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# STUDIA ECOLOGIAE ET BIOETHICAE



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## Research Outlines of the Sustainable Profile of Believers in Croatia

### Zarys badań dotyczących profilu osób wierzących w Chorwacji w odniesieniu do zrównoważonego rozwoju

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**Abstract:** The topic of this paper are sustainable habits and attitudes of the religious population in Croatia regarding the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*. Empirical work is based on CRO *Laudato Si'* project using survey method on a non-probabilistic sample of the religious population in Croatia, which in this paper are operationalized as active and occasional believers according to their regularity of attending religious ceremonies (N=1305). The analysis showed that active believers have a more pronounced sustainable profile (as they throw away less food, separate waste more, show greater readiness for saving water, electrical energy and have a more pronounced critical attitude about the need for greater application of the *Laudato Si'* within the Church and society) than the occasional believers. Given the nonrepresentative sample, the presented data cannot be generalized to the religious population in Croatia, shaping its fundamental contribution in stimulating future scientific analyses and reflections on the Church's relationship with religious practices, and emphasizing active believers as potential social leaders of sustainable lifestyles. Therefore, the sustainable habits of the surveyed believers represent a relational good and serve as the basis for building a culture of moderation that respects key principles of Catholic Social Teaching. In that perspective, we conclude that it is important for the Church to speak more often about the socio-environmental crisis and encourage strong responses to the crisis at all social levels, from households and families to the macro level.

**Keywords:** CRO *Laudato Si'* project, sustainable habits, Christians, relational good, social and environmental crisis, religion and ecology, Christianity and ecology

**Streszczenie:** Tematem artykułu są zrównoważone nawyki i postawy osób wierzących w Chorwacji w odniesieniu do encykliki *Laudato Si'*. Praca ma charakter empiryczny i opiera się na projekcie CRO *Laudato Si'*, wykorzystującym metodę ankietową opartą o dobór nieprobabilistyczny w obrębie populacji osób wierzących w Chorwacji, którą w tym przypadku stanowią osoby praktykujące i sporadycznie praktykujące, klasyfikowane według regularności uczestniczenia w ceremoniach religijnych (N=1305). Przeprowadzona analiza wykazała, że osoby aktywnie praktykujące charakteryzują się bardziej zrównoważonym profilem środowiskowym (np. wyrzucają mniej żywności, częściej segregują odpady, wykazują większą gotowość do oszczędzania wody i energii elektrycznej oraz mają bardziej zdecydowany stosunek do potrzeby szerszego wdrażania postulatów Encykliki *Laudato Si'* w Kościele i społeczeństwie), niż osoby praktykujące tylko sporadycznie. Biorąc pod uwagę, że próbka badawcza ma charakter niereprezentatywny, trudno jest uogólniać wnioski z przedstawionych danych na całą populację wierzących w Chorwacji, jako osób mających znaczący wpływ na stymulowanie przyszłych analiz naukowych i refleksji na temat powiązania Kościoła z praktykami religijnymi, ale należy podkreślać ich rolę jako osób będących potencjalnymi liderami wdrażania idei zrównoważonego stylu życia w społeczeństwie. Zrównoważone nawyki

obserwowane wśród ankietowanych wierzących stanowią dobro relacyjne i służą jako podstawa do budowania kultury umiaru, która respektuje kluczowe zasady Katolickiej Nauki Społecznej. Mając to na uwadze, dochodzimy do wniosku, że ważne jest, aby Kościół częściej poruszał kwestie związane z kryzysem społeczno-środowiskowym i zachęcał do zdecydowanego reagowania na przejawy tego kryzysu na wszystkich poziomach społecznych, począwszy od poziomu gospodarstw domowych i rodzin po poziom makro.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Projekt CRO *Laudato Si'*, zrównoważone nawyki, chrześcijaństwo, dobro relacyjne, kryzys społeczno-ekologiczny, religia i ekologia, chrześcijaństwo i ekologia

