

**Polish Catholic Press and Political  
Communication of the Church on the Basis of the  
2000-2015 Presidential Election**

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**Abstract:**

The article is an attempt to answer the question what role in political communication of the Catholic Church in Poland play the most important Polish Catholic opinion weekly magazines (*Gość Niedzielny*, *Niedziela*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*). Span of the analysis covers last 15 years. The research included the presidential campaign period in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The analysis was conducted with regard to the articles published during the period of one month prior to the presidential elections. The author assesses to what extent the analyzed press titles were convergent with the official announcements of the Polish Bishops' Conference regarding the political involvement of the Catholic Church. It is important to find an answer to the question of how the Catholic press supported one of the candidates for the office of President of the Republic. Another important question that needs clarification is whether and to what extent journalists discussed electoral programs of individual candidates. According to the author, the results of research regarding political engagement of Catholic press in the four presidential campaigns are a representative sample to determine the role of the analysed Catholic press in political communication of the Catholic Church in Poland.

**Key words:**

political communication, Catholic Church, presidential election, catholic press

***Introduction***

Literature concerning political sciences contains several fundamental perspectives for the term “politics” (Skarżyński 2014: 9-20). Politics is the mechanism for exercising power understood as authoritative allocation of values (Easton 1953). Politics refers to various processes which are used by the governments to respond to the pressure from the widely understood society by means of allocation of awards and punishment. Therefore, the notion of

“politics” is connected with formal or authoritative decisions describing the action plan of the community (Heywood 2009: 6-9; Joseph 1988: 41-42). The second proposal associates politics with the wide area of “public life” or “public affairs” (Heywood 2009: 10). The third perspective treats politics as the decision-making process, conflict-solving method based on compromise and consensus (Heywood 2009: 11). Thus, it is about citizens’ freedom of action in the public sector (Corriero 2014: 80-82). The fourth definition describes politics as the ability to achieve the desired effect with the use of any means. It is associated with power (Heywood 2009: 13). As far as democratic systems are concerned, citizens become engaged in politics to a various degree in an individual or institutional way.

The present paper considers the Catholic Church in Poland as an institution which manifests its involvement in the mechanisms of exercising power in various ways (e.g. by means of its teaching mission with regard to the Catholic social science), becomes engaged in public life, and aims at achieving its targets in the area of widely understood politics by means of certain specific decision-making processes. One of the forms of its involvement is participation in the political and media discourse, which reveals the method and scope of Church’s activity in the public sphere.

The author of this text focuses on the question about the role of the most important Polish Catholic opinion weekly magazines in the political communication of the Church over the period of the last 15 years. The voice of the Church with regard to political matters is expressed in various ways. Among them, in the form of official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference, pastoral letters, other official publications featured on the official website <http://episkopat.pl>, but also in the Catholic press published usually by the Church institution and other Catholic media. The present research tackles the problem of convergence between the institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference and the content of the Catholic press.<sup>1</sup> The context for the research is provided by the presidential campaigns between 2000-2015, which the author treats as an independent variable in this analysis. The dependent variables are various forms of involvement of the Catholic Church in Poland in the processes of political communication in Catholic press during the above-mentioned electoral elections.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term “message of Polish Episcopal Conference” is understood as one of the forms of informational message of Polish Episcopal Conference which is short, official information announced to the public.

The existence and way of functioning of religious institutions, including the Catholic Church in Poland after the communist period, have been the object of numerous studies, particularly from the point of view of the Law on Religious Denominations. However, apart from rare academic papers depicting the relations between the Catholic Church and the media (e.g., Hess 2009), there is no detailed study on the function of the Catholic press in Poland in the political communication of the Church after 1989.

### *Project methodology*

The aim of this study is twofold. First, its goal is to determine whether the Polish Catholic press has become a forum for the political communication of the Church with regard to information and interpretation during the presidential campaigns.<sup>2</sup> Second goal is to determine the extent to which the Catholic media have become an entity that supports candidates from the political parties which identify with the teachings of the Church in their attempts to become the President of Poland.<sup>3</sup> The results of the research are based on a representative sample in determination of the functions of the analysed Catholic media in the political communication of the Church in Poland in the 21st century.

