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The Polish Family in View of the Idea of a Civil Society¹

A separation and comparison of family and civil society spheres is neither an easy task nor a problem-free task. The family is described as the homestead, a habitat for human life and development, a place where one's own privacy is protected from the prying eyes of others and the interference of authority. Civil society, on the other hand, is seen as the sphere of attitudes and actions of citizens which extend beyond the confines of the four walls, and thus beyond the private zone, constituting the public sphere in the form of a network of associations, movements, groups and societies that are open for other participants, observers and critics, as well as politicians and authorities, to see and to assess. Nonetheless, it remains autonomous and independent in relation to the State. Despite the spheres being distinct, this text will consider their interdependencies stemming from the assumption that the level of social commitment is closely associated with none other than the family culture. Introducing this assumption into the analysis of Polish society, we are faced with a number of questions which are worth pondering. Firstly, to what extent is the idea of civil society a Polish reality, consolidated by experience, to which one may refer and relate rather than being an idea brought in from the outside, alien to indigenous thought and tradition? Secondly, if one assumes that it is necessary to learn how to be a citizen, and to practice this role, then how is the Polish family coping with this task? Thus, are family culture, behavioural models, attitudes, beliefs and values – which are drummed into Polish citizens and which characterise Polish society – conducive to the propagation of civil virtues? Furthermore, are they convergent? Do moral and social values cultivated within Polish families provide opportunities to furnish our children with

1 This is an amended version of the text published in Polish in 'Paedagogia Christiana' 2010, 2(26).

the social capital that will empower them to be active and responsible citizens? How able and willing are individuals to cross the boundaries of zones delineated by the interests and needs of the family, and to voluntarily enter into relations broader than those based on kinship? How important are public matters within Polish families? What is the effect of the components of family culture on the level of public trust in our society, and what are the reasons for the connection between Polish religiousness and attitudes lacking in public trust as well as the low levels of social and civil commitment? In what way and which entities are able to and should support families when taking into consideration their significant environmental variations and the divergence of cultivated traditions in the social/civil commitment of their members and, predominantly, the younger generation? How may one help invigorate the potential held in Polish families and how to make it up where it is lacking? What role may the Catholic Church assume in this scope?

This text attempts to answer, at least partially, the questions and problems raised above. Its primary purpose is to describe the state of the Polish family in terms of the development of civil solidarity, treating civic virtue (civil attitude) as a positive distinguishing feature of both individuals and the society, remembering the triple ideological heritage of citizenship (republican, liberal and socio-democratic). Despite the politicising of the concept of citizenship in Poland, perhaps constituting one of the causes stifling social involvement of Poles, the author will pay due care herein to treat it independently of the divisions as an idea symbolising individual and civil Self in a democratic society.

The idea of a civil society set in the Polish reality

Many researchers of civil society assume that the idea itself, the beginnings of which may be sought as far back as in the ancient political concepts of Aristotle and Cicero, developed most vigorously in the modern era, to dim slightly after Hegel and Marx halfway through the 19th century in Europe and then to reawaken there again in the 20th century. In Poland, as well as the other countries in Eastern Central Europe, the idea clearly made its presence felt in 1980 and then at the end of the 1980s, as caused by Soviet bloc societies breaking free of the communist system shackles by self-organisation and by civil mass initiatives. The upheaval of the multimillion 'Solidarity' movement was described in terms of a civil movement with significant public trust capital, bringing together various social groups and strata. Are we able to, aside from the 'Solidarity' movement in Poland, find and refer to other historic traces of the existence of civil tradition?

In my opinion, interwar Poland was an example of attitudes of social involvement and self-governance that were invigorated by the patriotic wave sweeping the country after independence was regained and the country returned to the

political maps of Europe as an independent and sovereign Republic of Poland. This was preceded by an enduring, century-and-a-half period of dependence and denationalisation. Despite the oft-turbulent political moments, the interwar period stands for a time of social invigoration, reawakening of various traditions of cooperation, associating, neighbourly assistance, self-assistance and local self-governance. At the same time, it was the heyday of social thought, of various orientations, within the scope of social pedagogy significantly influenced by the works of Helena Radlińska and Stanisław Karpowicz, as well as progressive authors, scholars and activists such as Edward Abramowski, Stanisław Brzozowski, Janusz Korczak, Stefania Sempołowska, Jan Władysław Dawid, Izabela Moszczeńska or those creating the state-supporting civil trend like S. Czerwiński, Kazimierz Sośnicki and Zygmunt Mysłakowski.² Maria Ossowska's work from 1946 entitled *Wzór obywatela w ustroju demokratycznym* can undoubtedly be cited as a manifest of civil-democratic attitude and thought.

