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## **Church in a Local Community**

### **Abstrakt**

#### **Kościół w społeczności lokalnej**

Kościół katolicki jest formacją globalną i uniwersalną (zunifikowaną), która elastycznie dopasowała się do potrzeb i oczekiwań regionów. Tak jak inne instytucje wielkich religii, uczestniczy także w przemianach okresu późnej nowoczesności. Uczestnikami owych przemian są również wierni w każdym, świeckim i religijnym, aspekcie swojego życia.

W Polsce równoległe z procesem globalizacji dokonała się przemiana ustrojowa. Kościół, jako instytucja, musiał zmienić swoją rolę w życiu publicznym. Jego misja jako ostoji przeciwników systemu komunistycznego dobiegła końca. Obecnie ważniejsze stają się problemy natury społeczno-ekonomicznej. Powrót do tej tradycyjnej roli Kościoła następuje nie tylko, dlatego że upadł reżim, ale również, dlatego że zmieniła się sytuacja gospodarcza kraju. Jak potwierdzają liczne badania społeczne<sup>1</sup> nastąpiła zmiana oczekiwań wiernych. Wyraźnie nie chcą oni udziału Kościoła w polityce, a jego zaangażowania w problemy społeczne. Na to nakłada się odchodzenie pod wpływem późnej modernizacji od tradycyjnych wartości i ograniczanie znaczenia religii i religijności.

Wydaje się, że przedstawione zjawiska szczególnie dobrze widoczne są w skali lokalnej. Dlatego też podjęte badania miały na celu przedstawienie i porównanie roli Kościoła w małej społeczności podlódzkich Brzezin i samej Łodzi. Kościół rozumiany był zarówno jako instytucja życia publicznego, jak i w sensie duchowo-religijnym.

### **Introduction**

Social and economic changes in the last few years are often defined as globalization and individualization. A. Giddens<sup>2</sup> in his last book "Modernity and Self-Identity" writes:

*"The global extent of modernity has to be put in the categories of progressing relations between extending and chronic changeability of local conditions and relations. (...) Globalization means, that in relation to at least some effects of eradicating mechanisms<sup>3</sup>,*

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<sup>1</sup> Por. B. Roguska, B. Wciórka, 2000, *Religijność i stosunek do kościoła*, [w:] *Nowa rzeczywistość. Oceny i opinie 1989-1999*, red. M. Strzeszewski, K. Zagórski, Dialog, Warszawa. W. Zdaniewicz, T. Zembrzuski, red., *Postawy społeczno-religijne mieszkańców archidiecezji łódzkiej*, Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź. E. Firlit et. al., *Rola parafii rzymsko-katolickiej w organizacji życia społecznego na szczeblu lokalnym*, UW, ATK, Pallotinum, Warszawa.

<sup>2</sup> A. Giddens, 2001, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, PWN, Warszawa, p. 31

<sup>3</sup> Eradicating mechanisms – consist of symbolic means and expert systems; separate interactions from specific properties of a place (Giddens, 2001, p. 30)

*there is no possibility not to participate in changes carried by modernity. (...) In the developed regions, the relation between locality and globality has the form of many in-depth transmutations concerning the essence of everyday living.”*

The Catholic Church is a global and universal (unified) formation, which has adapted itself to the needs and expectations of the regions in a flexible way. Similarly to other great religious institutions, it also participates in changes of the late modernity period. The faithful were also participated in these changes, in both secular and religious aspects of their lives.

In Poland, the process of globalization was parallel to the change of political system. The Church as an institution had to change its role in public life. Its mission as an opposition for the communist system ended. Nowadays, social and economic issues are of greater concern. The change of the Church's public role is not only due to the fall of communism but also because of economic changes in Poland. As many social studies<sup>4</sup> show, there has been a change in the expectations of the faithful. They clearly do not want any participation of the Church in the political life. Instead they want a greater engagement in social issues. Moreover, due to late modernization people tend to abandon traditional values and lessen the meaning of religion and religiousness.

It seems that the aforementioned phenomenon is particularly visible at a local level. That is why the undertaken research aimed at describing and comparing the role of the Church in a small community of Brzeziny near Łódź and Łódź itself. The Church was examined as a public institution as well as a spiritual and religious entity. It was also assumed that the inhabitants of a big city are exposed to the late modernization processes more than the inhabitants of a small city. Therefore, their level of religiousness and expectations from the Church will differ.