The author has formulated the following hypotheses:

1. The topic of politics and elections was present in the Polish Catholic press both in terms of information and interpretation.<sup>4</sup>
2. Polish Catholic press supported the right wing candidate (by means of creating a positive image of the politician) and/or criticised other candidates.<sup>5</sup>
3. Political communication in the Catholic press was convergent with the official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Both informing (reference to the journalistic Five Ws rule) and interpreting (the attempt to give sense to the information, comment, assessment of the news from a given point of view) are important in the process of political communication. As far as the modern journalism is concerned, it is necessary to verify whether the news is the execution of correspondence theory of truth and whether the rule of objectivity is executed in the neutrality of the message, presentation of different information contexts and supplementing the theory with new facts (Conboy 2004; The Guardian 2002).

<sup>3</sup> The following terminological simplification is used in the project: “candidates from the political parties which identify with the teachings of the Church” are called “right wing candidates”.

<sup>4</sup> The information level is understood as execution of the journalistic Five Ws rule, and the interpretation level is a method of “reading the sense” of information (Barbano 2016).

<sup>5</sup> The following right wing candidates stood for election: in 2000 Marian Krzaklewski, in 2005 – Lech Kaczyński, in 2010 – Jarosław Kaczyński, in 2015 – Andrzej Duda.

<sup>6</sup> Considering that Catholic media are supervised by the Polish Bishop’s Conference, the author of the article assumes the convergence of the content published in the Catholic press with official Episcopal messages.

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The following press titles were chosen for analysis: *Gość Niedzielny*, *Niedziela*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*. As far as the circulation and scope of influence is concerned, they are among the most important Catholic printed media in Poland. *Gość Niedzielny* is an all-Poland Catholic weekly magazine published by Instytut Gość Media. The Institute and its publishing house are owned by the Archdiocese of Katowice. Average sales of the magazine in 2015 amounted to over 130,000 copies. Such a result made this title a leader in terms of average sales of opinion weekly magazines.<sup>7</sup> *Niedziela* is published by the Metropolitan Curia in Częstochowa. The average sale of this weekly magazine is close to the result of *Gość Niedzielny*.<sup>8</sup> *Tygodnik Powszechny* is published by Tygodnik Powszechny z o.o. The common perception of the paper is that it attempts to combine liberal values with the principles of faith. The average sales of *Tygodnik Powszechny* amount to around 20,000 copies.<sup>9</sup> All analysed newspapers and magazines are Catholic and address ethical, social, political and economic issues. Moreover, the analysed titles invite representatives of various political parties to participate in the discussion concerning politics and social issues.<sup>10</sup>

The research material was obtained from paper editions of Catholic weekly magazines. All issues of the magazines published during the period of one month prior to the elections of the President of Poland were analysed (8.09.2000-8.10.2000; 23.09.2005-23.10.2005; 4.06.2010-4.07.2015; 24.04.2015-24.05.2015). The research included articles containing the following keywords: “presidential election”, “president”, “head of state” and relating to the presidential elections in Poland as part of the ongoing campaign. The author omitted the articles that were not related to the ongoing campaign, even if they included the aforementioned words in a different context, e.g. in the context of the presidential campaign in Germany. The criteria of analysis were fulfilled by 164 articles, including 52 in *Niedziela*, 48 in *Gość Niedzielny*, 64 in *Tygodnik Powszechny*.<sup>11</sup>

The research included the presidential campaign period in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The analysis was conducted with regard to the articles published during the period of one month

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<sup>7</sup> According to the data for 2015, the average sales of *Gość Niedzielny* amounted to 134,026 copies (ZKDP 2016).

<sup>8</sup> The information was obtained by the author from Head of Marketing of *Niedziela* Mariusz Książek via email on 18.01.2016.

<sup>9</sup> According to the data for 2015, the average sales of *Tygodnik Powszechny* amounted to 19,441 copies (ZKDP 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Famous Polish journalist and historian Ewa Czaczowska perceives *Tygodnik Powszechny* as a newspaper of “Catholicism of blurred borders” (cf. Czaczowska 1998). However, the editorial team of *Tygodnik Powszechny* describes the magazine as “Catholic social and cultural magazine”. Such subtitle accompanies the title of the paper.

<sup>11</sup> The full list of analysed articles can be found in final bibliography.