One would be hard pushed to call the earlier period of the Partitions conducive to the propagation of civil virtues, as it was more suitable for the practice of adaptive strategies. On the other hand, resistance to foreign domination gave socially active Poles a stimulant to combine their efforts to free themselves from the authoritarian foreign rule and to find or win areas of unobstructed activity. The most spectacular examples of such actions were the uprisings, national freedom fighting, which united people in common actions against the invaders. Each of the Partitions also constituted an arena for groups of opposing activists to spring up, getting together in the name of progress, proliferation of education, elimination of inequalities stemming from the remains of the feudal system still seen in the balance of social and economic powers. Activists included: Galician democrats, Warsaw's positivists, Poznań's constitutionals, and progressives from the Kingdom of Poland in the early 20th century.³ One of the characteristics of civil society is its independence from the State, sometimes exhibiting itself in the act of civil unrest. Polish society had many an opportunities to 'practice' the act of countering the State/authority, less frequently as a force independent of the State; resistance constituted social forces. However, maybe there was another form in which the social spirit manifested itself?

After World War II, the reality of Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (PRL – People's Republic of Poland) provided another opportunity to master the skills of, on the one hand, building adaptive structures, and on the other hand, resistance. Yet

2 See S. Wołoszyn, *Nauki o wychowaniu w Polsce w XX wieku*, Strzelec, Kielce 1998, pp. 155–162, or for a broader view, see A. Mencwel, *Etos lewicy. Esej o narodzinach kulturalizmu polskiego*, PIW, Warsaw 1990.

3 For a broader take see: M. Janowski, *Polska myśl liberalna do 1918 roku*, Znak – Fundacja imienia S. Batorego, Cracow – Warsaw 1998, pp. 257–281.

Poles were devoid of the opportunity to build bottom-up organisational structures, voluntary associations and societies around freely chosen spheres of activity. This was a time of civil mourning, lasting twice as long as the patriotic wave after 1918. It is no wonder then that it became more rooted and present in social attitudes and habits; as a way of life, it was recreated and presented to the next generation. The prewar generation of patriots and social activists did not have the opportunity to disseminate its ideals and wisdom among the postwar generation. Many thinkers and progressive activists, as long as they survived the nightmare of the war, were subject to repressions and persecutions by the authorities; many were forced to emigrate. A large part of the society learned how to resist based on internal emigration and passed this skill on to the next generation.

Generally speaking, the tradition of social movement in Polish history was most profoundly represented amongst leftists, socialist camp activists, predominantly of *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (PPS – Polish Socialist Party), with representatives and followers of the liberal thought in second place. The republican inspiration was mainly focused on independence, as a civil community cannot fully develop outside of a political community, the State. If today we are able to speak of the weakness of Polish civil society, then we have to cite the historical context within which the Polish society and nation took shape amongst its roots. That which is conducive within the bounds of civilisation for the development of a civil community, namely unobstructed free market mechanisms, a predominant role of a wealth accumulating middle class, national sovereignty, representative governance at all levels, a system of constitutionally guaranteed laws, pluralism of the centres of thought and public opinion forming and religious tolerance, was in short supply for a long time in the Polish reality. Thus, in the first place, civil activity in Poland was not mainly conducted by the middle class but by the intelligentsia, Catholic activists, and even progressive nobility. Secondly, the common ties and responsibilities (including national) were emphasised just as strongly as individual rights. Thirdly, not only own social resources were relied upon but primarily the involvement of the State and its instruments (even those of the invaders) in the solution of the burning problems of backwardness, inequality, in the act of educating on and propagating universal ideas and rights. Fourthly, Polish society was quicker to get together and integrate when resisting foreigners, enemies, invaders and occupiers than it was to unite in the name of some positive idea, for something, hence the strength of the Polish bonding capital and the shortage of Polish uniting capital. With such an amalgamation of factors, the tendency dominant across Polish soil in the 19th century of instigating and strengthening patriotic forces primarily for nationalistic purposes (and, more precisely, national freedom) and civil purposes to a lesser extent comes as no surprise; as moral rationale and primacy are due to independence movements that unite the nation. Only then should civil initiatives be undertaken. The spirit of the times in the

19th century in Europe visibly oscillated towards the propagation of national or even nationalistic ideas (opposing citizenship). In a stable political system, patriotism and civic virtue may be mutually supporting attitudes⁴; however, Poland's historical context placed the moral preponderance of feelings and patriotic attitudes over Poles' civil commitments. In the 20th century, national ideas in Europe assumed a more dangerous shape of totalitarian national-socialist and communist ideologies, which turned out to be further obstacles to the development of civil societies. Countries subject to the rule of the people were affected by this problem to a larger extent due to the extensive period of societies being subject to the demobilising power of a totalitarian regime.