Below, the detailed goals of the research have been listed:

- to compare the level of religiousness<sup>5</sup> of inhabitants of a big and a small city
- to specify the determinants of religiousness
- to identify the feeling of belonging to a community

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<sup>4</sup> B. Roguska, B. Wiórka, 2000, *Religijność i stosunek do kościoła* [In] M. Strzeszewski, K. Zagórski, eds., *Nowa rzeczywistość. Oceny i opinie 1989-1999*, Dialog, Warszawa; W. Zdaniewicz, T. Zembrzuski, *Postawy społeczno-religijne mieszkańców archidiecezji łódzkiej*, Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, Łódź. E Firlit et. al., *Rola parafii rzymsko-katolickiej w organizacji życia społecznego na szczeblu lokalnym*, UW, ATK, Pallontium, Warszawa

<sup>5</sup> The definition of religiosity was adopted after W. Piwowarski, *Religijność miejska w regionie uprzemysłowionym. Studium socjologiczne*, Biblioteka "Więzi", Warszawa, 1977

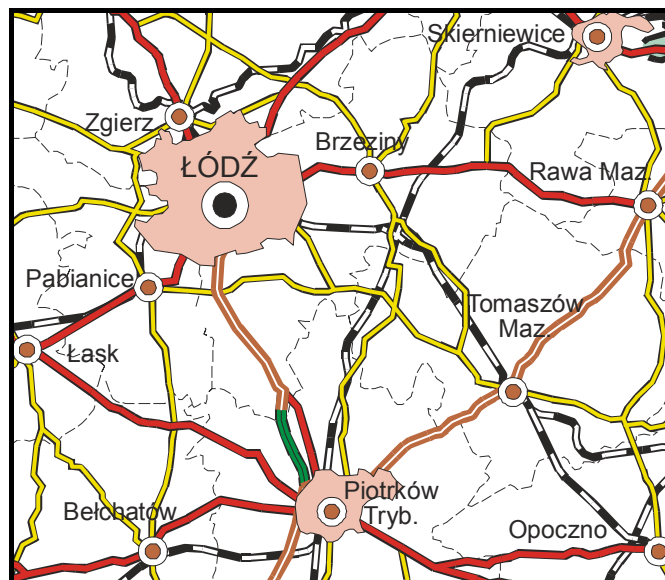
- to recognize the changes in expectations towards the role of the Church as a public institution in the periods before 1989 and after 1989

A questionnaire method was used in the research. Quota sample was chosen for the survey. The questionnaires were given to 252 inhabitants of Łódź and 254 inhabitants of Brzeziny.

### Demographic and social profile of the research area

Łódź and Brzeziny are situated in central Poland. They belong to the region of Wzniesienia Łódzkie (The Łódź Hills). The town of Brzeziny is situated in the suburban zone of the Łódź agglomeration (the distance between Brzeziny and Łódź is 20 km). According to the European statistical system Eurostat, Brzeziny is situated within the metropolitan area of Łódź (Pic. 1).

Picture 1. Location of Łódź and Brzeziny



The size of the respondents' cities varied in aspect of the number of inhabitants as well as in their area. Łódź is the second largest city in Poland, while Brzeziny is a small town of no more than 13,000 people. The area of Łódź is almost 14 times larger than the area of Brzeziny. The population density, as a result of both settlements' status, varies as well.

As far as sex structure is concerned, both cities exhibit a surplus of women. The feminization rate is higher in Łódź (119 women per 100 men), and in the case of Brzeziny the

ratio is similar to national average. The age structure in relation to economic status looks better in the case of Brzeziny. The participation rate of young and middle aged is high, while the participation of old aged in the total population of the city is relatively low. The percentage of people making a living out of work is also higher in Brzeziny. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate is much lower in Łódź (18,8%) than in Brzeziny (27,2%). The level of education also varies in both settlements. The inhabitants of Łódź are significantly better educated, which derives from a higher percentage of people with higher education and lower percentage of people with primary education.