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prior to the presidential elections. In 2000, the presidential election was held on 8 October. Twelve candidates stood for election. Three of them enjoyed the highest number of votes: Aleksander Kwaśniewski, standing for re-election (53.9% of votes), Andrzej Olechowski (17.3% of votes), Marian Krzaklewski (15.57% of votes) (PKW 2000). Five years later, after 10 years of Aleksander Kwaśniewski's presidency<sup>12</sup>, the presidential election was conducted in two rounds, which were held on 9 and 23 October, respectively. Lech Kaczyński won the election with 54.04% of votes in the second round of voting. Donald Tusk came second with 45.96% of votes (PKW 2005). In 2010, the presidential election was conducted in two rounds held on 20 June and 4 July. Bronisław Komorowski won the election with 53.01% of votes in the second round. Jarosław Kaczyński came second with 46.99% of votes (PKW 2010). In 2015, the date of the presidential election was set for 10 May. Again, a second round of voting (held on 24 May) was necessary. Andrzej Duda won the election with 51.55% of votes. Bronisław Komorowski came second with 48.45% of votes (PKW 2015).

The author used the method of content analysis (Krippendorff 2004) in the research, which allowed him to assess the scope of political communication in the Polish Catholic press and the convergence between the institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference and the content of the analysed articles. Moreover, the author used decision analysis (Johnson, Reynolds, & Mycoff 2016) in order to assess the Polish Episcopal Conference and the Catholic press as political decision centres which formulated messages to the voters concerning making specific political decisions.

The term "Catholic press" in Poland is understood by the author as press published by members of the Catholic Church in Poland. The editorial teams of such titles keep regular contact with the local Catholic Church hierarchy. The contact between the editorial team and the representative of the Church is supposed to ensure dissemination of the stance which is not contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church or to the position of a given local Church<sup>13</sup> (Guzek 2016: 26). The Catholic press is distinguished by the fact that it has a Church assistant, who acts as the liaison between the Church authorities and the editorial team (Lepa 1995: 172).

The term "political communication of the Church" is defined by the author as political communication (Davis 2010: 114-130; Dahlgren 2005; Scheufele 2000; Michalczyk 2005)

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<sup>12</sup>Aleksander Kwaśniewski became the president of Poland in 1995.

<sup>13</sup>Local Church is understood by the author as a diocese.

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forwarded by the institutional Church and the Catholic press (González Gaitano 2016; Lesniczak 2016). Therefore, what is analysed here is the process of presentation and promotion of the official voice of the Church, which is expressed in two areas: official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference and the Catholic press treated in this article as a supplement to the Polish Episcopal Conference during the presidential campaigns. Political communication of the Church expressed in various press titles may display certain differences connected with their varying programmes and political policies. The two perspectives of political communication (institutional and press) are contained in Brian McNair's concept (McNair 2011: 26), which indicates three basic elements of political communication: political players, mass media and citizens. Therefore, the Catholic Church was treated as a political player in the analysis undertaken in this paper. At the same time, the Catholic press represented both the first (political player) and the second element (mass media). Citizens as the third basic element of political communication are potential voters and addressees of the messages issued by the Catholic Church. The very fact that the Church is an institution does not automatically make it an element of political communication. However, Polish reality, especially after 1989, shows its substantial role in election campaigns (Zuba 2010; Bingen 1996).

***Political communication of the Church: 2000-2015 presidential campaigns***

Among the four analysed campaigns, the Polish Episcopal Conference referred to the presidential elections by means of overall instructions only in 2005 and 2010. In 2005, the bishops appealed to the faithful in a laconic message, encouraging them to pray for the homeland and electing smart, honest members of parliament who care for the good of the nation (Polish Episcopal Conference 2005: 4). On the other hand, in 2010 the Polish Episcopal Conference called for participation in the election to reflect the sense of responsibility for Poland (Polish Episcopal Conference 2010: 4). In their institutional messages, the bishops did not indicate the candidate for whom people should vote, but rather emphasized the significance of participation in the election.

On 26 August 2005, the Standing Council of the Polish Episcopal Conference and diocese bishops issued a message concerning the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005, as well as the pilgrimage of Pope Benedict XVI to Poland. In point 6 the bishops called for participation in the election and expressed their hope that the newly elected president will defend

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life from the moment of conception to the natural death, protect basic rights of the family and marriage understood as a long-lasting relationship between a man and a woman.