Nonetheless, social upheaval inspired by solidarity and the mobilisation of opposition forces in the 1980s and 1990s changed the face of Poland; citizens' actions turned out to be effective. Poland, in a peaceful manner, managed to break free from the communist system and began a new phase of establishing a democratic, self governing, free market country governed by the rule of law and protecting civil rights. The Ossowska Manifesto could once again be read by generations of fellow countrymen. Did the aforementioned upheaval forever break with our tradition of uniting in the fight against alien, enforced rule? Did it take place on the basis of indigenous inspirations or following models borrowed from the West? Did it set in motion the unity of people around the idea of social order, stabilisation and democracy? Twenty-five years have passed since the change of the political system; a new generation of Poles has come of age that does not remember the PRL reality. What are their attitudes as they enter adulthood? Have they acquired the necessary skills and desires to become active citizens? Has the generation that still remembers the times of the people's democracy changed its adaptive attitudes?

Family culture and the level of public trust

The questions above draw us back to the main thread of these deliberations: the family environment, as the place where the basic skills and attitudes to the world, other people, culture, market, politics and sacrum are attained. Among the values, norms and attitudes passed on, the family also creates its own frame of references with respect to involvement in public affairs and spheres of citizenship; as life practice, the family teaches household members to express themselves by types of activities that stem from the preferred worldview options. Certain trains

4 See e.g. E. Shils, *Co to jest społeczeństwo obywatelskie?*, [in:] *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, trans. B. Janicka et al., Znak – Fundacja imienia S. Batorego, Cracow – Warsaw 1994, pp. 29–31.

of thought from this sphere of family existence and personal development, which until recently were to a large extent of interest only to family sociologists and pedagogists, were presented in the 1990s in a new perspective of relations and correlations with economic development and the economic standing of a country by F. Fukuyama in his work entitled *Zaufanie. Kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu* (*Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*). As the author demonstrated, in the entirety of the preconditions for shaping social capital or a network of interpersonal relations and mutual cooperation instigated for the performance of common goals and improvement to the level of public trust,⁵ an important role is played by inner family factors as well as the family status in the social structure. As such, Fukuyama was an inspiration for posing new questions and new research with reference to the family.

In places where we are dealing with family-oriented culture, i.e., a type of loyalty limited predominantly to a circle of relatives and an attitude of distrust with respect to others (strangers), in a free market setup, as Fukuyama demonstrates, a small-scale economy is dominant, based on small, family businesses, with a lack of openness to managerial staff from outside of the family circle.⁶ An extreme form of familism takes on the shape of amoral familism, as described by E. Banfield and subsequently more extensively researched and confirmed by R. Putnam, characterised by the type of social and moral connections that are effective solely with respect to family members, whilst with respect to others: neighbours, local residents, members of the church community or society they remain in a distrustful relation and with no sense of responsibility for their fates.⁷ A society with such culture is characterised by low public trust. It lacks social ties built on the basis of spontaneous, bottom-up initiatives. Loyalty and identification are limited to the family and to the State/nation, possibly the Church. As such, just as with a hierarchical society, patron-client relationships are dominant. Taking a closer look at such descriptions, one may notice that the elevated position of the family is a value in and of itself. In some contexts (historical and political), the family may be coupled with tendencies which are not conducive to development, or even stifle it. The self-defence and other functions of the family,⁸ which for various reasons

5 See F. Fukuyama, *Zaufanie. Kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu*, trans. from English A. and L. Śliwa, Polish Scientific Publishers PWN, Warsaw – Breslau 1997, pp. 13–23, cf. R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle. Upadek i odrodzenie wspólnot lokalnych w Stanach Zjednoczonych*, trans. from English P. Sadura, S. Szymański, WAiP, Warsaw 2008, pp. 33–42.

6 See F. Fukuyama, *Zaufanie...*, *op. cit.* pp. 36–47.

7 See E.C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill. 1958, and for a broader view, see R. Putnam, *Demokracja w działaniu. Tradycje obywatelskie we współczesnych Włoszech*, trans. from English J. Szacki, Znak – Fundacja im. S. Batorego, Kraków – Warsaw 1995, pp. 208–225.