## Introduction

In the new Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum* (Francis 2023, 71), Pope Francis points out that efforts and changes at the level of households, families and the inner community are extremely important in reducing pollution and waste and promoting prudent consumption because they create a new culture. “Even though this does not immediately produce a notable effect from the quantitative standpoint, we are helping to bring about large processes of transformation rising from deep within society.” (Francis 2023, 71). The Pope also speaks of the necessity to change lifestyles in the Encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015) and in the *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation* (2023a), which directly refers to the creation of new, sustainable habits. “People may well have a growing ecological sensitivity, but it has not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption which, rather than decreasing, appear to be growing all the more” (Francis 2015, 55). More broadly, it is important to change lifestyles that are focused on irrational consumption and throwaway culture as they cause the “cry of the Earth” and the “cry of the poor.” “Throwaway culture affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish” (Francis 2015, 22). Of course, the change must be profound and broad in the Western model in order to achieve a more significant effect. In addition to the necessary political changes, it is necessary to bring changes in one’s own life

and progress with sincere concern for others (Francis 2023, 72). A culture of moderation, explained by Sadowski (2021, 2) is “seen as a standing in opposition to the culture of consumerism.” The important manifestation of the culture of moderation is a new lifestyle (Sadowski 2021).

For sociological theorists of post-industrial society, culture has primacy in generating social change (Tomić-Koludrović and Leburic 2002, 14). Lifestyles are closely related to culture, while habits and behaviors are related to consumption and leisure (Tomić-Koludrović and Leburic 2002, 24). In sociology, lifestyles are viewed both affirmatively<sup>1</sup> and critically. They are often linked with inequalities of social classes/groups, such as income levels, but also with taste (Bourdieu 1984). If we seek to establish a culture of moderation, we must seek new definitions of sustainable lifestyles as well, and in this paper, we will start with a new perspective of sustainable habits.

Starting from the assumption that it is important to empirically explore the practical application of the Catholic Social Teaching in the daily life of the actors, considering sociological imagination and research methods, in this paper we will focus on sustainable habits and readiness to practice them in the households of respondents, who have declared themselves as believers. The basis

<sup>1</sup> Featherstone believes that sociology should go to avoid “negative assessments of consumer pleasures and should focus on issues of the growing importance of consumption culture” (Featherstone 1991, 13; Tomić-Koludrović and Leburic 2002, 24).

of the analysis are the results of CRO *Laudato Si'* project that consisted of two parts: scientific research and practical project activities (Brgles 2020). "The main goal of the project was to point out the importance of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home* (2015), and by following the instructions stated in the Encyclical letter, to inspire the members of the Franciscan Secular Order and all interested individuals, to complete project activities planned in the project" (Brgles, Turza and Žagmešter 2022, 30). During 2019 and 2020 several practical activities were carried out: respecting non-working Sundays (Brstilo Lovrić and Mravunac 2022; Brgles and Brstilo Lovrić 2023), saving household heating energy, water and electrical energy, as well as avoiding food waste and use of plastic.

The focus of the first papers we published, based on the results of several studies conducted within the project, were young people (Brstilo Lovrić 2023; Brgles, Žagmešter Kemfelja, and Obrovac Lipar 2023). Also based on CRO *Laudato Si'* project data, the sociological analysis of Brstilo Lovrić (2023) detected that young religious people in Croatia show openness for sustainable habits and have "hunger" for greater social and environmental engagement, but with significant disorientation in terms of concrete action, given the lack of social support and systemic policy, thus prolonging the social and environmental crisis.

Considering that Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023) addresses all people of good will, not just the faithful to change practices and attitudes about sustainability, this topic has the potential of the common good on a global level. At the same time, it strengthens the mechanisms of the Church to be more proactive in relation to these topics. Thus, in *Laudate Deum* (2023, 61) he says that Catholic faithful have the motivation for action and change in their faith. "Authentic faith not only gives strength to the human heart, but also transforms life, transfigures our goals

and sheds light on our relationship to others and with creation as a whole" (Francis 2023, 61). We consider the faithful to be *primus inter parus*, who listen to the word of the Magisterium of the Church, especially the Catholic Social Teaching, which most profoundly concerns their social roles and activities, and is founded in moral theology. Also, in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis (2015, 15) considers "some principles drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent." This is why, in this paper we did an analysis on a subsample of believers.

