The communicative role of the Catholic Church in Poland in the 2015 presidential election and its perception by the public

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to determine the role of the Catholic Church hierarchy in the 2015 presidential election in Poland. The author will analyse the content of the most important institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference in which bishops express their opinions on presidential election and particular candidates. This case study also includes the analysis of the content of the most important Polish Catholic weekly magazines (Gość Niedzielny, Niedziela) and the analysis of the method of presenting the role of the Catholic Church as a potential political player in the most important all-Poland daily papers (Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita) and opinion weekly magazines (Newsweek Polska, Polityka).

1. Presidential campaign in Poland and involvement of the Catholic Church

1.1. Research hypotheses and methodology

The elections constitute a mechanism which allows for the review of politicians’ actions and verification of pre-election promises. It is worth noticing that elections and the campaign are not only a way to enforce political responsibility, but also to gain legitimization, shape public opinion and reinforce the elite (Heywood 2009). The functions of the elections and the accompanying electoral campaign are different and engage many entities. Elections can be referred to as the political communication channel, which engages (among others) politicians, the society, journalists and the mass media. Involvement of participants in political communication processes is diversified and, what is more, the reciprocal influence of the political players is not uniform. Within this paper, the author understands the term ‘political player’ not only as political entities that make political decisions, but also as other entities that...
influence such decisions and participate in the political process. Therefore, this category also encompasses citizens and the mass media.

The media play a particularly significant role in the process of influencing public opinion by the political leaders, and determine the main problems and subjects of political discourse. They are like the Areopagus, where the public debate and fight for power take place. The mass media do not only communicate the messages of political leaders, but also significantly influence the content they create and the form of political communication (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

Pursuant to the decision of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 4 February 2015 on ordering the presidential elections, elections for the President of the Republic of Poland were to be held on May 10, 2015. No candidate received the required majority of valid votes cast, so a second round of voting was necessary in order to determine the winner. In the first round of voting, Law and Justice’s candidate Andrzej Duda received 34.76% of valid votes, whereas Civic Platform’s candidate Bronisław Komorowski received 33.77% of valid votes. Paweł Kukiz came third with 20.80% of valid votes. The second round of voting was held on 24 May 2015. The winner was right-wing candidate Andrzej Duda, who received 51.55% of valid votes, whereas the incumbent president Bronisław Komorowski, representing the liberal faction, received 48.45% of votes.

In the present case study the author assesses the potential political involvement of the Catholic Church hierarchy in the presidential campaign in Poland in 2015. The aim of the research is to determine the role of Catholic clergymen in Poland, especially bishops, during the election race, as well as to find the answer to the question of how the attitude of the Catholic Church in the face of elections was perceived by the public opinion.

Therefore, the aim of this paper can be expressed by means of the following questions: did the Church in Poland, whose opinion was expressed in the institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference, refer directly or indirectly to the programme and the presidential candidates in the speeches and homilies delivered by bishops? Can the Church be referred to as a ‘political player’? How was the Church perceived by the mass media in the perspective of presidential elections? Did it support any of the presidential candidates?

The analysis of the content of the most important Polish daily papers and opinion weekly magazines, both Catholic and secular, may be interesting, as it allows the readers to see the way in which the public opinion (expressed mostly via the mass media) perceives Church involvement in the electoral campaign.

The author of the research formulates the following hypotheses:

1. Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland, in its institutional messages, was politically involved in the 2015 electoral campaign or the Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland was not politically involved in the presidential campaign.
2. Polish Catholic media supported the right-wing candidate Andrzej Duda in the presidential race or Polish Catholic media did not support any of the candidates.
3. The coverage of the secular media, being an exponent of the public opinion with regard to the political involvement of the Church hierarchy in Poland in the presidential elections, is similar to the institutional communication of the Polish
Episcopal Conference or the coverage of the secular media differs from the official position of the Polish Episcopal Conference, depicting political involvement of the Church hierarchy during the presidential campaign.

1.2. Research methodology

The author analysed the content of institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference (KEP), Presidium of the Polish Episcopal Conference, as well as bishops’ speeches and homilies that are available on the official website www.episkopat.pl. Among the Polish Catholic media, the research comprised Catholic weekly magazines *Gość Niedzielny* and *Niedziela*, which are characterized by the highest number of distributed copies. The content presented by *Radio Maryja* and *Telewizja Trwam*, Catholic media connected with the Redemptorists, shall be omitted. This is due to the fact that detailed analysis of the content of programmes broadcast by media belonging to father Tadeusz Rydzyk would require a separate publication due to the extensiveness of the material.