### Demographic and social profile of the respondents

The research was conducted among 506 people – 252 from Łódź and 254 from Brzeziny. There were 287 women and 219 men among the respondents (Table 1). The average age was 43,3 for Łódź and 43,1 for Brzeziny. The largest age group was between 35 and 45 and the smallest age group – above 55.

Table 1. Sex and age of the respondents

Sex	Age (years)							
	18-34		35-54		55 and more		Total	
	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny
Female	49	47	57	55	41	36	147	138
Male	38	38	41	51	26	25	105	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>252*</b>	<b>252</b>

\* two of the respondents did not tell their age

Respondents from both Łódź and Brzeziny were better educated than the total population of their cities. It is due to the fact that people with better education are more willing to take part in social surveys and opinion polls. Respondents from Łódź were better educated than respondents from Brzeziny. Among the respondents from Łódź men were slightly better educated – 26,0% with higher education and 37,5% with secondary education. For women, the same values were as follows – 17,0% and 38,8%. In Brzeziny on the contrary, women were better educated (28,1% with higher education) than men (16,6%). It was the young people that had the highest qualifications in both of the cities. 86% of people with higher education from Łódź and 88% from Brzeziny were 55 or less years old. The group of

people with primary education consisted in  $\frac{2}{3}$  of respondents from Łódź aged 55 or more and in  $\frac{3}{4}$  from Brzeziny of the same age.

The respondents' place of residence until the age of 14 seems to be an important independent variable as well. The following categories were adopted: provincial capital, district capital, other city, village. This feature varies greatly among the surveyed. Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents from Łódź spent their childhood in a provincial capital, while the respondents from Brzeziny spent their childhood in a district capital (31,0%) and village (31,0%).

About 20,0% of the surveyed was retired or disabled. The employment structure varied in both cities. The largest group of respondents from Łódź was formed by qualified workers, technicians, employees of the service sector and office workers. In Brzeziny in contrast to Łódź, the percentage of office workers was lower and the percentage of farmers was higher, as a result of Brzeziny's nature.

The majority considered themselves of average wealth (almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of respondents from Łódź and  $\frac{4}{5}$  from Brzeziny). 10% of Łódź's and 6% of Brzeziny's respondents considered themselves wealthy. They were mainly male workers or specialists, young people and people with higher education. People who considered themselves poor were mostly 55 or more years old, with primary or incomplete secondary education.

The surveyed inhabitants of Łódź and Brzeziny also had political preferences (Table 2). Only about 30% of respondents from Łódź and 40% from Brzeziny agreed to answer this question. About 20% of respondents from Łódź supported the political centre, about 50% - the left wing and about 30% - the rightwing. In Brzeziny, 55% supported the right wing, 30% - the left wing and 15% - the political centre. The differences in political preferences are probably the result of differences in the period of the survey (Łódź – summer 2002, Brzeziny – summer 2004) and the size of the settlement, where survey was carried out.

Table 2. Political preferences of the respondents

Political option	number of answers		% of answers	
	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny
Right-wing	31	55	12,2	21,8
Centre	18	15	7,1	6,0
Left-wing	37	30	14,6	11,9

None	74	18	29,1	7,1
No answer given	94	134	37,0	53,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>

### Religiousness of local communities

One of the primary criteria that was used to evaluate religiousness was the respondents' declaration about their attitude towards faith. Apparently it is different in both settlements. Among the respondents from Łódź 72% were deeply devout or devout, while in the case of Brzeziny 81,7% with a smaller percentage of neutral respondents.

In the sixties and seventies the scientists from KUL<sup>6</sup> who studied religiousness of inhabitants of Płock, Puławy, Kazimierz and Nowa Huta achieved results similar to those from Brzeziny. It is also worth mentioning, that the results from Brzeziny are similar to average Polish statistics by CBOS. As surveys show, in the last decade over 80% of Polish people declared themselves as devout or deeply devout. In the years 1999-2000 the participation of the deeply devout rose to 11% and devout – to 85%. The authors of the survey emphasize that the results indicate growing religiousness of Polish people and low level of secularization of social life in Poland<sup>7</sup>. While comparing the statistical data you have to remember about differences in social and economic structures of the surveyed populations. In the case of Łódź, we are dealing with a metropolitan society, which is much more eager to yield to the influence of mass culture than the citizens of Brzeziny, or average Polish respondents.