In the first, theoretical part of the paper, we will briefly explain the principles of the Catholic Social Teaching, with special reference to the common good (Fig. 1). The important dimension of the Catholic Social Teaching consists of its principles. They are, as defined by Weiler (1995, 18), "criteria for judging social issues and guidelines for social action." In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, four principles are mentioned: the principle of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. The principle of the human person is singled out (both in the organization of the text and in a separate chapter) and is the foundation for the principles of the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. The *Compendium* is particularly interesting in that it refers to certain concepts that have appeared separately in Church documents and literature on the social doctrine of the Church as consequences or implications of these principles. Thus, the consequence of the common good is the principle of the universal destination of goods (within which private ownership is interpreted and a preferential option for the poor is articulated). The principle of subsidiarity has participation in social life as its consequence. The fundamental values of social life (truth, freedom, justice, and love) are closely interconnected yet distinct from the principles.

Hittinger (2008, 120-121) also speaks about "coherence of the four principles," as he

further elaborates in his conclusions “There are natural persons and group-persons. In different ways, each is distinct in dignity, possessing rights and responsibilities. [...] Solidarity is never a single thing, but a multitude of relations. On these facts, subsidiarity counts as an authentic principle of social life. When one power assists another, it must not subvert the solidarity of the group. These particular groups, in turn, need the virtue of ordering themselves in harmony with others, and thus is brought into existence the common good called polity” Hittinger (2008, 77-78) thus connects four principles – human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and common good.

The common good can be considered from a number of different scientific disciplines. In the Croatian context, the scientific symposium “The Common Good in Church and Social Life in Croatia” contributed to this.<sup>2</sup>

We have laid the basis of our analysis in the relational theory of Donati, which focuses on relations rather than structures and actions as theories that dominated sociology throughout the 20th century. Also, we will define sustainable habits as Donati’s concept of relational good.

In the second chapter we will describe the research methodology, and in the third chapter we will present the analysis and interpretation of the results. In Conclusion, we will summarize the most important results of our research, which, despite the limitations, may be the basis for further research.

## 1. From Common Good to Relational Good

The principle of the common good is classically defined as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” (Paul VI 1965, 26) and this principle demands a vision of social ideal for

structuring social relations. The principle of the common good could be easily misunderstood; therefore, the main idea behind this principle is “that a person, as an individual, cannot develop their individuality and sociability on their own” and is “oriented towards others” from the micro-level of the family to the macro-level of the international community (Valković 1994).

Hittinger (2008, 81) notes that in the 19th century, a time when the social doctrine of the Church was developing, diametrically opposed understandings of society as an organism (substantial unity) or as market (agregata). The Magisterium rejects these concepts of society, based on the tradition of understanding Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle. He warns that societies are not composed solely of common ends but also demand an intrinsic common good, where the concept of “common” is contrasted with “private” but not with “individual”, which is preserved within such a social order (Hittinger 2008, 92-94). Precisely for that reason, “human persons can be members of plural societies”. In contrast to the private, the “common good [...] cannot be distributed or cashed-out” (Hittinger 2008, 84). He also states that “wherever there are plural rational agents, aiming at common ends, through united action, and where the unity is one of the intrinsic goods aimed at, we have a society” (Hittinger 2008, 83). The main task of social justice is the harmonization of these plural formations (Hittinger 2008, 94).

The thesis advocated by Croatian sociologist Črpić is that “we are not in a position to overlook [...] the common good” (2023, 355). He outlines practices necessary for the development of the common good in Croatia: the use of “good practices,” “strengthening trust in institutions,” “deconstruction of the «Yugoslav» governance model,” and legislation that regulates the *actual* Croatian society (Črpić 2023, 364-365).