The analysis also comprised two all-Poland daily papers (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*) and two all-Poland opinion weekly magazines (*Newsweek Polska*, *Polityka*) with the highest number of copies sold. The research applied to paper versions of the newspapers. The analysis of secular and Catholic newspapers should guarantee objectivity as far as verification of the research hypotheses formulated by the author is concerned. The mass media are a very special exponent, or voice, of the public opinion (McCombs 2004; Lepa 2011). However, one should remember that in the Polish reality the programme policy and the journalists working in the mass media are usually politically involved. The issue of media partiality shall not be omitted in the research connected with assessment of the involvement of the Catholic Church and Catholic media in the presidential campaign.

Among the institutional messages of the Catholic Church published on www.episkopat.pl and among the Catholic weekly magazines with the highest circulation (*Gość Niedzielny*, *Niedziela*), the analysis has been performed with regard to the articles where one of the following words appears: ‘politics’, ‘election’, ‘president’ or surname of one of the presidential candidates (Braun, Duda, Jarubas, Komorowski, Korwin-Mikke, Kowalski, Kukiz, Ogórek, Palikot, Tanajno, Wilk).

On the other hand, the analysis of the content of all-Polish secular daily papers and opinion weekly magazines has been performed with regard to the articles where at least one of the following words appears: ‘priest’, ‘bishop’, ‘church’, ‘episcopacy’, surname of one of the Polish hierarchs and at the same time one of the following: ‘politics’, ‘election’, ‘president’, surname of one of the presidential candidates. By using such a method, the author wanted to limit the scope of analysis only to those articles where the subject of the Catholic Church discussing the presidential campaign is present, and omit the wide media discussion on the presence of the Church in public life and its opinion on various issues.

The research included the period between 04/20/2015 and 05/25/2015, that is the period starting from announcing candidates’ data, preceding the first and second round of voting (from 04/20/2015 until 05/10/2015), and the period of voting as of the first round of voting (05/10/2015) up to the moment when Andrzej Duda was...
elected the President of the Republic of Poland (05/25/2015). Due to this method, the author shall gain a wide perspective with regard to the role of the Catholic Church in the process of political communication during the electoral campaign.

2. The analysis of institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference

Two institutional messages authored by Polish bishops meet the methodological criteria assumed here, which is why they were chosen to be analysed. These messages are: The homily delivered by archbishop Stanisław Gądecki on the day of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland (05/3/2015) and the congratulatory letter of the Presidium of Polish Episcopal Conference to president Andrzej Duda (05/25/2015).

The first document is the homily delivered by archbishop Stanisław Gądecki on 3.05.2015 in Jasna Góra. In the introduction to the homily, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań emphasized the fact that politics is an area where the relationships between Christians and Jesus Christ are reflected:

On the day of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland, which at the same time is the anniversary marking the declaration of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, let us listen, here in the Jasna Góra monastery, to the words of the Holy Spirit speaking of the relationship between the Christian and Jesus Christ, of Mary, the most perfect reflection of this relationship, and of the way in which this relationship with Jesus Christ is manifested in the world of politics.

The President of the Polish Episcopal Conference spoke at length about the presidential election in point three of his homily, referring mostly to the Church magisterium contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (points 1877–1927). Archbishop Gądecki stated that each Catholic has the right and obligation to participate in the free election for the sake of common good, and is obliged to vote in a proper way, that is in compliance with his/her own moral beliefs. According to the Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań, believers should cast a vote in favour of a person whose attitude and opinions are similar to those of the believers, or at least are not in contradiction with Catholicism, Catholic and moral principles (Gądecki 2015). Moreover, the President of the Polish Episcopal Conference called on the believers to participate in the election: ‘As many people entitled to vote as possible should participate in the election. Only then will the results reflect the real will of the majority of society, and not of the minority groups which, acting on their own interest, are able to motivate themselves effectively’ (Gądecki 2015).

It is worth noticing that in the homily archbishop Gądecki did not support any of the candidates. What is more, he emphasized that

the priests – as the witnesses of supernatural reality – should not support any of the candidates during the electoral campaign. They should avoid presenting their own choice as the only one valid. They should also respect the maturity of laypeople and, by means of shaping their conscience, help them achieve maturity. The priest should not serve politics, but should shape the conscience in accordance with the Gospel in order to make it capable of making its own decisions. The task of the priest is to announce the ethical criteria of the choice and leave it to the believers to make the decision. (Gądecki 2015)
In his homily, archbishop Gądecki also reminded that the Law of God is superior to the codified law. It was done in the context of political discourse provoked by a document authored by bishops in which they criticise one of the political decisions on in vitro fertilization. However, this does not mean that the Catholic Church and priests wanted the politicians to replace the state law with the Canon Law:

