

Evangelizing Cells as a Proposal for a Parish in Poland

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To summarize the above discussion it should be noted that the situation in Poland pastoral demands of the parish renewal, so that it can truly become a place that supports the renewal of the gospel to all the local people's living environments, leading to wake up and growth of faith. Looking for a genuine renewal of the parish roads, remember that without the participation of the laity will be only apparent. It is necessary that the leaders and people responsible for animating, who will be priests' associates. This is the way is the way of evangelizing proposed by the system of parish cells, which by means of using regular relationships, reaches environments often inaccessible for priests. The parish evangelization cells in Poland is relatively poorly known, so you should formulate a pastoral demand to take advantage of the system having regard to the particular culture and mentality. You can also adopt, without the implementation of the system, certain elements of the existing parish communities. In this way, the parish will be able to carry out its basic tasks, not to mention those who are astray.

Keywords: Church in Poland, parish, evangelization, new evangelization, parish evangelizing cells

Evangelizing problems of the parishes in Poland

The present circumstances of the Church in Poland concern mainly the following phenomena: a growing number of municipal parishes, decreasing population in rural parishes, various changes of life of the faithful, urbanization processes, social and system changes. Nowadays people are exposed to a huge variety of

moral and religious outlooks which results in religious indifference.¹ Current value systems, ideologies and outlooks are subject to temporariness and competition.² Thus, in the pluralist world the Church is not, as it used to be, an obvious offer for the modern man.³ The world and human behaviours are changing, whereas the Church in Poland is not prepared for such many-sided and deep transition.⁴

The Polish parish nowadays is not free of these dynamic and deep changes, processes as autonomization, individualization, secularization leading to separation of daily and religious life, especially signs of religious life that can be determined as institutional.⁵ Nowadays the factors determining the parish identity are exposed to accelerated erosion. The Catholic ideals and their permanent existence are often not influenced by evangelizing interpretation or the parish anymore.⁶ Certainly in the Polish Catholicism we see a high attendance of the faithful in Church.⁷ However, it should be remembered that there is a growing number of people baptized with weakened or no identity with the parish, their main contribution being only that of living within the parish.⁸ Certainly, there are still many of the faithful approaching the parish on the important personal, family or social occasions connected with birth, upbringing, preparation for marriage and family life, illness or death.⁹ However, it does not change the fact that a growing number of people regard the parish only as a Church building, a site of rite or the institution providing certain religious services.¹⁰ Such an attitude may be observed during celebrations of

- 1 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*. Tom. 2. Lublin, 2002, p. 55.
- 2 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*. Katowice, 2011, p. 190–191.
- 3 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 181.
- 4 Cf. PRZYBYŁOWSKI, J.: Kościół w Polsce w perspektywie nowej ewangelizacji. In: *Kościół w Polsce dzisiaj*. Warszawa, 2013, p. 24.
- 5 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia katolicka w przemianie. In: PIWOWARSKI, W., STYK, J. (ed.): *Przemiany religijności społeczeństwa polskiego*. Warszawa, 1993, p. 151–159.
- 6 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 189–190.
- 7 However, one may ask the question: have the people claiming to be Catholics moved from religiosity to faith? 94% of the people in Poland claim to be Catholics, part of the baptized declare to be non-practicing believers; others do practice but it is difficult to call their faith “mature”. The Catholicity in Poland is termed as folk, traditional, what, unfortunately, is often reflected in its superficiality. According to sociological surveys, only about 30–40% of Catholics in Poland accept the basic rules of the faith and morality and 13% is engaged in the life of the Church. According to CBOS, there are about 58% of practicing believers in Poland and according to ISKK there are about 46% of regularly practicing people. Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*. Katowice, 2008, p. 38–39.
- 8 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 35.
- 9 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 193–194.
- 10 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 52.

the Eucharist of matrimony or funeral, when some people do not know and cannot follow the order of the Mass.¹¹