Just as the environmental and social crisis was considered separately in the social

<sup>2</sup> Organized by the Centre for the Promotion of the Social Teaching of the Church in 2022 year. Proceedings were published in 2023 (Baloban, Migles, and Petrović Štefanac 2023).

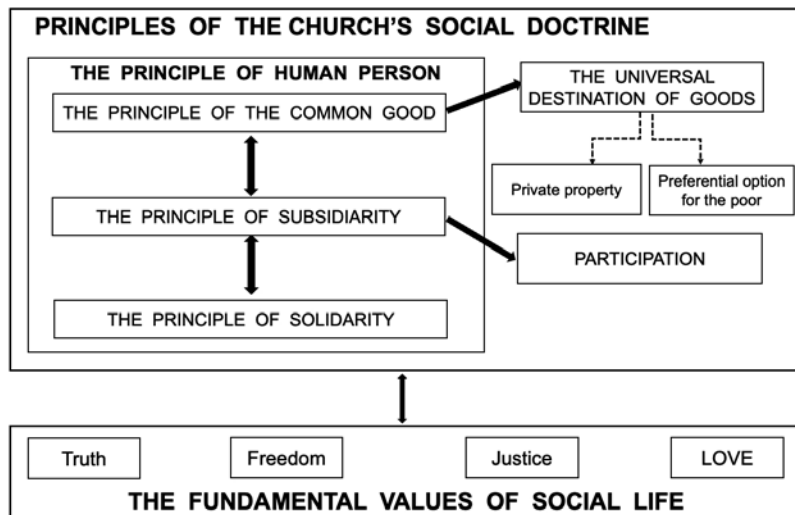


Figure 1. “Schematic representation of the principles of the Church’s social doctrine according to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*” (Papinsko vijeće “Iustitia et pax” 1991, 89–159)

sciences (Beck 2010), so in the understanding of actors in sociology, two examples are singled out in which a person is founded in society or is only constructed and has no special connection with society. Archer (2006) criticizes two models: “Modernity’s Man” originated in modernization theories of society, and “Society’s Being” stems from postmodern theories. Archer (2006) presents a new model that is based in personal identity and is deeply related to religiosity. According to Archer (2006, 268) every human interacts with “three different orders of natural reality: (i) nature, (ii) practice and (iii) the social.”

In this paper we focus on the relational theory of Pierpaolo Donati (2007) which considers society as a relation. “According to relational sociology, society is a cluster of spheres differentiating themselves according to their specific relations” (Donati 2007, 167). From the new paradigm, Donati establishes new concepts: *social private*, *societarian citizenship*, and *relational goods*. Sustainable habits in our work are considered as relational goods. They are relational goods related to climate and culture as common

goods.<sup>3</sup> Lifestyles are a broader concept and in sociology are mainly defined through consumption and taste (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2008, 450). We believe that such definitions are limited because they imply the social identity of an individual and exclude personal identity. Donati (2022) discusses the relational constitution of identity. He states that “Post-modern society should take into account the necessity of redefining identity by relating to others no longer in a functionalist manner, but rather in a super functional” (Donati 2022, 174).

According to Donati (2022) the relation usually remains implicit and latent, and we can claim that actors practice sustainable habits not only because of social identity and routine, but also because of the personal identity that Archer talked about (2006). Sustainable habits are in relation to all three realities. “The relational goods are those that can be produced and enjoyed only together with the ones who are concerned in them (they are forms of voluntary sharing put in common between stakeholders)” (Donati 1993, chapter 2, according to Donati

<sup>3</sup> “The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all,” claims Pope Francis (2015, 23).

2007, 167). He explains that “concept of RG arises from the observation that there are social spheres in which private subjects pursue interests that are not strictly their own, either directly or indirectly, but are shared with others and are motivated not by profit, but by the need for a common good” (Donati 2019, 241). Listing some of the relational goods such as *mutual trust, cooperation, solidarity, peace, social friendship, and free giving*, Donati (2022a) considers they are inspired by the principle of reciprocity. Sustainable habits are also inspired by the principle of reciprocity because they are in relation to everything created in the past, present and future.