8 See A. Potocki, *Wychowanie religijne w polskich przemianach*, UKSW Press, Warsaw 2007, pp. 41–42.

it had to fulfil in the past, have been inscribed in its culture and the culture of the community; the culture which remains preserved, even though the external factors which have made an impact on it are long gone. Thus, it may be that in certain situations the family will appear as a suppressant of national transformations and the creation of an open society due to the type of behaviours and attitudes passes on from generation to generation that are characterised by distrust in relation to others, social apathy or even an attitude of anger towards the authorities.

For Fukuyama the dividing line between countries with low social capital versus countries with high social capital is the line running along or across familism. Is it correct to say then that pro-family attitudes do not go hand in hand with civil attitudes? Perhaps this would be a biased conclusion. As we are assuming that the family – on the scale of moral communities – is to fulfil a required role on account of building an environment for living and educating as well as supporting social cohesion and national identity. Thus, it would not be sensible to limit the family's role for the benefit of the development of networks of voluntary organisations and spontaneous social behaviours. The family as the guardian of moral and social virtues is the best guarantor of social and political order, economic growth and heydays of civil society. Without the family on board as the primary and principal model consistent with the rules of life, it would not be possible to instil moral virtues such as fairness, reliability, loyalty, moderation, diligence and responsibility, and social virtues such as solidarity, trust, tolerance and cooperation. The problem lies more with how to ensure that the family learns to apply this set of virtues in a broader social circle, and not only in its own close circle. The benefits that cooperation, solidarity and public trust bring to the lives of individuals and communities, including political and economic communities, have been recognised for a long time now. The classic interpretation is presented by A. de Tocqueville, who in citing the doctrine of enlightened self-interest, indicated the advantage of actions that take into account the interests of other individuals.⁹ Fukuyama expresses this thought in words.

Law, agreement and economic rationalism are a solid but insufficient footing for post-industrial society prosperity and stability; they should be reinforced by a general approval for reciprocity of interests, moral duty, service to the society and trust – qualities rather based on habit than cold calculations, which in a contemporary society are a '*sine qua non* condition for it to function'.¹⁰ Both the liberal and republican methods for presenting arguments for social involvement and its consolidation in the moral culture of individuals and the society are evident in

9 And even in broadening the application of this doctrine to religious issues, see A. de Tocqueville, *O demokracji w Ameryce*, trans. from English B. Janicka, M. Król, Fundacja 'Aletheia', Warsaw 2005, pp. 500–504.

10 F. Fukuyama, *Zaufanie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

the two interpretations. Shifting now to the Polish backdrop, one may ask which of them more closely matches our native thought and practice. While it is difficult to judge, it seems that due to the significant effects and reach of the teachings of the Church, which are predominantly directed at the family, the republican set of values is more pronounced, referring to the duty to serve others, the common good, rather than the liberal with a category of interest or benefit stemming from cooperation with others. Both emphasise the significance of trust as a general attitude in relationships with others as conducive to dialogue and cooperation.

Trust and cooperation mutually support each other. Thus, in a society with a high participation culture, trusting others is still supported by a practice of common actions. Reciprocation standards do well and become established through habits proliferating across societies. The habits entice people to come together in associations, societies, meet in clubs, support groups, churches and other places natural for the given local community. Trust is mandatory for these types of places; as such, it is difficult to say if it is a result or cause for undertaking mutual initiatives. Putnam seems to present such a take on the matter in his research on the fates of American society, once very civil and today experiencing a crisis in involvement symbolised by the figure of a lone tenpin bowler. However, Polish reality is not similar to American society. We are definitely short of similar traditions of associations, crafting bottom-up initiatives, and mutual actions without looking around for suzerainty and authority. We know the historical context, which explains this phenomenon to a large extent and clarifies the source of the extensive resources of distrust, passed on from generation to generation and even today nurtured in many environments and families. In general, our children do not have the opportunity to see their parents as active members of the local community. If they are learning social involvement, the impulse is not originated by the family, but is primarily generated by educational institutions. Is it the lack of participation culture that causes low levels of public trust? Or instead, does the absence of trust bring about consequences in the form of social apathy? There is no simple answer to this question. In Poland's culture, both deficits simply fuel and strengthen each other. Even the last 25 years have not been free from new threats to the creation of a civil community.¹¹ My personal inclination is to favour the position to care for participation culture by various means, primarily with respect to the younger generation, which should translate into an improvement in public trust.