The bishops did not refer to the presidential campaign and elections in the official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference directly preceding the elections of the new President of Poland in 2000 and 2015. What is important, there were two events that were discussed by the public opinion and set the context for the campaigns in 2000 and 2010. In 2000, several weeks before the election, a video fragment was shown in the campaign advertisement of Marian Krzaklewski. It featured the incumbent president Aleksander Kwaśniewski with his minister Marek Siwiec parodying Pope's blessing in Kalisz in 1998. Their behaviour was highly criticised by the Catholic circles and the Polish right wing (Millard 2001: 392). The election of 2010 was conducted with the plane crash in Smoleńsk in the background (Niżyńska 2010: 467-479; Cześnik 2014: 518-539; Bugajski 2011: 104).

Among the four analysed presidential campaigns, only the pre-election polls in 2000 indicated the potential winner in the first round of voting very clearly (TNS OBOP 2000). None of the candidates for president in the following years managed to gain the same political position prior to the election as Aleksander Kwaśniewski did in 2000. Certainly, political divisions of the right wing parties and Aleksander Kwaśniewski's care for his own image should be indicated as the reasons for his success. The Freedom Union party (Unia Wolności) did not identify with any person standing for the presidential election. Akcja Wyborcza "Solidarność", which decided to appoint Marian Krzaklewski as the rival for Aleksander Kwaśniewski, was internally divided to such an extent that even the politicians from The Conservative People's Party (Stronnictwo Ludowo-Konserwatywne) questioned the leader of "Solidarność" as the candidate. The leader of the left wing tried to make the media show him as a good administrator of the country, President of all Poles, who cares for the security of Poland (in 1999 Poland became a member of NATO) and improvement of economic conditions (attempts to become a member of the European Union). This was enough for him to gain over 53% of votes (Millard 2001: 393). As far as the rivalry between Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński in 2005, Bronisław Komorowski and Jarosław Kaczyński in 2010, as well as Andrzej Duda and Bronisław Komorowski in 2015 is concerned, none of the candidates was a certain winner up to the moment of voting. In 2005, the small

interval between parliamentary and presidential elections<sup>14</sup> could result in the presence of references to both presidential and parliamentary candidates in the press articles.

### ***Political communication in Niedziela***

The fundamental aim of the political discourse of *Niedziela* in 2000 was to present the reasons why people should not vote for Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The incumbent president was depicted as a person who mocks Catholic faith and Pope John Paul II, and as an alcoholic, fraudster and supporter of abortion (Nowak 2000b: 20; Chrzanowski 2000: 8). None of the 23 articles published in *Niedziela* with regard to the presidential campaign in 2000 depicted positive achievements of Aleksander Kwaśniewski. As many as 21 articles contributed to building his negative image (which equals 91.3% of the articles referring to the presidential campaign in 2000). What is more, *Niedziela* showed the incumbent president [Aleksander Kwaśniewski] as a person who does not respect history and Polish tradition (Ryszka 2000: 26; Nowak 2000c: 20).

In *Niedziela* bishops asked the readers not to vote for Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Michalik 2000: 7; Nowak 2000a: 6).

Less attention was paid to the leader of Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Marian Krzaklewski, even though he was the person supported by *Niedziela*, which presented him as a genuine statesman, head of the family, defender of Christian values, a faithful man who deserves a vote (Czuba 2000: 11; Editorial team 2000a: 7). Therefore, the measures aiming at creating the negative image of Aleksander Kwaśniewski in *Niedziela* were easy to notice, whereas the positive campaign of this weekly magazine with regard to the right wing candidate was almost unnoticeable. The attitude of the discussed title is also confirmed by the existing study concerning involvement of the Church hierarchy in political communication. According to Waldemar Wojtasik (2011: 98), in 1995-2005 the involvement of the institutional Church during the election campaigns was particularly visible with regard to one political camp.