Focused on relations, which imply belonging, but also relationships, we assume that sustainable habits as relational good are in relation to the religious status of a person / respondent because we observe him both as a personal and social identity, which interacts with nature, practice, and society. Active believer adopts and defines his sustainable habits in correlation with himself, nature, and his social environment, but at the same time, he himself is a part of nature, included in it, as Pope Francis pointed out (2015, 139). While religion may not be the only factor shaping an individual's decisions, behaviors, habits and, more broadly, lifestyles, we assume that active believers want to follow Catholic Social Teaching and apply its principles in everyday life. Also, they recognize that the Catholic Church has the potential to promote culture of moderation (Sadowski 2021, 13).

## 2. Research Description

The data in this paper was collected as part of the CRO *Laudato Si'* project (2019–2021), led at the Catholic University of Croatia in collaboration with the Croatian National Fraternity of the Franciscan Secular Order (FSO) and the Franciscan Youth in Croatia (FY). The project aimed to highlight the importance of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* through a series of scientific, professional, and practical activities,

encouraging the implementation of its principles in the daily lives of participants and all interested citizens. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Croatia, and data were gathered through online and physical (paper-pen) survey questionnaires, respecting voluntary participation, and ensuring the anonymity of participants who provided informed consent.

The data presented in this paper are part of the final project research conducted using a questionnaire consisting of a total of 55 questions related to the awareness and understanding of the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, attitudes towards Pope Francis' pontificate, knowledge of environmental, sustainable and social issues and readiness to change habits and lifestyle with a set of questions about the sociological characteristics of the respondents.

The sample was non-probabilistic and included members of the Franciscan Secular Order and the Franciscan Youth, members of various religious communities, clergy, Catholic and other believers, as well as all interested adults (18+ years), citizens of the Republic of Croatia. A total of 1324 participants took part in the final scientific project, while in this paper, a subsample of 1305 participants was formed based on their religious profiles. In the subsample used, females dominated (71.7%) compared to just over a one quarter of males (28.3%). All respondents were adults (18 years and older), with the majority falling into the middle age group between 45 and 54 years (20.2%), followed by individuals between 55 and 64 years (19.2%), and the oldest age group of 65 years and above (17.8%) similar to participants from 35 to 44 years (17.1%). A quarter (25.8%) of the participants were young adults aged 18 to 34 years.

Regarding marital status, the majority of participants (55.7%) were married, in contrast to one quarter of them of unmarried (25.6%), while others were widows or fell into another category. Almost two thirds (64.2%) of the participants had children,

unlike one third of the respondents (35.8%). The majority of participants, just under half (45.8%), completed high school, while over a third (38.2%) had some level of higher education (college, university, professional study). Some participants had a master's or doctoral degree (9.6%), while others had no formal education or had completed primary school. Half of the participants were employed or self-employed (53%), around a fifth were retirees (23.8%), and some were students (11.4%). Other participants were unemployed or in some other work status.

### 2.1. Research Aim and Measurement Instruments

The research aim of this paper was to analyze sustainable habits and attitudes of the religious population in Croatia. First, ten variables were analyzed about sustainable habits through the frequency of food waste and waste separation, willingness to adopt sustainable habits as water and energy savings, avoiding plastic, food waste and personal car usage, discussing ecological topics with relevant others and readiness for more sustainable habits. In the second analytical set, the sustainable attitudes of surveyed believers were analyzed regarding the (in)adequacy of Church discourse on the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, as well as its sustainability potential in fostering greater sustainable habits at macro and micro level.

For the purposes of analysis, a dichotomous variable of believer profiles was created from the original categorical variable indicating the frequency of attending religious ceremonies (Table 1). Participants who responded that they never attend religious ceremonies as well as those who did not answer this question were excluded from the analyses.