Politicians who belong to Church may have different opinions on many issues. They can be members of different political parties and propose different methods of protecting and promoting values. The Church does not limit their conscience with regard to the choice of temporary solutions of social and economic problems, does not force them to become members of any party, allows for pluralism in terms of interpretation of the basic rules for political theories. However, it opposes complete freedom of Catholic politicians (for the sake of freedom of conscience) in relation to establishing such laws that erase the Law of God. (Gądecki 2015)

The homily delivered by archbishop Gądecki cannot be interpreted as a form of granting the support of Polish Episcopal Conference to any of the presidential candidates. It is a very significant and clear form of a political message of the Catholic Church hierarchy, which confirmed its own identity as a witness of supernatural identity and its apolitical mission understood as pointing to the ethical criteria of choice and leaving it to the believers to make the decision.

According to the author, the time and venue of delivering the homily by archbishop Gądecki can be perceived as a voice representing the Catholic Church hierarchy in the perspective of the presidential election. The Jasna Góra monastery is the most important national sanctuary in Poland. May 3 is a church holiday. What is more, in 2015 it was the date directly preceding the first round of the presidential election.

The congratulatory letter of the Presidium of the Polish Episcopal Conference to Andrzej Duda, dated 25 May 2015, should be interpreted as formal, institutional congratulations for the newly elected President of the Republic of Poland. The bishops expressed hope for an agreement and effort of all Polish people in the face of the most difficult challenges faced by Poland, which will be ‘intensified with the awareness of our common responsibility for our homeland, Europe and the world’ (Presidium of the Polish Episcopal Conference, 2015). The hierarchs of the Church in Poland offered the wishes of ‘effective unification of Polish people around the most important issues for Poland and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the service as the President of the Republic of Poland’ to president Duda (Presidium of the Polish Episcopal Conference, 2015). In the letter of the Presidium of Polish Episcopal Conference, there are no expressions suggesting that the hierarchs are satisfied with the fact that the right-wing candidate representing Christian values became the President. The congratulatory letter cannot be therefore described as indicating a partial attitude of Church hierarchs in the face of the analysed relationship between Church and politics during the presidential campaign. A similar congratulatory letter was sent by the Presidium of the Polish Episcopal Conference to Bronisław Komorowski on 5 July 2010.

The Catholic Church in Poland in its institutional messages was not politically involved in the 2015 electoral campaign, which means that it did not officially support
any of the presidential candidates. In the official message the Church hierarchs expressed the ideas of the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

3. Polish Catholic media and political communication of the Church during the presidential campaign

3.1. Research materials: quantitative description of the articles

All in all, the number of press articles that met the methodological criteria presented in the first point and were published in the examined period amounted to 27. Twenty articles were published in Gość Niedzielny, and 7 were published in Niedziela.

Articles regarding political communication of the Catholic Church were published in Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela at different rates, as shown in Table 1 (the horizontal row presents the chronological order of the issues):

Six articles were published prior to the first round of voting (issues 16–18), whereas 21 articles were published between the first and second round (issues 19–21). The 20th issue of Gość Niedzielny published on 05/17/2015 included as many as 10 articles referring to this subject.

3.2. Qualitative analysis of the publications

The following categorization key with definitions has been utilised as far as the analysis of content of the Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela weekly magazines is concerned:

1. Feature subject to research: CHURCH—POLITICS

Feature definition: the way in which the newspapers present the degree of political involvement of the Church hierarchs in the presidential campaign. The feature comprises the statements of Polish bishops and priests with regard to the presidential election as presented in the Catholic weekly magazines.

Categories within the feature and their definitions:

i. no involvement – hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as distancing itself from the presidential campaign, not participating in the campaign and manifesting its own apolitical mission

ii. involvement in accordance with the guidelines of the Church magisterium – the hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as participating in political communication in line with the rules established by the Catholic social teaching as shown in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (points 1877–1927) and in the Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life of 24 November 2002.

Table 1. Articles on political communication in Catholic weeklies.

| Issue no. 16 (04/19) | Issue no. 17 (04/26) | Issue no. 18 (05/3) | Issue no. 19 (05/10) | Issue no. 20 (05/17) | Issue no. 21 (05/24) |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Gość Niedzielny      | 0                    | 0                   | 3                   | 3                   | 10                  | 4                   |
| Niedziela            | 1                    | 0                   | 2                   | 2                   | 1                   | 1                   |
iii. involvement beyond the guidelines of the Church magisterium – the hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as an involved participant of the political discourse, whose activities go beyond the rules established by itself in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (points 1877–1927) and in the aforementioned Doctrinal note

2. Feature subject to research: MEDIA—CANDIDATE

Feature definition: media attitude towards the presidential candidates.