Polish families, in my opinion, constitute a rich stock of virtues, attitudes, habits and behaviours that have done well over the centuries in protecting the strength of the Polish nation. Today, this reservoir, strong on patriotism and

11 See P. Sztompka, *Trauma IV RP*, 'Europa. Tygodnik idei' 2007, 12, 155, pp. 12–13.

Catholicism¹² but also supported by other ideological traditions, should be able to excite civil Self in Polish society and invigorate it both as a civil community and as a solidarity-based society. The key to the above is – once again borrowing from Putnam's terminology – using various means to facilitate the crossing of the bonding capital threshold towards more openness to the virtues of bridging capital.¹³ We require impulses which would nurse our tested communal ties – ties that integrate from the inside, provide a feeling of security and support the assurance of one's own identity – and at the same time would broaden our activity horizon by new, more extensive identities due to the perspective of cooperation and openness to others, of entering into relations which exhibit weaker bonds of loyalty but equally satisfying, bonds of loyalty that permit the attainment of various goals. In addition to the scope of the individual benefits stemming from bridging capital, we are also dealing with benefits for the entire society, which strengthened by a network of mutual relationships gains effective protection against the state's paternalism.

Both dimensions of social capital – bonding and bridging – are neither disjointed nor interchangeable. This is clearly seen using the family as an example. It would be difficult to imagine a functioning family without bonding capital. The primal trust has a symbolic role, described by E. Erikson;¹⁴ it is born within a child in response to love, acceptance, care, reliability and parental responsibility, and constitutes a real building block for the construction of the future personality of the developing child. The next of kin, in giving themselves to the child, teach that trust and its *a priori* offering to others is possible. By ensuring compliance, consistency, continuity and repeatability of experiences, as well as delineating the sphere of prohibitions and permissions, allow for the child to find its feet in the world and to feel its reality. If strong bonding ties inside the family are optimal for the development of children,¹⁵ the question arises concerning the possibility of its marriage with bridging capital and whether – if at all – this is in the interest of the family. It turns out that the answer is yes. Putnam documents this well through indicating large areas of social involvement opening up for the parents. These include activities oscillating around supporting or controlling educational institutions their children attend, increased interest in religious practices, again often motivated by the well-being of the children and an image of a functioning family as well as newly etched out social relationships between parents of the children who play or learn together. The social capital evident in the attitudes and behaviours of the parents (trusting others, participation in organisations, in

12 See *id.*, *Nie ufaj nikomu*, 'Gazeta Wyborcza', 1–2.12.2007, p. 20.

13 See R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–42.

14 See E. Erikson, *Dzieciństwo i społeczeństwo*, trans. from English P. Hejmej, Rebis, Poznań 2000, pp. 257–261.

15 See R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle...*, *op. cit.*, p. 592.

the life of the parish, voluntary work, voting during elections, and informal social relationships with friends) turns out to be positively correlated with schooling as well as general developmental successes of their children.¹⁶ However, this requires a social climate clearly supportive of such attitudes and behaviours. National economic and political stabilisation is clearly conducive both to the above and to effectively functioning public service institutions (public trust), respect by authorities at all levels for the citizen, institutions obeying the law, primacy of public reason (common good) in the actions of the ruling party and opposition, and related factors comprising the whole: a stable and just democracy. Otherwise, familism, in as much as it becomes a culturally enshrined social tendency in response to a general instability and changeability or uncertainty pertaining to the rules of a society, may even turn out to be the best possible solution from the point of view of the household members.

One will be able to speak of a change in mentality – which will possibly craft or reinstate the social network, trust and reciprocity standards – only when, apart from the changes in the individual approach to citizenship and social involvement in public institutions, remedial actions will appear. Due to the young age of democracy in Poland, this dimension – namely, the improvement of the structure of the state itself as well as the functions of governance from the local government level all the way to institutions of central authority – seems to be of key importance. The picture painted thus far would, however, be incomplete if at the current level of analysis references were not made to the role of the Catholic Church in awakening social awareness on the map of institutions having national reach. So far, little has been said about the role of the Church here. It does require a searching look due to the dominant position of the Catholic religion in the process of shaping the worldviews and attitudes of Poles. This is ensured by the weekly Sunday preaching in churches, which is actively made use of by half of the believers, the omnipresent catechesis in schools, as well as the presence of the voice of the Church in media and the public debate.