The attitude to faith can be also influenced by age and sex of the respondents. In both surveyed populations, a deep faith was more frequently declared by women (in Brzeziny 93,6% of the women are devout or deeply devout) and older people. Political preferences were also an important determinant. 96,8% of devout and deeply devout people in Łódź and 91% in Brzeziny supported the right wing political fractions.

Very strong relations between the attitude to religion and family traditions appeared in both surveyed populations. Over 80% of the surveyed were raised in families where religion was very important and was part of everyday life. At the same time, 93% of respondents from Łódź and 84% from Brzeziny indicated family traditions as a main source of their attitude to

<sup>6</sup> W. Piwowarski, 1977, *Religijność miejska w regionie uprzemysłowionym. Studium socjologiczne*, Biblioteka „Więzi”, Warszawa

<sup>7</sup> B. Roguska, 1999, *Kościół w III Rzeczypospolitej*, *Komunikat CBOS*, 2497, CBOS

religion. Moreover, almost 91% of respondents from Łódź and 56% from Brzeziny, who were raised in families without religious traditions, declared their attitude to religion as neutral.

25% of respondents from Łódź and 84% from Brzeziny said that their attitude to religion changed during the last 10-15 years. 51% of Łódź's respondents and 45% of Brzeziny's respondents became more religious. The remaining part became less religious. This change was mainly influenced by respondents' own experiences and conclusions. Only 23,1% of people from Łódź and 17% from Brzeziny was influenced by the clergy. Unfortunately, it was the clergy that caused the loss of faith in 77% respondents from Łódź and 75% of respondents from Brzeziny.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the change of religiousness in Poland. Their opinion is in contrast to what they said about themselves. Only 18,5% of the surveyed from Łódź and 16,4% from Brzeziny thought that the attitude of Polish people to religion had not changed, while 67,9% (Łódź) and 54,1% (Brzeziny) said that religiousness today is not as big as it used to be. The change in religiousness of Polish people is caused by social and economic situation and the influence of clergy.

The results of the research indicate that respondents from Łódź neglect religious practices rather more often than people from Brzeziny. No practice at all was confirmed by 20% of Łódź's respondents and 15% of Brzeziny's respondents. 21,3% (Łódź) and 13,5% (Brzeziny) did not participate in Sunday service, 23,6% (Łódź) and 15,9% (Brzeziny) did not take communion. Most people from Łódź fulfilled their religious duties only few times a year (about  $\frac{1}{3}$ ). People from Brzeziny practiced religion more often – 36% of them attended a service once in a week (25,2% in Łódź), and holy communion was taken several times a year by 46,4% of the surveyed (33,9% in Łódź).

In comparison to respondents' religious activity 10 – 15 years ago, today's religious practices are much less common (Table 3). The number of people who never attend services or participate in them only few times a year increased, while the number of those who attend services once a week or a few times a month decreased. Such a small attendance in services of respondents from Łódź is parallel to the small percentage of people taking holy communion – 18,5% do it a few times a month or more often. Respondents from Brzeziny show increased activity – 25% took holy communion a few times a month or more frequently.

Table 3. Participation in religious practices of respondents from Łódź and Brzeziny

Frequency	Attending the services nowadays (%)		Attending the services 10-15 years ago (%)		Taking communion (%)	
	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny
Few times a week	3,5	7,2	2,0	7,5	8,3	5,2
Once a week	25,2	36,5	36,6	48,0	5,1	11,1
Few times a month	14,2	18,7	21,7	21,8	5,1	8,7
Few times a year	35,8	23,8	24,0	13,1	33,9	46,4
Never	21,3	13,5	15,0	7,2	23,6	15,9
No answer given	0,0	0,3	0,8	2,4	24,0	12,7

Questions were asked about optional practices concerned reading the Catholic press and participating in other church activities than services. The involvement of the respondents was slight. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  (both in Łódź and Brzeziny) did not read any religious newspapers. 4% (Brzeziny) and 8% (Łódź) read the Catholic press often. The most popular titles were: *Niedziela*, *Nasz Dziennik* and *Rycerz Niepokalanej*.