Categories within the feature:

i. Support for Andrzej Duda – the media support right-wing candidate Andrzej Duda or express positive opinions about him, indicate that people should vote for him and/or criticise the program and the presidency of Bronisław Komorowski

ii. Support for Bronisław Komorowski – the media support Bronisław Komorowski, indicate that people should vote for him and/or criticise the program of Andrzej Duda and Andrzej Duda himself

iii. Other candidate and procedure – e.g. the media present information about the electoral procedure or about the remaining presidential candidates and their programs

iv. No support – media do not refer to the presidential candidates at all

When assessing the way in which Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela presented the degree of political involvement of the Catholic Church hierarchs in the presidential campaign, the author compares the results (number of articles) referring to the research feature CHURCH—POLITICS in Table 2.

Catholic weekly magazines usually depict the Catholic Church hierarchs as not involved in the presidential campaign (15 articles which constitute 55% of all articles published in the analysed issues of Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela) or as involved in accordance with the guidelines of the Church magisterium (12 articles, which constitute 44% of all articles published in the analysed issues of Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela).

The attitude of Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela towards the presidential candidates is as follows (feature subject to research: MEDIA—CANDIDATE). Numbers in Table 3 reflect the number of articles classified as belonging to a given category.

Within the 10 articles (which constitute 37% of all articles published in the analysed issues of Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela), the analysed Catholic weekly magazines support Andrzej Duda, express positive opinions about him, indicate that people should vote for him and/or criticise the program and the presidency of Bronislaw Komorowski. No article supporting Bronisław Komorowski or criticising Andrzej

|                | No involvement | Involvement in accordance with the guidelines of the church magisterium | Involvement beyond the guidelines of the church magisterium |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gość Niedzielny| 13             | 7                                                                       | 0                                                           |
| Niedziela      | 2              | 5                                                                       | 0                                                           |

Table 2. Degree of political involvement of the Church in Catholic weeklies news.
Duda appeared in Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela. It is now possible to explain one of the hypotheses formulated, namely that the Polish Catholic media supported right-wing candidate Andrzej Duda during the presidential campaign.

The author is now going to quote fragments of the analysed articles in order to depict political support granted to Andrzej Duda by the Catholic media and their negative attitude towards Bronisław Komorowski:

- Bronisław Komorowski’s campaign is highly predictable and boring. (…) The president is less convincing when he endorses the catchword of ‘agreement’. During the last 4 years, he did not do much in order to eliminate political divisions. One may have the impression that his definition of agreement constitutes uninterrupted rule of Civic Platform for the years to come. Sometimes Bronisław Komorowski abandons his sleepy style and again burns with aversion to Jarosław Kaczyński’s party. In such a situation, malicious irony, unpleasant tone and clear resentment appear (Semka 2015).

- Nowadays, it is Komorowski that symbolizes the old generation in politics, whereas Duda symbolizes the new one. (…) Duda is competent, has ministerial experience and speaks several languages. It is clear that he has got a mind of his own. He is not just a scared nominee of the head of the party. (…) It is now visible that the biggest right-wing party has a successor who is not going to bring shame on the party. Rejuvenating Polish political elite is a demand that will become more and more popular (Semka 2015).

- [Bronisław Komorowski] indicated modern patriotism as one of the priorities of his presidency. The ‘Orzeł może’ (‘The Eagle can’) initiative supported by him can be a symbol of this modernity. Instead of actively opposing the ‘pedagogy of shame’ and cultivating national pride in our beautiful history, Bronisław Komorowski chose parades with a chocolate eagle in the company of only ‘cool Poles’. Modern patriotism came down to blind satisfaction with regard to the achievements of the Polish Third Republic. Lech Kaczyński (when he was the mayor of Warsaw) managed to build the Warsaw Uprising Museum within 11 months. Within 5 years of his presidency, Bronisław Komorowski did nothing in order to build the Museum of the History of Poland (Legutko 2015b).

- President Bronisław Komorowski could have a significant influence on Polish foreign policy… but it is not clear whether he really wanted it. Surely, he did not leave his mark on this policy like his predecessor. Instead, he guaranteed the policy of Tusk-Sikorski duet. It is clearly visible when we look at the nominations for the position of ambassador. He did not insist on election of his candidates and he did

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Table 3. Articles of Catholic weeklies and support to particular presidential candidates.

| Support for Andrzej Duda | Support for Bronisław Komorowski | Other candidate and procedure | No support |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Gość Niedzielny          | 7                               | 0                             | 6          | 7          |
| Niedziela                | 3                               | 0                             | 1          | 3          |
not mind the fact that many candidates were former collaborators of Polish People’s Republic intelligence and graduates of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (Legutko 2015b).