As compared with the 2000 campaign, the political communication of *Niedziela* during the 2005 campaign showed a significant decrease in the number of articles concerning the presidential election. There were eight such articles in 2005, and in 2010 only three such texts were published. It is worth noticing that the political communication in *Niedziela* during the

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<sup>14</sup> Parliamentary elections were held on 25.09.2005, only two weeks prior to the first round of presidential elections. (Cf. *Postanowienie Marszałka... 2005*; *Postanowienie Prezydenta... 2005*).



presidential campaign in 2005 was positive – it did not focus on discrediting Donald Tusk, but on showing the advantages of electing the PiS candidate for president. Four out of eight articles clearly supported the candidate of Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość): two columns by Czesław Ryszka and interviews with Lech Stefan, vice president of the “Pro Cultura Catholica” Association, and the then president of Warsaw. The column entitled “Poznaje się po czynach i owocach” (By their fruits and deeds you will know them) indicated the most important elements of the PiS programme (care for a strong and safe state, strong economy, eliminating unemployment, care for family, improvement programme for healthcare), which can be easily understood as support for Lech Kaczyński during the presidential campaign (Ryszka 2005b: 19). On the other hand, in the article entitled “Druga runda” (The second round) Ryszka (2005a: 19) wrote:

“The election is not over yet. There is a second round ahead, which is in fact the first round of the presidential election, and then another, decisive one. For me the choice is simple: Lech Kaczyński offers us a country of social solidarity, whereas Donald Tusk offers us a country based on some liberal experiment, which can be proven by e.g. proposing 3x15 flat-rate tax, which is but a continuation of liberal capitalism with no place for the weak, the disabled and large families which are less economically adapted. There is no doubt about the fact that the victory of Tusk is a safety valve for the post-communists (...) It is only by upholding the momentum, that is by electing Lech Kaczyński for president after the victory of PiS, that we can be sure that the social programme for which most of the voters cast their votes will be implemented.”

The long-standing President of the Polish Episcopal Conference, archbishop Józef Michalik from Przemyśl, did not refer directly in *Niedziela* to any of the candidates, but he addressed the issue of participation in the election as the issue of social responsibility. He reminded the readers that the Church is not and has not been interested in gaining direct political power, but rather wants the power to be exercised by “responsible, skilful, competent and honest people” (Michalik 2005: 18). On the other hand, in the article entitled “Wybrać prezydenta” (Choosing the president) Rev. Walerian Słomka called for election of the man of truth, who is able to love the nation and follows the doctrine of the Ten Commandments and Gospel (Słomka 2005). Therefore, it was a clear reference to the deontological level of human decisions.

The topic of politics and presidential election in 2010 was presented in *Niedziela* in the context of the president’s plane crash in Smoleńsk. The weekly accepted the programme of right wing candidates Lech Kaczyński and Marek Jurek, so it granted legitimacy to their political aspirations (Żukowski 2010: 28-29; Jurek 2010: 24-25; Jakubiak 2000: 26-27).

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The year 2015 showed larger interest of *Niedziela* as compared to 2005 and 2010. As far as the 18 analysed articles are concerned, the weekly magazine focused on: the need to change the ruling group, significance of participation in the election and support for the right wing candidate, Andrzej Duda. *Niedziela* also emphasized PO-PSL coalition's fear of losing power, and presented the potential failure of Bronisław Komorowski as the beginning of the process of healing the state (Czerniakowska 2015: 44; Skotnicki 2015: 44; Czabański 2015: 45). The author found eight articles supporting Andrzej Duda or criticising Bronisław Komorowski and Civic Platform party (Platforma Obywatelska) which supported him.

Political communication of the Church hierarchy in *Niedziela* was limited to the presentation of the book entitled "Polsko, uwierz w swoją wielkość. Głos biskupów w sprawie Ojczyzny 2010-2015" by Joanna Szczerbińska. This was the voice in defence of morality, tradition, Polish identity, honesty. This presentation was convergent with the criticism addressed towards "dishonourable politicians and their obsequious media" (Szczerbińska 2015: 38-39), which should be interpreted as criticism of the political actions of Civic Platform party. The Catholic weekly magazine also reminded us of the Church teachings with regard to the involvement of Catholics in the political life and the moral obligation of voting for a man of conscience (Ryszka 2015: 40; Dudkiewicz 2015: 3).

Andrzej Duda was the only candidate for president of Poland who was interviewed and asked about his election programme and vision of Poland. It is easy to conclude that by adopting the form of self-presentation, the interview contributed to creating a positive image of PiS politician (Duda 2015: 1, 10-11).