Those who indicated attending religious ceremonies once a week or more often were categorized as active believers, while participants who reported attending religious ceremonies occasionally (six to ten times a year) or rarely (once every three months or less) were categorized as occasional believers.

### 2.2. Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted using the statistical software package for social sciences (SPSS, version 22). Analyses were performed using the chi-square test at a significance level of 5% or 95% confidence. The following analytical sections bring tabular representations of statistically significant results organized in the latter sections, while variables without statistical significance are listed in the last section named "Other".

## 3. Participants' Sustainable Habits

In this section, frequency of food waste, waste separation, willingness to practice sustainable habits such as water and energy savings, avoiding food waste, plastic and personal car usage, engaging in discussions with others about ecological topics, and readiness for sustainable habits were analyzed in relation to the believer profile.

### 3.1. Food Waste

In analyzing the relationship between believer profiles and their frequency of food waste, a statistically significant relationship was detected ( $p < 0.05$ ).

As evident from Table 2, active believers waste less food during its preparation in households compared to occasional believers. A higher percentage of active believers (27.2%) never waste food, whereas among occasional believers, a larger proportion

**Table 1. Believer Profile of the Participants Based on the Frequency of Attending Religious Ceremonies (N=1305)**

Believer Profile	%	N
Active Believers	87.7	1144
Occasional Believers	12.3	161
Total	100	1305



tends to waste food occasionally (32.9%) or regularly (17.4%).

### 3.2. Waste Separation

The analysis of the frequency of waste separation based on the believer profile of the participants (Table 3) showed a statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Active believers separate waste more regularly, with over half of them (56.1%) engaging in regular waste separation, compared to the below-average (46%) practice of regular waste separation among occasional believers.

### 3.3. Saving Water

The analysis of the readiness for saving water based on the believer profile of the participants indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ).

As evident from the Table 4 active believers are more ready for saving water, with 97.2% of them expressing interest compared to 93.1% of occasional believers. It is noteworthy that both believer profiles generally show high interest in the practice of water saving.

### 3.4. Saving Electrical Energy

A statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ) was also found between the believer profile and the participants' readiness for saving electrical energy (Table 5).

Active believers expressed a higher percentage of readiness for saving electrical energy (96%) compared to occasional believers (91.2%), of whom there were twice as many in the category unready for the practice of saving energy.

### 3.5. Saving Household Heating Energy

In the context of believer profile and readiness for household heating energy savings (Table 6) a statistically significant relationship was also identified ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Active believers are more willing to save household energy, with 93.1% of them compared to 88.1% of occasional believers open to this practice.

### 3.6. Avoiding Personal Car Usage

A statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ) was identified for avoiding personal car usage and the participants' believer profile (Table 7).

As regards this question, there are more significant discrepancies than in other questions. Nearly one third (29.2%) of active believers responded that they are not willing to avoid the use of personal car, but it is still less compared to a larger proportion of occasional believers (41.6%) who also responded negatively. The idea was endorsed by a larger percentage of active believers, over 70%, compared to 58.4% of occasional believers. Despite the noticed differences, the logic, as in other questions,

**Table 2. Believer Profile Based on the Frequency of Food Waste**

Believer Profile	Frequency of Food Waste (%)					Total	N	Hi-Square test
	Never	Infrequently	Occasionally	Regularly				
Active	27.2	39.0	21.9	11.9	100	1139	$\chi^2$ (df=3, N=1300)=19.080 $p=0.001$	
Occasional	15.5	34.2	32.9	17.4	100	161		
Total	25.8	38.4	23.2	12.6	100	1300		

**Table 3. Believer Profile Based on the Frequency of Waste Separation**

Believer Profile	Frequency of Waste Separation (%)				Total	N	Hi-Square test
	Occasionally	Infrequently	Routinely				
Active	3.7	40.2	56.1	100	1140	$\chi^2$ (df=2, N=1301)=6.313 $p=0.043$	
Occasional	5.6	48.4	46.0	100	161		
Total	3.9	41.2	54.9	100	1301		

persists that a majority of respondents are in favor of the proposed sustainable habit, but active believers lead the way.