- Duda wants to give hope to Polish people. Komorowski picked fear (of PiS\textsuperscript{10}). once again. Even though the president and his environment speak about agreement all the time, they think of connecting by means of dividing. Dividing into rational and radical Poland (Legutko 2015a).

- [Komorowski] was deaf to social transformation, increasing frustration and protests, especially of the young generation. Therefore, his idea to order a referendum devoted to single-member districts, changes in electoral law and funding political parties from the budget announced after his election defeat was not credible. His campaign was not a discussion with Poles, but a celebration of president’s arrival. The idea to divide the voters into rational and radical ones resulted in labelling every person who did not express satisfaction with status quo (without making an attempt to understand the causes of such a public mood) (Grajewski, 2015).

- Andrzej Duda has the right to gain support of the whole opposition, of every person who does not accept the undirected drift of the country (Jurek, 2015).

- Pride comes before a fall – this wise motto repeated by the incumbent president of the Republic of Poland is an important lesson that can be learned from the presidential election. Everyone should take these words to their heart. Bronisław Komorowski illustrated their validity right at the beginning of the campaign, with his disrespectful remark about the candidate chosen by Law and Justice: ‘Duda who? I don’t know him …’ After the campaign, he will know Andrzej Duda, PhD for sure (Nowak, 2015).

- The argument presented by Bronisław Komorowski (a very important participant of the legislative process, as the law cannot enter into force without the signature of the president), who likes to emphasize the fact that he is a Catholic, that he is ‘in favour of life’, so he is also ‘in favour of in vitro’, cannot be justified. Presenting such opinions is an indication of split personality, justifying the ‘I am for and even against’ attitude (Jackowski, 2015a).

- The political environment that has harmfully ruled Poland since 2007 wants to stay in power at all costs and maintain its monopoly (Jackowski, 2015b).

According to the author, a cover and an interview with Andrzej Duda published in the issue no. 20/2015 of Niedziela on 05/17/2015 (a week before the second, decisive round of voting) is a clear indication of support for the right-wing candidate. The first page features the president with his wife and daughter. They show the sign of victory – the ‘V sign’. In this interview, Andrzej Duda depicts Bronisław Komorowski as a person who is internally contradictory: he will attack the Church in one sentence, and invoke the bishops’ authority in the second one (Stelmasiak 2015). Moreover, Duda considers Komorowski’s presidency as passive and symbolized merely by ‘the chandelier’. Interestingly enough, Andrzej Duda was the only presidential candidate who was granted an interview in Niedziela within the analysed period.

The empirical data acquired as a result of the analysis of the Catholic weekly magazines depict the Polish Episcopal Conference as an entity involved in the presidential
election in accordance with the guidelines of the Church magisterium. Such a result is identical with the institutional message of the Polish Episcopal Conference as analysed before. In as many as 15 articles analysed, the hierarchic Catholic Church was presented as distancing itself from the presidential campaign, not participating in the campaign and manifesting its own apolitical mission.

If the Catholic media are perceived as a voice supplementing the institutional messages of the Polish Episcopal Conference or as a hidden exponent of such messages, the Catholic Church hierarchs in Poland shall be viewed as politically involved and supporting Andrzej Duda as a candidate for president of the Republic of Poland. With such interpretation, the voice of bishops should be discerned in the opinions of the authors of articles published in Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela.

4. Public opinion on the involvement of the Catholic Church in the presidential campaign: quantitative and qualitative analysis of the secular press

4.1. Research materials: quantitative description of the articles

The total number of press articles that met the methodological criteria presented in the first point and were published within the examined period was 28. Four articles were published in Rzeczpospolita, 14 in Gazeta Wyborcza, 4 in Polityka, and 6 in Newsweek Polska.

The articles concerning political communication of the Catholic Church hierarchs were published regularly in Rzeczpospolita, Gazeta Wyborcza and Polityka. The number of articles in Newsweek Polska increased within the period between the first and second round of voting, as compared with the period preceding 05/10/2015, which is shown in Table 4 (the horizontal row presents the chronological order of the issues). Numbers in the table reflect the number of articles classified as belonging to a given category.