The analysis of *Niedziela* showed that the political communication of the Church in this press title was aimed at supporting the right wing candidates or criticising their rivals (it was found in 35 out of 52 articles, which means that in 67.3% of the research material *Niedziela* supported the right wing candidate or criticised other candidates).

The decision of *Niedziela* to grant support to right wing candidates or criticise their rivals is viewed as the reflection of its attitude to the following issues discussed by the candidates and their political parties: adopted Christian and patriotic values, views on family, defending life from the moment of conception to the natural death, bioethical issues, faith.

*Political communication in Gość Niedzielny*

Political communication in *Gość Niedzielny* in 2000 was similar to the communication of *Niedziela*. Three out of twelve articles directly built a positive image of Marian Krzaklewski, and eight articles (or at least their fragments) referred to Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the reasons why people should not vote for him. *Gość Niedzielny* showed Marian Krzaklewski as a good husband (Kasprzykowski 2000: 28; Editorial team 2000b: 12), head of the family. On the other hand, Aleksander Kwaśniewski was shown in the perspective of the scandal in Kalisz connected with the parody of John Paul II, political lies (lack of higher education, false property statements), unaccomplished promises (flats for young married couples, social pensions for former employees) and the despicable behaviour at the cemetery in Katyn (Bratkowski 2000: 5; Kucharczak 2000: 13; Grajewski 2000: 6).

Marian Krzaklewski was the only candidate who was offered an interview presenting his election programme published in *Gość Niedzielny* (Krzaklewski 2000: 5; 12). This should be interpreted as an expression of political support granted to the right wing candidate by this weekly magazine. As opposed to *Niedziela*, *Gość Niedzielny* did not publish the voice of the Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland, but only extensive fragments of the statement issued by the Country Management Board of the Institute of Catholic Action, urging the faithful not to vote for an atheist, that is Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Editorial team 2000f: 12).

*Gość Niedzielny* did not support any of the main candidates during the 2005 presidential campaign. Five articles tackled the issue of rivalry between Donald Tusk and Aleksander Kaczyński, but it was limited only to the presentation of the programmes and main political aims of both politicians, without any form of negative campaign directed at them.

The editorial team of *Gość Niedzielny* published interviews with both Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński (Tusk 2005: 22-25; Kaczyński 2005: 22-25). Moreover, this Catholic weekly magazine suggested that the voters should take into consideration the Polish Episcopal Conference's statements concerning moral requirements for political representatives of a faithful voter. However, no official statements of the Polish Episcopal Conference hierarchy were found in *Gość Niedzielny* (Bartoszewski 2005: 50). The weekly also presented the scope of president's powers, which may be regarded as a very important piece of information for the voters (Bartoszewski 2005: 50).

During the presidential campaign in 2010 *Gość Niedzielny* did not support any of the candidates. However, the views of the main candidates for the president of Poland (Łoziński 2010: 1, 16-21) and the profiles of Jarosław Kaczyński and Bronisław Komorowski were extensively presented (Grajewski 2010: 28-29). The authors of the articles paid close attention to the historical perspective with regard to the previous elections held after 1989 (Grajewski 2015: 7) and to the significant errors of pre-elections polls. At the same time they attempted to explain the reasons for such a huge divergence of results. They also asked the question whether it was the cause of manipulation, errors of poll centres or false information provided by the respondents (Dziedzina 2010: 32-34). Just like in 2005, *Gość Niedzielny* did not publish any statements from the Polish bishops concerning the presidential election.

During the 2015 election the weekly magazine performed a factual assessment of the 5 years of Bronisław Komorowski's presidency, exposing his weakness with regard to playing the role of the head of state and conducting the campaign (Grajewski 2015: 7; Legutko 2015a: 6). The author singled out seven articles that either supported Andrzej Duda as the candidate meant to bring good change, described him as a patriot or criticised Bronisław Komorowski (Jurek 2015: 74; Legutko 2015: 4; Legutko 2015a: 6; Legutko 2015b: 26-27; Legutko 2015c: 36-37; Grajewski 2015: 7; Fedyszak-Radziejowska 2015: 74).

Political communication of the Church with regard to the presidential election in 2015 was represented by a single article, where Tomasz Jaklewicz referred to the homily delivered by the President of Polish Episcopal Conference, archbishop Stanisław Gądecki on 3.05.2015 on Jasna Góra (politics is about thoughtful care for the common good, and each Catholic has the right and obligation to participate in the election). However, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań did not mention the candidate for whom Catholics should vote (Secler 2016).