Each of the mentioned activities has the same regularity as those referring to the level of religiousness of the respondents – women are more active, men attend services and take holy communion less frequently. It is very similar in case of people who consider themselves wealthy. The interesting thing is that there seems to be no correlation between the religious practices and respondents' level of education.

The family is the most important variable. 76,2% (Łódź) and 84% (Brzeziny) of the people who took communion few times a week were raised in a family where religion was very important. Political preferences are another variable which determines the quality of religious practices and attitude to religion. The support of the right-wing usually goes hand in hand with greater religious activity and declaration of profound faith.

One of the parameters of religiousness is morality. The respondents were shown different situations and were asked to take a position on them. The opinion of Roman-Catholic Church is in each case clear – approving (teaching religion in schools) or disapproving (sexual intercourse before marriage, abortion, telling lies, marriages of clergymen, working on Sundays) particular behaviour. The answers given by respondents differ from those assumptions. More than a half of the surveyed approves of sexual intercourse before marriage. If you add people with neutral opinion to this group, their number reaches 74-76%. Abortion, marriages of clergymen and working on Sundays is not approved of by more people from Brzeziny than Łódź, but lying is approved by more respondents from Brzeziny. Up to 56,3% (Łódź) and 45,2% (Brzeziny) was neutral or



approved of marriages of clergymen. At the same time, only 14,6% (Łódź) and 9,6% (Brzeziny) did not approve of teaching religion in schools.

The profile of those who approve or disapprove of a specific situation varies with the respondents' city. People from Łódź who approve of sexual intercourse before marriage have mainly neutral attitude to religion (80%), belong to the youngest age group (70%) or were raised in families without religion (91,7%). They were mainly born in Łódź and considered themselves wealthy.

Among the people from Brzeziny who approved of sexual intercourse before marriage, we can see a high participation of devoted people (70,2%) and people raised in religious families, while religion was not a part of everyday practice. Almost 85% of them was 55 years old or less. They were raised in a village or a district capital (72,7%) and their economic status was average. It is worth to mention that some of respondents from Łódź were more conservative in some situations.

### **Church as a community and its social role**

When writing about a religious community, Piwowarski<sup>8</sup> refers mostly to the sense of a bond between a parishioner and his parish and priest. The measure of the bond with a parish in the undertaken research was the respondents' opinion about their parish. Almost half of those who agreed to answer this question (48,8% in Łódź, 66,3% in Brzeziny) spoke of the positive aspects of their parish, such as the church building or the work of the priests. About 20% of respondents from Łódź and 55% from Brzeziny said that their parish is not distinguished by anything, which may indicate a very small bond with the parish community.

The measure of the sense of belonging to a community on a local and global level were the questions about the role and place of the Roman-Catholic Church in the society and their changes in the last few years. The greater the sense of belonging to a community, the bigger role of the Church and the trust put in it.

In comparison to other public and political institutions, the Roman-Catholic Church had good ratings. Almost 50% of Brzeziny's respondents and 38% of Łódź's respondents put their trust in it. Another trusted institution, according to the respondents, is the army. It is worth mentioning that other organizations had very poor ratings. Only local government has 13% of Brzeziny's support. Trust put in some of the public and political institutions shows a

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<sup>8</sup> W. Piwowarski, op.cit.

strong correlation with the respondents' political preferences. Almost 77% (Łódź) and 61% (Brzeziny) of the right-wing supporters trusts the Church. In contrast, only 5,7% (Łódź) and 23,7% (Brzeziny) of the left-wing supporters do the same.

However, the evaluation of the Church administration is not so favourable, especially in Łódź. Only 26,4% of the respondents had positive opinions about it, and 39% had negative opinions. In Brzeziny, half of the respondents had a good or very good opinion about the Church administration, and only 17% had a bad opinion.

In the detailed questions about the fields of activity of the Church, once again many positive opinions appear. The majority of the surveyed estimated the involvement of the Church in education, culture and healthcare as very good or good (Table 4). The results in both cities are similar.

