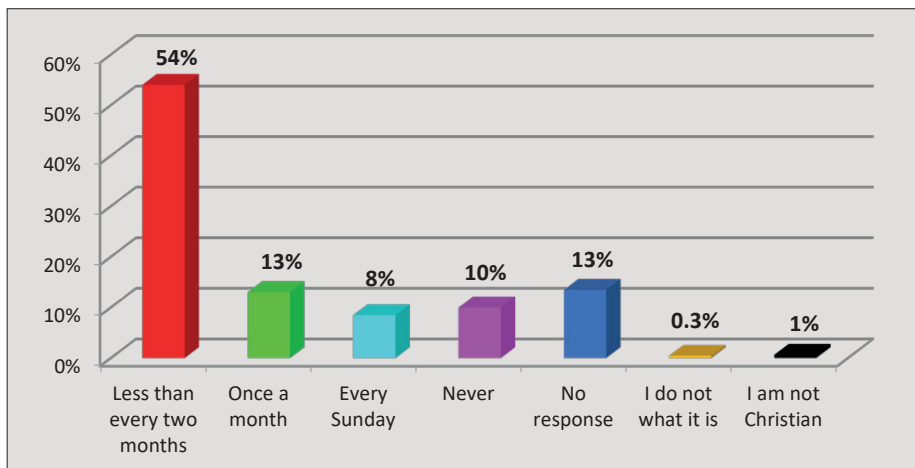
resilience, 32 students). Ten students associate the communion with an »experience of joy«. Four students indicate that the communion »leads them to unity«. Finally, four other respondents refer »to sharing ideas and feelings with others«.

In summary, students at the school understand the celebration of the Eucharist in terms of a wide range of aspects of spiritual capital, such as experiences of joy, solidarity, recognition of social injustice, and a sense of personal responsibility. Young people recognize that the celebration of the Mass can transform them to some degree, instilling moral values, generating emotional resilience to adverse and stressful situations, and leading to emotional well-being, among other aspects of spiritual capital.

#### 4.2. Results H2: Measuring the frequency of the participation in the Mass. Do the students appreciate the value of the Eucharistic celebration in terms of spiritual capital?

We have evaluated students' perceptions of the importance of the Mass (*question 7*). We have assessed the frequency of students' participation in the Eucharist to determine their attitudes toward the Mass and whether they benefit from spiritual capital presented in the celebration. It is one matter to recognize the Mass as a source of spiritual capital (our first hypothesis), and another matter to live it as spiritual capital. Figure 6 shows the results.

Figure 6. How often do you attend the Mass? (Question 7).



Source: The author.

It should be noted that 67% of the students participate only sporadically in the celebration of the Eucharist, that is, only once every two months or even less frequently (309 students). A total of 10% of students report that they never attend the Eucharist (46 students). Finally, only 8% of students report attending the Mass regularly (39 students)<sup>51</sup>.

The results suggest that students may theoretically understand the Mass as a place of spiritual capital, but practice does not reflect this. The results obtained reflect a general framework for the whole Spanish society. In Table 3 we see the frequency of participation of the whole Spanish society in the celebration of the Eucharist based on official statistics. In 2008, more than half of the people (55.2%) who identified themselves as Catholic no longer attended the Mass. Ten years later, in 2018, the percentage decreased slightly, but the trend still indicates low appreciation of the celebration of the Eucharist in Spanish society.

**Table 3.** *The frequency of the Mass.*<sup>52</sup>

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2018</b>
Almost never	55.2%	46.7%
Several times in a year	17.2%	21.6%
Once a month	9.8%	11.4%
Almost every Sunday and holidays	14.6%	15.2%
Several times a week	1.5%	4.7%
No response	1.7%	0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Thus, our results reflect a worrying trend. More than half of young people at a Catholic school deny the importance of celebrating the Eucharist. As a result, they do not recognize the Eucharist in practice as spiritual capital, spiritual capital that can bring values to society, that contributes to well-being, that leads to solidarity and recognition of social injustices, that generates emotional resilience to adverse and stressful situations, to name but a few aspects. The rupture between the Eucharistic celebration and today’s culture seems to become more and more evident. In this way, we confirm our second hypothesis: the decline in participation in the Eucharistic celebration among Catholic

<sup>51</sup> 67 students did not respond to the question.

<sup>52</sup> Source: Centre of Sociological Investigations (CIS), <http://www.cis.es/>.