4.2. Qualitative analysis of the publications

The following categorization key with definitions has been utilised as far as the analysis of press content is concerned:

1. Feature subject to research: CHURCH—POLITICS

Feature definition: the way in which the newspapers present the degree of political involvement of the Church hierarchs in the presidential campaign.

| Table 4. Articles concerning political communication of the Catholic Church in Polish main media. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              | 04/20–04/26 | 04/27–05/3 | 05/4–05/10 | 05/11–05/17 | 05/18–05/24 |
| Rzeczpospolita             | 1           | 0          | 2          | 0           | 1           |
| Gazeta Wyborcza            | 2           | 3          | 4          | 2           | 3           |
| Polityka                   | 2           | 0          | 0          | 0           | 2           |
| Newsweek Polska            | 1           | 0          | 1          | 3           | 1           |
Categories within the feature and their definitions:

i. no involvement – the hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as distancing itself from the presidential campaign, not participating in the campaign and manifesting its own apolitical mission

ii. involvement in accordance with the guidelines of the Church magisterium – the hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as participating in political communication in line with the rules established by the Catholic social teachings

iii. involvement beyond the guidelines of the Church magisterium – the hierarchic Catholic Church is presented as an involved participant of the political discourse, whose activities go beyond the rules established by itself in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (points 1877-1927) and in the aforementioned Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life of 24 November 2002.

2. Feature subject to research: CHURCH—CANDIDATE

Feature definition: Catholic Church attitude towards the presidential candidates.

Categories within the feature:

i. partial attitude – the media depict the Church hierarchs as supporting right-wing candidate Andrzej Duda and/or indicating that the citizens should not vote for one of the candidates

ii. attitude of no involvement – the media depict the Church hierarchs as neutral, supporting none of the presidential candidates

iii. other – e.g. the media depict the Church hierarchs as presenting general information about the candidates and electoral procedure in the form of information, not a political message

While assessing the way in which Rzeczpospolita, Gazeta Wyborcza, Polityka and Newsweek Polska depicted the degree of the political involvement of the Catholic Church hierarchy in the presidential campaign, the author presents the results referring to the researched CHURCH—POLITICS and CHURCH—CANDIDATE subject to research with the proposed categorization key in the table. Numbers in the table reflect the number of articles classified as belonging to a given category (Tables 5 and 6).

The results of the analysis presented above indicate that the hierarchic Church is shown in highly diversified ways in the presidential campaign. In Rzeczpospolita,

| Table 5. Feature subject to research: CHURCH—POLITICS. |
|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Category                                               | Rzeczpospolita | Gazeta Wyborcza | Polityka | Newsweek Polska |
| No involvement with the guidelines of the church magisterium | 0              | 4               | 1        | 2               |
| Involvement beyond the guidelines of the church magisterium | 0              | 9               | 2        | 3               |

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the Polish Episcopal Conference is shown as executing its own apolitical mission, whereas as a political player it refers (laconically) to the role of the Church as established by the Church magisterium. It does not have political ambitions of supporting one of the candidates for the president of the Republic of Poland. Such a way of political communication of the Church as a non-involved entity can be noticed in the following fragments of analysed articles:

- The hierarchs avoided being involved in the electoral campaign. It is a good forecast for the future. After all, the Church is supposed to realise its prophetic mission. (…) So far, the leaders of the rankings managed to divide the society with regard to their outlook on life and attitude towards the Smolensk crash. However, they failed to engage the Church hierarchs in the elections, despite their attempts (Krzyżak 2015a).
- This campaign is exceptional in many respects. For the first time (and this year’s election is the sixth presidential election of Poland’s Third Republic) the politicians failed to engage the representatives of the hierarchic Church in the pre-election debate. Bishops and the majority of other priests were highly temperate (Krzyżak 2015b).
- It has to be admitted that the hierarchic Church did not get involved in the campaign. There was no political statement of any bishop that would encourage people to vote for a specific candidate (Krzyżak 2015c).

The role of the Catholic Church hierarchs with regard to political communication is presented differently by Gazeta Wyborcza. It published 9 articles (64% of all articles published in the analysed issues of Gazeta Wyborcza), in which the Polish Episcopal Conference was depicted as a committed participant of the political discourse during the electoral campaign. In 7 articles (50% of all articles published in the analysed issues of Gazeta Wyborcza) it was depicted as a political player supporting Andrzej Duda. The author presents some examples:

- The Church is extremely important for the candidate of Law and Justice. Duda has given interviews in Catholic papers, appeared in father Rydzyk’s media (for three hours) and visited sanctuaries in Jasna Góra, Łagiewniki and Wadowice (Kondzińska 2015).
- Some time ago, bishop Ignacy Dec sent an open letter to president Bronisław Komorowski in which he urged the president as a Catholic not to sign the anti-violence convention. This act of the bishop of Świdnica is not the only one. What is it that drives the bishops who attempt to directly influence the decisions made by the politicians (Kozłowska 2015)?
Generally, the church does not run an electoral campaign, but it does take place at the level of the parishes. Only one candidate is promoted there – and it is not you (Grochal & Kurski, 2015).