Table 4. Evaluation of the activity of Roman-Catholic Church

Fields of social life	Very good		Good		Average		Bad		Very bad	
	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny
Education	11,3	9,5	41,6	40,7	39,5	43,6	7,1	5,3	0,4	0,9
Social help	9,2	11,7	39,7	38,9	34,3	37,7	12,6	10,5	4,2	1,2
Culture	8,5	8,8	42,1	41,7	41,7	41,7	6,8	6,2	0,9	1,6
Healthcare	6,0	3,8	37,4	30,6	37,0	47,7	16,6	14,1	3,0	3,8

Respondents from Łódź and Brzeziny also indicated the most important tasks, which in their opinion, Church should deal with (Table 5). In their opinion, Church should increase the efforts in such fields as: social help, crime prevention, social pathologies' prevention. The respondents were very satisfied with the activity of Church in culture, education and arts. Their biggest dissatisfaction was connected with the involvement of the Church in political life<sup>9</sup>.

Table 5. The fields in which Church should be involved in, according to the respondents.

Should Church be involved...

The fields of activity	Much more		More		The same as now		Less		Much less	
	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny	Łódź	Brzeziny
Social care and help,	40,1	29,6	43,9	49,4	14,8	19,0	0,4	1,2	0,8	0,8

<sup>9</sup> B. Wiórka, *Religijność Polaków na przełomie wieków*, Komunikat CBOS, 2497, CBOS

<b>charity</b>										
<b>The upbringing of children and youth</b>	10,6	22,3	39,8	36,4	36,9	34,3	10,6	3,7	2,1	3,3
<b>Morality, decency, social influence</b>	12,3	19,6	45,1	31,4	30,6	41,2	8,5	4,1	3,4	3,7
<b>Matters of faith, religion, preaching the Word of God, priesthood, evangelization</b>	11,9	17,1	32,6	26,4	49,6	53,7	5,1	2,0	0,8	0,8
<b>Family life</b>	7,6	9,8	24,5	28,2	47,7	55,5	15,2	4,9	5,1	1,6
<b>Education</b>	7,2	9,3	28,8	26,6	36,0	41,9	17,4	15,3	10,6	6,9
<b>Science, culture, art</b>	5,2	10,7	28,9	39,3	50,9	47,1	12,5	2,1	2,6	0,8
<b>Social pathologies prevention (alcoholism and drug abuse)</b>	34,9	34,3	49,8	54,8	14,0	10,1	1,3	0,0	0,0	0,8
<b>Crime prevention</b>	26,7	24,7	50,4	56,7	20,3	18,2	2,2	0,0	0,4	0,4
<b>Politics</b>	5,1	3,7	4,6	4,9	24,9	25,2	24,9	21,9	40,5	44,3

The inhabitants of Łódź and Brzeziny can see very clear changes in the situation of the Church now and before the year 1989. The respect for the Church itself and its representatives, priests and curates has decreased according to 40% of respondents from Łódź and 39% from Brzeziny. At the same time, the respondents said that the influence of the Church on the country's politics and its presence in political life increased. Respondents believe that the wealth and economic status of the Church and the priests increased as well. Earlier analysis indicate that this situation is not accepted in the society (political engagement of the Church and the clergy).

## Conclusions

The main goal of the research was to show the differences in the role of the Catholic Church in a big city as well as in a small local community. It was assumed that the role of the Church is visible in its social functions and the religiousness of the parishioners. According to the research, there are differences in the religiousness of the citizens of Łódź and the citizens of Brzeziny. Although the differences are not large, it is clear that a smaller community performs its religious practices more often and with greater engagement (more people, more frequent practices). According to the respondents, their own religiousness remains stable and the religiousness of other Poles decreased during the last 10-15 years. Therefore, the

secularization which is the part of the late modernity might exist only in the awareness of the people as a part of reality created by the media. On the other hand, the respondents' vision of morality is different from that of the Catholic Church. Traditional values have not been preserved neither in Łódź nor in Brzeziny.

The evaluation of the social role of the Church was very similar in both cities. Both the tasks performed by this institution and the respondents' expectations were almost identical. "The eradicating" in both cases is probably connected with similar difficult economic situation and the disappointment with the participants of public life. According to the respondents, the Church must be involved in social problems and not involved in the politics. The Church is surely an element of social life and exists not only in the sacrum space. Its former political engagement should be replaced by the engagement in education and social help.