Parish as space of evangelization

In the encyclical *Veritatis splendor* John Paul II called upon the people of God to embrace new evangelization which constitutes a new way of preaching the constant message of Gospel, entailing new forms understandable for the contemporaries.¹² In the context of this timely calling, it is worth asking ourselves questions of a pastoral nature. Does the contemporary Polish parish proclaim its message and conduct its evangelizing mission? Does it reach its people? Is it able to develop reports of sharing experience suitable for the contemporary life of people of particular background? Is it able to effectively fill with the Gospel minds, hearts and daily life of the contemporaries?¹³

Trying to capture the actual state of the parishes in Poland, which is the point of departure in the process of creating a model of its functioning, it should be first observed that the evangelizing mission lies within the nature of a parish as evangelization there constitutes, more than anywhere else, teaching, bringing-up and a school of Christian life.¹⁴ This evangelization is traditionally conducted for instance through sacramental preparations. At this point, the preparations for the sacrament of confirmation and the sacrament of matrimony are of special importance.¹⁵ Therefore, the parish should not neglect its traditional functions, i.e. proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the liturgy and pastoral care.¹⁶ The initial religious socialization, which is primarily responsible for religious and moral condition of its members, takes place in the parish.¹⁷ It should be noted that despite all the difficulties faced by the contemporary parish in Poland, its traditional functions still have power.¹⁸ The Catholics in Poland are mainly conservative and need stable basic

11 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 39–40.

12 Cf. JAN PAWEŁ II: Encyklika *Veritatis splendor*. Watykan, 1993, no. 106.

13 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 186–187.

14 Cf. CIPRIANI, S., DACQUINO, P.: *Evangelizzazione e sacramenti*. Neapoli, 1973, p. 152–184.

15 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 52.

16 "The new socio-economic and religious situation in Poland demands not only renewal of traditional parish functions but also stimulating development of new functions which are a reaction to the current needs, e.g.: the function of developing small religious groups, the re-evangelizing function and the socio-human function." KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Leksykon teologii pastoralnej*. Lublin, 2006, p. 594.

17 Cf. WIELEBSKI, T., TUTAK, M.: Działalność duszpasterska a badania religijności na przykładzie Diecezji Warszawsko-Praskiej. In: *Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne*, 2011, no. 14, p. 80.

18 Cf. PRZYGODA, W.: Funkcje urzeczywistniania się Kościoła. In: *Roczniki Teologiczne*, 46, 1999, fasc. 6, p. 176–188.

structures to shape their religiosity.¹⁹ On the other hand, it should be admitted that the parish in Poland is not keeping pace with changes and due to various mechanisms inside – lacks flexibility. The situation of the contemporary parish may be defined as “situation of transition” because it is often a combination of incoherent elements of a traditional parish and signs of contemporary Christianity. Old and new elements are not always coherent, which causes tension and lack of integrity. It should be recognized that the traditional elements do not always harmonize with signs of new culture and sensitivity of people.²⁰ On the other hand, ineffectiveness of traditional Christian ministry, unfortunately, occurs more often and the parishes try to perform some parochial activism. Thus, parishes sometimes turn into kindergartens, schools, sports clubs, Internet cafes, forgetting that the parish should be, above all, space of “heaven of faith” and technical measures should never replace the activity of the very Holy Spirit.²¹

Then, what should the contemporary parish be like? What direction should it take? What priority should it have today? Above all, it should be the basic place of materialization of the Church as the community of the faithful united by the power of the Word of God, liturgy (especially eucharistic liturgy) and everyday brotherly love.²² The Canon Law of the Catholic Church defines a parish as a community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a rector as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop.²³ As a rule, a parish should be a territorial unit.²⁴ The Second Vatican Council introduced a change of looking at the parish, when an emphasis was put on a more dynamic and internal dimension of the Church,²⁵ where the parish is not only the smallest unit of the hierarchical Church but turns into the Church of God in itself.²⁶ It should be emphasized that such an approach does not exclude the “external” dimension of the parish.²⁷ Such was also the teaching of John Paul

19 Cf. PRZYBYŁOWSKI, J.: Kościół w Polsce w perspektywie nowej ewangelizacji. In: *Kościół w Polsce dzisiaj*, p. 29–30.

20 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 191.