The Polish family and the Church

The trials which the Church has been subject to in the history of this nation, and for which, when it did represent the voice of the people, it was highly recognised, play an important role in the trust afforded to clergy in many circles of the society. Such an image became set in stone when assessing the contribution of the Church to the survival of the nation during the Partitions, then was further confirmed by the sacrifice during the two world wars. The people's democracy era,

16 See R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 485–501.

more akin to us, is a period which is particularly vivid in the memory of Poles. The list of achievements starts with an avant-garde letter by Polish bishops to their German counterparts with the words 'we are sorry and ask for forgiveness' and is expanded upon by a message of spiritual contents in homilies, which took the load off and allowed for a somewhat easier experience of the difficulties of daily life characterised by shortages, dependence on the authorities and the omnipresence of Marxists ideology, supporting the spirit of a community contrary to the drab reality. Support for budding opposition movements was also the clergy's contribution, which took the form of providing shelter to opposition activists and organising events to help the repressed and their families. The fight with the Church, carried on by the system that had no social legitimacy, only served to strengthen this institution. Through the clergy's cooperation, it became possible to reach the faithful with appeals and the ideological messages of the secular opposition. Clergy also passed on the works of artists and news from the world of science, elaborated and presented within the confines of the church walls and often representing a point of view other than the religious. The culmination of the positive effect of the Church on the Polish postwar reality was Cardinal Karol Wojtyła becoming Pope. John Paul II gave Polish people's morale a boost during his pilgrimages to Poland, postulated a new style of Catholicism, supported the efforts of his countrymen to take over the running of the country peacefully and to create a democratic government, and supported our accession to the European Union. These and many other achievements of the Church lie at the foot of the socially established positive image of its contributions.

Today in the postmodern world, with open borders, the free flow of capital, ideas, a pluralisation of opinions and the secularisation of many aspects of life, most Poles maintain their relationship with the Church and its messages and faith. Christian thought, recently reinvigorated by the new style and message of Pope Francis, has been given the opportunity to continue to constitute an important source of meaningfulness, to be a source of answers to existential questions pertaining to a good and fulfilling life, as well as to build communities with others.¹⁷ To an observer, parish communities are closely knit groups of participants of religious services who are united by the belief in one God. However, does that common belief interconnect them? Is it conducive to conscious participation? Does it become a source for the parish built up on the strength of mutual actions? An attentive observer will notice significant if not glaring shortages here: whereas the statistic for declaring faith and participation in services is high (even amongst teenagers), the percentage involvement of the faithful in parish life is at the same time terribly low. Religious sociologists admit that Polish religiousness

17 See J. Mariański, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce a życie społeczne. Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne*, Gaudium, Lublin 2005, pp. 252–263.

is mainly characterised by rituality in cult practices satisfying individual (and not communal) religious needs.¹⁸ Why is it that a common faith does not release positive energy to build bonds around other common goals? What are the reasons?

To begin with, we should delve into our difficult, suffering-marred history. The Church often stepped in to fulfil the role attributed to the state and secular institutions by protecting against the invader, occupier or regime, thus awakening the spirit of resistance in the name of grand ideas. Today, the Church sometimes still clings to that interpretation of a fight. But now it is against an enemy lurking at the gates of the modern world in the guise of the market and large capital that are blind to the needs of the poor and that reduce people to the level of consumers, the state as a soulless bureaucracy apparatus, or the media, cynical and feeding on cheap sensation, etc. The criticism of today's reality, devoid of references to God and preached from the pulpits, places many believers in a position of distrustfulness and withdrawal into the safe privacy of their homes, families. Families are thus far from the uncertain, invasive, godless world. This possibly keeps in a circle of exclusive religious communities that oppose many phenomena of modernity reminiscent of 'cultural ghettos' with the 'mental state of a bunker'.¹⁹ Yet a hierarchical Church, which can find its feet well enough by itself in a world of global capital, fathoms its mechanisms for the good of its institution that serves for the endurance of the divine eternal truths. Such a strategy of teaching activity and entrepreneurship and not maintaining fear, distrust or even resentment can be applied equally well in our parishes. Whereas the opposition of the rich and the poor (similar to the broader category 'us' and 'them') is still a live source of antagonisms that has not been extinguished in the Church, the virtue of resourcefulness belongs to the ranks of virtual or suspicious virtues. A Catholic in Poland is associated with a friendly person who often exhibit the attitude of distrust and unwillingness at different levels of intensity that are not put out by the clergy and sometimes even fuelled and intended for the not-so-small group of 'enemies of the Church'.