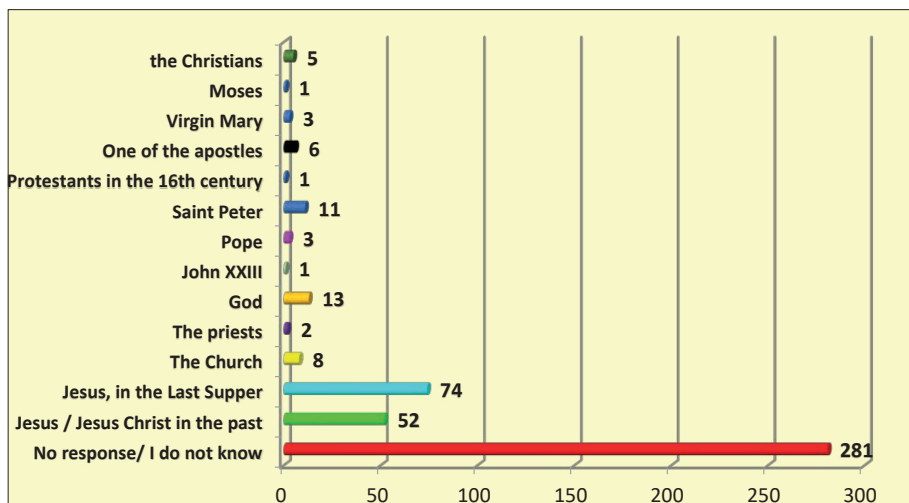
school youth. Therefore, we can also confirm the decreasing appreciation of the importance of the Mass for the students. It seems that the general perception of the vision of the Mass results from the tradition and the effective practice of participation, which function separately.

### 4.3. Results H3: Assessment of knowledge about the Eucharist

In order to assess knowledge about the celebration of the Eucharist, we have analysed the answers to the three remaining open-ended questions of the questionnaire: questions 4, 5, and 6.

Figure 7 shows the statistics on knowledge of who had instituted the Eucharist and when (*question 4*). A total of 61% of the students do not know the answer (281 out of 461). This is a significant percentage since this question asks about the nature of the celebration. Only 52 students give »Jesus« as the answer, which is 11.3%. The other 16% of students mention the »person of Jesus Christ«, and they correctly state that »it happened at the Last Supper« (74 responses out of 461 young students). Thus, only about 27% of students know about the basic aspects of the Eucharist.

**Figure 7.** *Who instituted the Eucharist and when? (Question 4)*

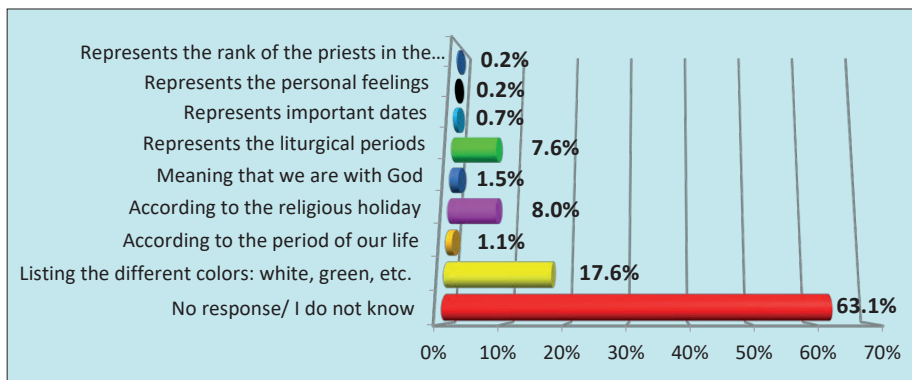


Source: *The author.*

In Figure 8 (*question 5*) we have present the meaning of the colours that accompany the celebration of the Eucharist. Again, students demonstrate significant knowledge deficits. Sixty-three percent of the students confirm that they do not know the answer. Another 17.6% of students are aware of the various colours that are displayed during the Mass, but only 17.4% of students answer the question correctly: »the colours represent important dates in religion« (3 students), »liturgical time« (35 students), »a religious festival« (37 students), »times in the church« (5 students).

Finally, in *question 6* we have asked about the possible different names that can also denote the Eucharist. Forty-five percent of the students did not answer or did not know the answer, see Figure 9. The most expected answer was »the Mass«, and indeed 15% of the students give this word as a synonym for the Eucharist, but this is still a small percentage given the »popularity« of the word in everyday language.

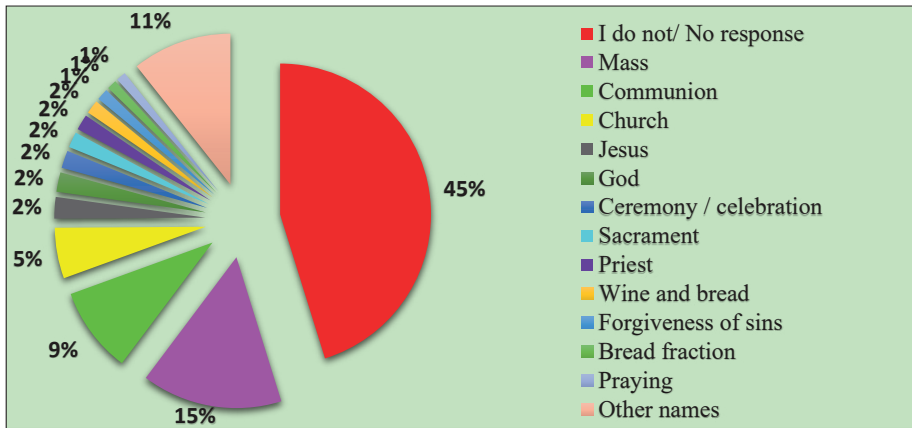
**Figure 8.** *The priest wears different colours during the celebration of the Eucharist. Do you know what they mean? (Question 5).*



Source: *The author.*

For the other answers, such as »communion«, »Jesus«, »God«, »ceremony«, »church«, »sacrament«, »priest«, »wine and bread«, »bread part«, »pray«, the percentage is between 2-9%.