**3.7. Environmental Preservation**

The readiness of respondents to change their own lifestyle by adopting habits that can contribute to environmental preservation showed a statistically significant relationship based on their believer profile ( $p < 0.05$ ).

As evident from the Table 8 the active believers in the category of general readiness for a lifestyle change towards environmental preservation express greater readiness (96.5%) compared to occasional believers (90.6%), with notion that both profiles show readiness percentage of over 90%.

**3.8. Other**

Statistical significance was not shown regarding the readiness for avoiding plastic, avoiding food waste in households, or discussing the importance of ecology with others based on the believer profile. Considering that, it can be emphasized that both believer profiles showed a high sensitivity for sustainable habits, recognizing their importance in personal and social life.

**4. Attitudes towards the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical**

The second analytical section covers two questions about participants' attitudes towards the (in)adequacy of the Church's discourse on the *Laudato Si'* encyclical and its sustainable potential.

**Table 4. Believer Profile Based on Readiness for Saving Water**

Believer Profile	Readiness for Saving Water (%)			N	Hi-Square test
	Unready	Ready	Total		
Active	2.8	97.2	100	1129	$\chi^2$ (df=1, N=1289)=5.898 p=0,015
Occasional	6.9	93.1	100	160	
Total	3.3	96.7	100	1289	

**Table 5. Believer Profile Based on Readiness for Saving Electrical Energy**

Believer Profile	Readiness for Saving Electrical Energy (%)			N	Hi-Square test
	Unready	Ready	Total		
Active	4.0	96.0	100	1125	$\chi^2$ (df=1, N=1285)=6.171 p=0.013
Occasional	8.8	91.2	100	160	
Total	4.6	95.3	100	1285	

**Table 6. Believer Profile Based on Saving Household Heating Energy**

Believer Profile	Readiness for Saving Household Heating Energy (%)			N	Hi-Square test
	Unready	Ready	Total		
Active	6.9	93.1	100	1121	$\chi^2$ (df=1, N=1281)=4.365 p=0.037
Occasional	11.9	88.1	100	160	
Total	7.5	92.5	100	1281	

**Table 7. Believer Profile Based on Avoiding Personal Car Usage**

Believer Profile	Avoiding Personal Car Usage (%)			N	Hi-Square test
	Unready	Ready	Total		
Active	29.2	70.8	100	1106	$\chi^2$ (df=1, N=1260)=9.123 p=0.003
Occasional	41.6	58.4	100	154	
Total	30.7	69.3	100	1260	

#### 4.1. Sufficiency of Church's Discourse on the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical

Participants' opinions about the sufficiency of the Church's discourse on the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical (Table 9) was statistically significantly related to their believer profile ( $p < 0.05$ ).

A larger percentage of active believers critically affirms the claim that the Church does not speak enough about the *Laudato Si'* encyclical (66%) of them compared to 43.9% of occasional believers. Occasional believers, on the other hand, are more undecided on this issue, with 55.5%, compared to 30.6% active believers.

#### 4.2. Sustainability Potential of the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical

The respondents' opinion that the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical has sustainability potential in terms of promoting broader sustainable habits among individuals and wider in society was found to be statistically significantly related to their believer profile ( $p < 0.05$ ).

As evident from the Table 10 in response to the question of whether the application

of the guidelines presented by Pope Francis in the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical can encourage individual and social sustainability, active believers expressed greater support than occasional ones, a higher percentage of them absolutely see this possibility (43.2% compared to 29.1%) than occasional believers.