Outside of the historical baggage weighing on today's state of apathy and withdrawal from the community life of the parish, I would indicate three other reasons of underdevelopment in Poland's Christian civil society.²⁰ Firstly, the inflexible structures of organisations and authority in the whole Church as a strictly hierarchical institution are often unyielding to any signs of democratisation. The dominance of the authoritarian style of running a parish by issuing orders, the

18 See J. Mariański, *Kościół katolicki w społeczeństwie obywatelskim. Refleksje socjologiczne*, Catholic University of Lublin Press, Lublin 1998, pp. 118, 138.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

20 See J. Gowin, *Sześć tez na temat wolności i religii. Chrześcijanin i obywatel*, 'Europa. Tygodnik idei' 2008, 22(165), pp. 12–13.

lack or weakness of Ministry Parish Councils, and the predetermined roles for the particular 'states' in the life of a parish, including those for teenagers, are all examples of the institutional barriers put up by the Church. This is not conducive to bottom-up initiatives, meeting others on account of religious inspiration, or just because one wants to do something with others at a local church. Thus, the young meet outside of the Church, as this institution, which has extensive infrastructure (Catechesis rooms, church facilities), is scared of spontaneous teenager activity and is not forthcoming with any initiatives for enticing young people with new forms of organising free time. Instead, the Church remains within the safe, tried and tested patronising position as an agency used for the provision of individual and familial religious services. Secondly, transferring Catechesis to schools and making it a graded, scholastic subject. Apart from the measurable benefits, this decision also brought with it losses,²¹ simply in distancing children and teenagers, constituting the groups most willing and susceptible to stimuli encouraging them to act with others from the parish, in which such actions might have been crafted. The result of such distancing has been the loss of mental, emotional and moral feelings of a bond with the parish. The young people, not being real subjects in the life of the local church, do not feel responsible. Thirdly, a lack of adequate social and philosophical knowledge in the moulding of new priests, accustoming them and teaching them to understand the ever-faster changes taking place in the life of modern societies and to understand the ideas voiced by secular elites who reach the social masses via media channels. This state of distrust, misunderstanding and nonacceptance of today's secular world results in the entire energy of the clergy focusing on criticism dressed up in a moralising tone and teaching the truths of the faith completely disjointed from the contested reality, in a perpetual void between 'heaven and earth'.²² An invitation for cooperation at the parish from its stewards requires knowledge (at the least basic management, social communication, and social animation) and a dialogue with modernity and thus a change in attitude and more openness.

Just some of the causes described above that act in unison multiply the apathy effect. As such, the 'participation revolution' of the faithful still remains the Church's project in progress and perhaps remains in the pipelines of the majority of clergy. It is even more surprising that at the same time, the primary moral principle with which most Poles identify is the 'Love thy neighbour' commandment. The presence of 'participation oases' in honourable examples of parish life, and perhaps even more so from the missionary activity of some orders for the reactivation of the community centred on certain initiatives (in addition to those strictly religious, charitable, sporting, educational, artistic, recreational and civil)

21 For a broader perspective, see A. Potocki, *Wychowanie religijne...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–258.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 258–272.

which await popularisation, do not change the diagnosis spelled out above. Such initiatives, whereas not addressed to entire families, still strengthen them, activating its particular members (children, teenagers, parents and grandparents).

'Modern' barriers to the development of local communities

All of the barriers to the development of a civil society in Poland discussed thus far, particular to our cultural context, should also be supplemented by risk factors, which run independently, but are related to the transformation of modern societies and may overlap with the previous. Following in the footsteps of Putnam, who investigated the reasons for the collapse of local communities in the United States over the last decades, the following phenomena may be mentioned: intensity of efforts associated with professional work and its preservation, or 'chasing after money', worry as to one's material standing, professional career of both parents, pressure of time, uncontrolled growth of cities (suburbanisation, including closed and monitored estates), commuting to work, popularisation of mass communication and entertainment, predominantly the television and the Internet, deteriorating (from generation to generation) residential, religious and organisational ties associated with a feeling of belonging to one's own surroundings, church and groups and organisations as a result of increased social mobility.²³ From our point of view, the author's statement on the insufficient presence of even the 'second civil generation' (for the United States, this pertains to those born in the 1920s and after who remember the times of World War II mobilising the populace to common action) in order to prevent a dispersion of social forces in the society seems particularly important. Rapidly occurring social changes in the second half of the 20th century meant that from generation to generation the ability to pass on the attitude of socialisation to children and grandchildren was lost. It is difficult not to compare this situation with post-war Poland, where the civil spirit of the prewar generation of Poles was rapidly if not violently, quashed by repression, creating a social void between the family and nation. Today, this space is starting to show signs of being cultivated, but it clearly can be seen, at the very least when compared with the United States, that this task cannot be confined to families, and perhaps it has come down to them to only a small degree. These, in the role of repository of virtues, constitute the best foundation for the creation of a civil society. Invigorating for social involvement is a task assigned to many entities, including the State, local authorities,²⁴ schools and other

23 See R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kregle...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 307–469.