Priest Józef Niżnik, guardian of saint Andrew Bobola Sanctuary, got involved in the campaign of Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda at his own request. He thanked Duda for his ‘love for saint Andrew Bobola’ which, according to the guardian, led Duda here. (…) This church performance is not going to help Duda. Subcarpathia is a traditional bastion of PiS anyway, and most probably this will not change now. However, the Church will lose its credibility again. It will no longer be possible to state that, apart from black sheep Rydzyk, priests do not support any of the candidates (Wiśniewska 2015).

Polityka and Newsweek Polska depict the Church hierarchs as participants involved in the political discourse in 5 out of 10 articles. It should be clarified that such involvement is beyond the guidelines of the Church magisterium. On the other hand, in 6 out of 10 articles, the weekly magazines mentioned here depict the Polish Episcopal Conference as supporting Andrzej Duda. The author presents several examples taken from the analysed articles which depict the hierarchic Church as a political entity involved in the election and supporting Andrzej Duda:

- We have got two pillars of the electoral strategy of PiS: Smolensk crash and the alliance with the Church. This alliance has already become a fact: as far as Polish political and electoral dispute is concerned, the institutional Church (by means of the opinions of majority of bishops) clearly supports PiS (Szostkiewicz 2015).
- We will choose between a state involved in compromises and a state acting at Church’s bidding, especially that of Toruń (Pawlicka 2015).
- Andrzej Duda sounds like a broken record. He keeps repeating ‘teachings of John Paul II’ or ‘the opinion of Polish Episcopal Conference’ whatever you ask him about (Meller 2015).
- But today and tomorrow, and particularly on Sunday, 24 May, the choice will be equally known and real, equally predictable and important. The choice is obvious and clear. Original or fake, ahead or backwards, tolerance or Rydzyk, moderation or Macierewicz, Komorowski or Kaczyński, because we should compare the actual candidates and not the suit of one candidate with the camouflage of the other one (Lis 2015).

5. Media pluralism and partiality

The analysis has been performed with regard to those all-Polish daily papers and opinion weekly magazines, as well as Catholic weekly magazines which maintain a more or less significant relationship with politics. The media-politics relationship can be examined with regard to ethical categories. The media serving one group and being a mouthpiece for just one political party cannot provide the readers with an objective and reliable image of reality. In such case, it is not possible to say that the media follow the basic ethical rules, namely the principle of objectivity and the principle of truth. The issue of freedom to express own views and political opinions as
granted to the members of the editorial staff is a very important issue in the balanced assessment of the media image of the politicians. If a journalist hired in a certain newspaper wrote an article that was not in line with the programme policy of this newspaper, would this text be published?

The perspective on political communication of British theoretician Ralph Negrin who claims that ‘the method of presenting different media events may tell us a lot about the degree of media subordination to the political players’ seems true and apt (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012). The press titles analysed by the author represented a high level of diversification of the principles which indicate a certain point of view and assessment of political reality as presented by the editor-in-chief or the publisher of a given newspaper. There are Catholic, right-wing, left-wing, pro-government and opposition newspapers. The mere knowledge of newspaper’s profile is a hint that allows to predict the political preferences as expressed in the articles and confront them with the programme policy of the paper. The author did not intend to indicate precisely the political sympathies of editors-in-chief, but rather to emphasize the pluralism of the media, which, however, obvious it may be, cannot be omitted in the overall assessment of the methods of presentation of the political communication of the Catholic Church hierarchs in the 2015 presidential campaign. It would be naive to think that all analysed newspapers would present the political involvement of the Catholic Church hierarchs in Poland with the same proportion and objectivity. It is important to realise that the partiality of the media is not expressed via pluralism or via presenting the same event from different perspectives, but rather when the mass media content favours and enhances some stance, opinions or a participant of social or political life, and on the other hand criticises and weakens some other participant (Dobek-Ostrowska 2011).

6. Conclusion

The institutional message of the Polish Episcopal Conference during the campaign was concise and clear. It was limited to the homily delivered by archbishop Gadecki on 3 May 2015, in which the Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań reminded of the teachings of the Church magisterium and did not support any of the candidates for the president of the Republic of Poland.