#### Conclusion

In this survey research, we analyzed the sustainable habits and attitudes of profiled believers in Croatia ( $N=1305$ ). Using original empirical data collected within the scientific project CRO *Laudato Si'*, led at the Catholic University of Croatia and partner institutions, this study aimed to delve into the micro-level of believers' daily lives. Therefore, not only the attitudes of the surveyed believers were considered, but also their concrete sustainable habits as practices, whether existing or potential, in terms of readiness to sustainable lifestyle changes for the sake of general well-being, social and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the respondents' attitudes towards the (in) sufficiency of the Church's discourse on

**Table 8. Believer Profile Based on Readiness for Greater Environmental Preservation**

Believer Profile	Readiness for Greater Environmental Preservation (%)				N	Hi-Square test
	Unready	Ready	Total			
Active	3.5	96.5	100	1140	$\chi^2$ (df=1, N=1299)=10.665 $p=0.001$	
Occasional	9.4	90.6	100	159		
Total	4.2	95.8	100	1299		

**Table 9. Believer Profile Regarding the Statement on the Sufficiency of the Church's Discourse about *Laudato Si'* Encyclical**

Believer Profile	Sufficiency of the Church's Discourse about <i>Laudato Si'</i> (%)				N	Hi-Square test
	No	Undecided	Yes	Total		
Active	66.0	30.6	3.4	100	1067	$\chi^2$ (df=2, N=1222)=38.825 $p=0.001$
Occasional	43.9	55.5	0.6	100	155	
Total	63.3	33.7	3.0	100	1222	

**Table 10. Believer Profile According to the Statement on the Sustainability Potential of the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical**

Believer Profile	Sustainability Potential of <i>Laudato Si'</i> (%)				Total	N	Hi-Square test
	Absolutely no	Mostly no	Mostly yes	Absolutely yes			
Active	1.0	2.2	53.6	43.2	100	1133	$\chi^2$ (df=3, N=1291)=14.908 $p=0.002$
Occasional	1.9	5.1	63.9	29.1	100	158	
Total	1.1	2.6	54.8	41.5	100	1291	

the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical Letter and its sustainable potential were analyzed to establish connections between personal and structural aspects within the context of Church practices.

Given the limitations of the sample used, the recommendation for future research is to conduct representative research that can be generalized to the religious population in Croatia, whereby an analysis of the religiosity variable in relation to a broader set of participant characteristics would provide a comprehensive understanding of predictors of environmental attitudes, as well as the application of mixed methodology. Taking this into consideration, our analysis provides legitimacy for several empirical conclusions.

The findings are primarily encouraging, as most surveyed believers, regardless of whether they have an active or occasional profile, expressed a readiness for sustainable practices such as water and energy savings, avoiding food waste, and an affirmation of environmental topics. The religious profile itself, regardless of attendance at religious ceremonies, appears to be a platform for environmental sustainability. Furthermore, it was determined that active believers who attend religious ceremonies weekly have a greater sensitivity to these topics and practices than the so-called "occasional" believers who attend religious ceremonies on a monthly or yearly basis. Therefore, on the surveyed sample, it can be argued that active believers are potential carriers of broader changes in terms of increased environmental awareness, sustainable habits and lifestyle within the Church and society. This change, we believe, must then spread capillary, where active and systematic Church engagement is crucial to promoting these topics and practices through various channels of action to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among the clergy and lay believers, and then with the wider public.

Just as the environmental crisis represents a social crisis (Francis 2015), its solution

cannot be reduced to a single channel or group. Bearing in mind that this issue connects different sociological categories of citizens, there is an opportunity for a more active role of the Church and its believers in overcoming today's global challenges from the perspective of environmental sustainability, with the aim of promoting the common good.

In conclusion, sustainable habits, and new sustainable lifestyles stem from personal, not just social identity (Archer 2006) and are the basis for building a new culture (Francis 2023). Culture here is not some abstract idea of individuals, but "culture of encounter" and it has to do with their desires, their interests and ultimately the way they live their lives (Francis 2020, 216). It is a culture of moderation that promotes a new model of progress, a culture of communion and a new lifestyle (Sadowski 2021).

The generated good is not aimed at irresponsible use and abuse of the goods (Francis 2015) but has the qualities and strength to achieve collective goals (Donati 2019, 244) such as stopping the "cry of the Earth" and "the cry of the poor".

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