The analysis of the content of *Gość Niedzielny* revealed that the political communication of the Church in this press title was aimed at supporting right wing candidates or criticising their rivals for the position of the president of Poland only in 2000 and 2015 (it was found in 18 out of 48 articles, which means that in 37.5% of research material the analysed weekly magazine supported right wing candidate or criticised other candidates).

The decision of *Gość Niedzielny* to grant support to Marian Krzaklewski in 2000 was primarily the result of the different values and programme of the right wing candidate as opposed to the ones proposed by post-communist candidate Aleksander Kwaśniewski. In 2015 the right

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wing candidate, Andrzej Duda, gained support of *Gość Niedzielny* due to the awkwardness of Bronisław Komorowski, who (according to the weekly magazine) did not deserve the second term after 5 years of dull presidency.

***Political communication in Tygodnik Powszechny***

In four out of seven articles referring to the 2000 presidential campaign in *Tygodnik Powszechny* the negative attitude of the authors towards Aleksander Kwaśniewski can be found (Editorial team 2000f; 2000d; 2000e; Boniecki 2000). The articles contained the allusion to gestures of Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Marek Siwiec that were meant as a parody of the Pope, recorded in 1997 and the consequent disapproval expressed by Polish bishops such as archbishop Stanisław Szymecki, bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, bishop Kazimierz Górny, bishop Kazimierz Ryczan, archbishop Józef Życiński, archbishop Władysław Ziółek, bishop Adam Lepa, bishop Ireneusz Pękałski (Editorial team 2000c: 2; 2000d: 2).

During the campaign in 2005 *Tygodnik Powszechny* did not support any of the candidates. It only presented the profiles of Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński, their political goals and the economic consequences of their victory (Graczyk 2005: 5; Majcherek 2005: 5; Jankowiak 2005: 4).

The magazine emphasized the fact that during the presidential campaign in 2005 the Polish bishops did not support any of the candidates (Boniecki 2005: 5; Stala 2010: 48; Majcherek et al. 2010: 6-7). *Tygodnik Powszechny* paid attention to the negative campaign conducted by Radio Maryja against Donald Tusk (Hennelowa 2005: 16). This observation made by the magazine, which noticed the area of political support granted to the Polish right wing by Redemptorist from Toruń Tadeusz Rydzyk, is confirmed in literature. Bartłomiej Secler (2013) points to the controversies connected with signing in 2006 of the so-called stability pact between Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość), Self-Defence party (Samoobrona) and League of Polish Families party (Liga Polskich Rodzin), which took place in the presence of reporters from *Radio Maryja*, *TV Trwam* and *Nasz Dziennik* — the media associated with Tadeusz Rydzyk. Damian Guzek (2015) emphasizes the political and sanctimonious character of the influence of Radio Maryja, which highlights the sense of national identity of its listeners. According to Janusz Bugajski (2011: 104), “Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, an ultraconservative member of the Redemptionist order and the founder of Radio Maryja, has used these outlets

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[Radio Maryja and TV Trwam] to engage in scathing attacks on assorted enemies, including the Tusk government”.

On the other hand, Piotr Sula (2008: 152) notices that the political involvement of Tadeusz Rydzyk’s media is not a new phenomenon:

“Radio Maryja and its listeners have been supporting League of Polish Families party for a long time now. However, before the parliamentary election of 2005 those centred around Tadeusz Rydzyk, who was in charge of the station, gave their support to Law and Justice party. At the moment, Tadeusz Rydzyk has a new instrument to use, since in 2003 Telewizja Trwam, a new TV station, gained the broadcasting licence. As of today, the environment of Tadeusz Rydzyk backs up PiS and the government with Jarosław Kaczyński as the Prime Minister”.

Also Rafał Riedel (2009: 12) and Stanisław Burdziej (2008: 208-209) confirm that the listeners of Radio Maryja are supporters of Polish right wing parties and addressees of the messages from father Rydzyk.

In 2010 the authors of the articles published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* presented the image of the Polish political scene and the consequences of electing Bronisław Komorowski and Jarosław Kaczyński, but did not support neither of the two main candidates (Flis 2010: 10-11; Staniszkis 2010: 12-13; Stala 2010: 48; Zaremba 2010: 3-5; Wielowieyska 2010: 3-5).