The Catholic media became involved in the presidential campaign by supporting Andrzej Duda and criticizing Bronisław Komorowski. According to the author, it was a deliberate action. The hierarchic church remained apolitical in the institutional message. There was no text within the analysed Catholic weekly magazines that would indicate that the Polish Episcopal Conference supported any of the candidates or that bishops’ involvement in the campaign went beyond the Catholic social teaching. At the same time, in as many as 10 articles published in Gość Niedzielny and Niedziela, support for the Law and Justice candidate, as well as criticism aimed at Bronisław Komorowski’s presidency could be noticed. It remains an open question whether it was done in line with the suggestions of the Church hierarchs (and to what degree). Among all the daily papers that were analysed, only Rzeczpospolita assessed the hierarchic Church as an entity realising its apolitical mission, and the involvement of the Church in the electoral campaign (or politics in general) as being in line with the
guidelines of the Church magisterium. A different opinion was expressed by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka* and *Newsweek Polska*. They considered the attitude of the hierarchic Church as supporting Andrzej Duda.

The conclusions derived from the analysis are confirmed by the Ariadna poll, conducted on 25–28 July 2015 among a representative group of 1053 people. 63% of the respondents stated that the involvement of the hierarchic Catholic Church in politics is too high. However, the respondents’ opinions were divided as far as the assessment of the relationship between Andrzej Duda and the Church hierarchs is concerned (Maliszewski 2015).

In the text of this paper, although present, other factors that may affect the perception of the Catholic Church as engaged in politics were not specifically analysed. Examples include: the impact of various personal statements of clergy, the impact of Father Rydzyk’s media, and stereotypes in journalists and in society.

According to the author, the analysis performed proves the existence of the phenomenon of mediatisation of politics in the Polish press (also in the Catholic press). The mass media not only inform the audience of the political reality, but also create it. Are the Polish media dependent on politics? Is politics dependent on the media? Such questions cannot be omitted with regard to academic research on political communication. The results of the analysis indicated that the aforementioned questions are significant as far as political communication of the Catholic Church hierarchs and its perception by the public opinion is concerned.

**Notes**

1. Refer to the work *The decision of the Marshal of Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 4 February 2015 on ordering the presidential elections*.
2. Refer to the work *Announcement of the State Electoral Commission of 11 May 2015 on the results of the Elections for the President of the Republic of Poland held on May 10, 2015*.
3. Refer to the work *Announcement of the State Electoral Commission of 25 May 2015 on the results of the Second Round of the Elections for the President of the Republic of Poland*.
4. Media, which manages father Tadeusz Rydzyk, interpret the participation of the Church in the social sphere very widely, not only as an evaluation political developments from the perspective of the Church’s teaching, but also as support for specific political parties. Cf. Łoziński, Bogumił, *Prawda i stereotypy*, 01/26/2012, http://gosci.pl/doc/1061870. Prawda-i-stereotypy [Accessed 24 June 2016].
5. Portal on the media, advertising, Internet, PR Wirtualnemedia.pl regularly publishes results concerning circulation and sales of the most important Polish daily papers and opinion weekly magazines. According to the survey published on http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/tylko-dziennik-gazeta-prawna-i-gazeta-polska-codziennie-nasplosie-rzeczpospolita-stracila-najwiekszej-wyprzedaż-kioskowa [Accessed 24 June 2016], *Gazeta Wyborcza* is the opinion daily paper with the highest number of copies sold (157 thousand copies). *Rzeczpospolita* comes second (55 thousand copies). According to the data gathered in November 2015 and published on http://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/newsweek-wyprzedzil-polityke-zyzkuja-w-sieci-i-do-rzeczy [Accessed 24 June 2016], *Newsweek Polska* (124 thousand copies) and *Polityka* (112 thousand copies) are Polish opinion weekly magazines with the highest number of copies sold. Gość Niedzielny, included in the survey of Wirtualnemedia.pl, shall be classified in this article as a representative of the Catholic media. It is worth mentioning that its sales fluctuate around the number of 131 thousand copies.
6. The election calendar concerning presidential election held on May, 10, 2015 (the possible second round of elections - two weeks later), which constitutes an annex to the decision of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of February 4, 2015, indicates April 20, 2015 as the final date when the data regarding candidates for President of the Republic of Poland shall be announced. See The decision of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 4 February 2015 on ordering the presidential election.

7. Refer to Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

8. The Church’s magisterium in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, points 1877-1927) and in the Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life of 24 November 2002, emphasizes its teachings in some of the social issues, particularly concerning community nature of human vocation, responsibility and participation of citizens in social life and political decisions, moral principles as referring to the authority, common good with regard to political community and protection of human rights.

9. The author examines the attitude of the Catholic media towards the presidential candidates (MEDIA—CANDIDATE) as it may be interpreted as the voice of the Church hierarchs supplementing the official standing as expressed in official messages.

10. Acronym of the Law and Order party in Polish (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)

11. Refer to the work Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal note on some questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life.

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