Figure 9. Name other names related to the Eucharist (Question 6).



Source: The author.

From the obtained answers, we can conclude that the young generation does not have sufficient knowledge of the basic aspects of the Eucharist. The results obtained are worrying, since in the context of our school, we expected that the students should have a broad knowledge of the Eucharist. Years of study in a Catholic and religious school should have left them with an important »bookmark« with respect to the basic aspects. However, the results do not confirm our expectation. Hence, we cannot confirm our third hypothesis.

## Conclusion

The celebration of the Eucharist is perceived by the students as a source of spiritual capital, given that more than 45% of the answers referred to some of the indicators of spiritual capital. Yet, spiritual capital is not easily measured or identified, and »the results becomes fully visible only in the lives and behaviour of mature adults<sup>53</sup>«. Consequently, the younger generation does not recognize that the Mass can directly contribute to their lives. Only 8% of students report attending the Mass regularly, and about 67% of young people do not benefit from this resource of spiritual capital deposited in the Eucharist because they attend the Mass only sporadically.

<sup>53</sup> Ann CASSON, Religious and Spiritual Capitals. The Experience of the Celebration of Mass in the English Catholic Secondary School, in: *International Studies in Catholic Education* 5 (2013) 2, 204-217, 16.

Secondly, we have found that one of the main reasons for young people's disengagement from the Eucharistic celebration is a decrease in knowledge of fundamental aspects. Although students have received significant Catholic and religious preparation over many years, they are still not familiar with the Mass and do not know much about it. Young people are in a process of intellectual, physical and social growth, and their main focus is on the present. Therefore, their awareness of faith does not assure them of immediate benefits. At least, this is their impression. Consequently, the attitude of the students toward the celebration of the Eucharist is one of disinterest and lack of familiarity. This is because they perceive the celebration of the Eucharist as something separate from their daily lives.

Nonetheless, one of the positive aspects that our study reveals is the great richness of the young students' responses and expressions when they talk about the Mass. This could indicate that the background is still there, and they need spiritual experiences. Hence, the challenge is to provide tools and resources within the Eucharistic celebration to show that spiritual capital can effectively bring them values of well-being and convey benefits for their progress and development as a person. One of the possible solutions may be to actively involve young people in the celebration, for example, by having them say their personal prayers during the Mass or participate more actively in the liturgy of the Word. The celebration of the Eucharist should be connected to their daily experiences.

Other possible solutions would be the use of images during the Mass. The younger generation needs to understand the celebration. One cannot speak in a language or explain situations and experiences that are completely foreign and incomprehensible to them.

Another possible solution in the context of the Eucharistic celebration could be a coffee meeting after the Mass (which already exists in several countries), or a simple invitation to participate in the parish, an invitation to help neighbours with their shopping, etc. The youth need to feel useful and active. Participating in the Mass means understanding that there are many other people in need.

## Sažetak

### **EUHARISTIJSKO SLAVLJE KAO IZVOR DUHOVNOGA KAPITALA. SLUČAJ ŠPANJOLSKE KATOLIČKE ŠKOLE**

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*Unatoč desetljećima sekularizacije, utjecaj se kršćanske tradicije još uvijek osjeća u Europi. Ovaj se članak usredotočuje na slučaj Španjolske, zemlje koja je u samo nekoliko desetljeća od jedne od najviše katoličkih postala jedna od najmanje religioznih. Ovaj članak predstavlja studiju duhovnog kapitala koristeći uzorak španjolske mladeži. Duhovnih je izvora mnogo, no primjer jasnog vjerskog i duhovnog izvora je euharistija, koju većina katolika još uvijek smatra »duhovnom hranom«. Stoga, u prilogu mjerimo u kojoj je mjeri misa još uvijek duhovni resurs u sekularnom španjolskom krajoliku. Nastojimo dohvatiti vlastite izraze mlađe generacije. Naši rezultati upućuju na to da mladi doživljavaju euharistijsko slavlje kao izvor duhovnog kapitala (iskustvo radosti, sućuti, zahvalnosti, emocionalne dobrobiti, otpornosti itd.) budući da se više od 65% odgovora odnosi na neke od pokazatelja duhovnog kapitala. Međutim, samo 8% učenika izjavljuje da redovito pohađa misu. Ostali učenici ili uopće ne sudjeluju u euharistijskom slavlju ili sudjeluju tek sporadično.*

**Ključne riječi:** *duhovnost, duhovni kapital, euharistija, katolička škola, sekularizacija*