During the presidential campaign in 2015 the magazine did not support any of the candidates. It just presented the views of the candidates for the president of Poland (Szuldrzyński 2015: 24-26; Ogórek 2015: 18-21; Flis 2015: 5; Reszka 2015; Pszoniak 2015: 22-23; Zelnik 2015: 24-25; Reszka 2015b: 6-7). However, it is worth noticing that *Tygodnik Powszechny* honoured Bronisław Komorowski with the Saint George Medal. This event became an impetus for Bronisław Komorowski to express his gratitude towards the editorial team. This was interpreted as a form of political support granted by the magazine to Bronisław Komorowski (Komorowski 2015: 69).

*Tygodnik Powszechny* paid attention to the greater circumspection of the institutional Church with regard to expressing its political views and to the fact that the secretariat of the Polish Episcopal Conference did not issue any letter containing support for any of the candidates (Strzelczyk 2015: 9). In 2015 no Polish bishop made a statement concerning the election and candidates in *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

The analysis of the content of *Tygodnik Powszechny* revealed that the political communication of the Church in this weekly magazine was aimed at supporting right wing

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candidates or criticising their rivals for the position of the president of Poland only in 2000. In 14 out of 64 articles positive campaign towards the right wing candidates or criticism of other candidates (left wing or liberals) could be noticed.

### *Conclusion*

It can be concluded that the information in the analysed Catholic press titles was just a starting point for discussion of topics connected with the presidential elections. In 2000-2015, Polish Catholic opinion weekly magazines joined the political discourse in the context of the ongoing presidential campaigns. The involvement of the analysed Catholic media was expressed both with regard to information and interpretation. It is confirmed by Józef Krukowski (2007: 36-40), who treats religious institutions as public and legal persons, which results in them executing certain functions in social life, including the right to make statements as part of the political discourse.

The Catholic press in Poland supported the right wing candidates, but the level of such support was not equal in all analysed magazines published during the subsequent presidential campaigns. In 2000 the right wing candidates were supported by *Niedziela*, *Gość Niedzielny* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, in 2005 and 2010 only by *Niedziela*, and in 2015 by *Niedziela* and *Gość Niedzielny*. Among the three Catholic magazines, *Niedziela* should be perceived as the most politically involved medium (supporting the right wing), whereas *Tygodnik Powszechny* should be perceived as the magazine which is open towards the representatives of different parties from the Polish political scene. On the other hand, the official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference were considerably different from the political messages conveyed in the analysed Catholic weekly magazines. The Polish Episcopal Conference explained (in a general way) the significance of political participation on the basis of the Church teachings only in 2005 and 2010, but did not indicate its own favourite candidate.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, in 2000 and 2015 the official messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference did not contain any reference with regard to the presidential elections. The analysis undertaken also revealed the political involvement of father Rydzyk's media for the benefit of right wing politicians. This phenomenon has been

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<sup>15</sup> The documents of Catholic Church tackle the issue of Christians' involvement in social and political life [e.g. Second Vatican Council. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (1965); *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life of 24 November 2002]. The indications mentioned above predispose the Catholic Church to take part in the political discourse.

pointed out by Stanisław Burdziej (2008: 219), who mentions the disparate positions of the institutional Church and the media associated with the Redemptorist and adds that “any discussion of church-state relations in contemporary Poland needs to take account of these significant nuances”.

The results of the research prove the lack of convergence between the institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference and the political communication of the Church in the press. This should rather be perceived as institutional and press complementarity with regard to the execution of the function of political communication by the Church.

Taking part in the political discourse is one of the forms of political participation, which reveals the level and manner of involvement of a given entity in the public sector. The Catholic Church emphasizes the fact that Catholics should respect justified political differences and expresses objection to the concept of pluralism based on moral relativism. Its task is not to formulate specific political solutions. Catholics may find their place in different political parties, as long as their programme is not contrary to faith and natural law (Nitecki 2014). According to the author, this is the reason for the various positions of different editorial teams of Catholic press with regard to the candidates for the president of Poland in the context of analysed election campaigns (providing support, adopting neutral position or conducting negative campaign).

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