24 See T. Talaczyński, *Samorząd uczniowski: raczej szansa niż kłopot*, 'Wychowawca' 2007, 11.

educational institutions,²⁵ NGO's, work places, academic centres, media and the Church. Again, following in the footsteps of Putnam, one can only repeat his just appeal to build a multi-pronged programme of 'social capitalists' with reference to all entities in the public life.²⁶ However, I would like to focus attention on and emphasise the role of one of these entities, whose effect on Polish families is still very significant, namely the Catholic Church. I consider that on account of the religious beliefs of most Polish families, without the contribution by the clergy to this task, and as such without the involvement of individual priests in the network of parishes²⁷ and monastic orders, the shaping of social virtues and awakening of the civil spirit in our society will remain shelved for a long time. It will just be an idea, possibly a niche form of spontaneous self-fulfilment for the few. All other valuable and needed attempts and efforts in this scope, starting with the state and ending with the media, may turn out essentially ineffective (as witnessed thus far) unless the Church joins the fray.

Conclusion: Parish as the community of communities

A parish brought to life by the activity of the faithful is at the moment just an idea, interestingly referred to by Catholic journalists as 'the community of communities'.²⁸ In my opinion, this key to building a civil society in Poland is in the hands of the clergy and active Catholic activists, without whom Polish familism with its cultivated distrust shall become the suppressant for positive social change. However, a change in conviction is necessary, namely that active parishioners do not constitute a burden for the Church; to the contrary, they are a benefit. Their involvement means enrichment of the substance Christian life and, what is more, that which is postulated in the fifth commandment of the Church ('You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church'). Putman's appeal to the American clergy, lay leaders, theologians and common believers stated:

Let's bring forth new, pluralistic, socially responsible 'great awakening', so that in 2010 Americans were more involved than they are today, in that or the other spiritual community of meanings, at the same time trying to be more tolerant with respect to faith and practices of other Americans.²⁹

25 See K. Wrońska, *Wartości obywatelskie w życiu szkoły*, 'Hejnał Oświatowy' 2008, 3(77), pp. 13–17.

26 See R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 653–674.

27 See J. Mariański, *Udział katolików świeckich w życiu parafii (założenia i rzeczywistość)*, Płocki Instytut Wydawniczy, Płock 2008, pp. 97–112.

28 See e.g. A. Potocki, *Jakiej potrzebujemy parafii?*, 'Teofil' 2008, 1(27), pp. 125–141.

29 R. Putnam, *Samotna gra w kręgle...*, *op. cit.*, p. 665.

In Poland, a call for a broader opening of churches to its parishioners could take on the same form, so that they felt as lay brothers: the subject and not like today the object of the mission. To that end, an incentive is needed to craft small groups within parishes that would combine various forms of common interests. This would establish new horizontal bonds between people, not necessarily tightly bound to the Church, but drawn to it due to the openness and friendliness of the representatives of that environment. As the Dominican priest A. Potocki writes, whose reflection I would like to use as support, as one which fully reflects my point of view on the matter, a counterweight to the fossilisation of parish life,

[...] one would like to see a democratic style – style which is in tune with the times and the Polish conditions, which corresponds well to the postulates of a civil society. It is a necessity, if we wish to move from a Church of the Clergy to a Church of the People of God.³⁰

In the new structure, full of small groups, there would be a place for every parishioner as long as they wanted it. They would present an opportunity to fulfil oneself across various spheres of activity with others, in accordance with one's own preferences and to build a space for mutual trust, friendliness, cooperation and foundation of a civil community.

Thanks to such skills – writes Potocki – the parish, without waiting for 'customers', who will either turn up or not, shall exist outside the sphere of the temple.³¹

It is here that the elites may be formed

[...] able to cross the boundaries of the parish and knowing how to be present in public affairs. This is a new task for the parish: be the foundation for lay brothers acting around the world. Taking responsibility of its actions. Acting not under the protective umbrella of the Church, but nonetheless well rooted in it – and through none other than the parish.³²

The new formula for the parish as a community of communities, and openness to bottom-up participation and activities of lay brothers (children, teenagers, parents and grandparents) present an opportunity for a wider social subjectification of our kinsmen and removing the barriers to more ways of building an open society without losing the foundation in the form of family assets.



30 A. Potocki, *Jakiej potrzebujemy parafii?*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

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