21 Cf. PRZYBYŁOWSKI, J.: Kościół w Polsce w perspektywie nowej ewangelizacji. In: *Kościół w Polsce dzisiaj*, p. 24–25.

22 Cf. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: Decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam actuositatem*. Watykan, 1965, no. 10.

23 Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 515 § 1.

24 The Canon Law of the Catholic Church says the following: “As a general rule a parish is to be territorial, that is, one which includes all the Christian faithful of a certain territory. When it is expedient, however, personal parishes are to be established determined by reason of the rite, language, or nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory, or even for some other reason.” *Code of Canon Law*, can. 518.

25 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 22.

26 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Leksykon teologii pastoralnej*, p. 588–589.

27 The ecclesial community finds its most immediate and visible expression in the parish. A parish, whose establishment is decided by the competent ecclesial authority, is a basic unit in a diocese. It is given to the care of its rector who, under the authority of the diocese bishop, organizes pastoral life. The parish is a community suited for celebrating the Eucharist. Such suitability is rooted in the fact that the parish

II, who said that a parish is not a structure or territory but rather “the family of God”.²⁸ According to this approach, the basic functions of parishes should be preserved and renewed. The elements that will revive²⁹ the organic essence of Christianity from inside (not only outside) should be given special attention.³⁰

The parish will be evangelizing only if it has a real influence on the Christian life of parishioners.³¹ Nowadays it is not possible to achieve this without the laity and small communities,³² called living units. In small communities a sense of belonging engages people more than just being a formal member of the parish.³³ Even a huge parish may become a genuine religious community, if various religious lively communities work within it³⁴ trying to combine everyday life with faith.³⁵ Through vitality of such communities the message of salvation may dawn where only laymen can reach³⁶ e.g. in families,

is a “community of faith” and an “organic community”, that is, constituted by the ordained ministers and other Christians, in which the pastor (rector) – who represents the diocesan bishop – is the hierarchical bond with the entire particular Church. All the people baptized in the Catholic Church who live in the parish territory are this parish’s members. In a way, the parish is the ultimate placement of the Church. In a certain sense it is the Church living in the midst of the homes of its sons and daughters. Cf. JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*. Watykan, 1988, no. 26; PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 185.

28 “It is necessary that in light of the faith all rediscover the true meaning of the parish, that is, the place where the very ‘mystery’ of the Church is present and at work, even if at times it is lacking persons and means, even if at other times it might be scattered over vast territories or almost not to be found in crowded and chaotic modern sections of cities. The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather, ‘the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit’, ‘a familial and welcoming home’, the ‘community of the faithful’.” JOHN PAUL II: *Christifideles laici*, no. 26.

29 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 195.

30 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 216.

31 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia w diecezji i Kościele powszechnym. In: *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, 30, 1983, fasc. 6, p. 99–117.

32 As John Paul II emphasizes, in such communities the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another; these communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors. Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Christifideles laici*, no. 26.

33 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 56.

34 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Leksykon teologii pastoralnej*, p. 593.

35 “Among these associations, those which promote and encourage closer unity between the concrete life of the members and their faith must be given primary consideration. Associations are not ends unto themselves; rather they should serve the mission of the Church to the world. Their apostolic dynamism depends on their conformity with the goals of the Church as well as on the Christian witness and evangelical spirit of every member and of the whole association.” THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 19.

36 “Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.” *The Canon Law of the Catholic Church*, no. 900.

at work, in places of leisure and wherever people prejudiced against the “official” Church can be found.³⁷

Evangelization supported by cells as a proposal for parishes

The author of the method of evangelizing through groups of home cells was the Corean pastor Paul Yonggi Cho. He started his evangelizing work in 1958 in Seoul in a small missionary tent and with time his assembly became the largest of this sort in the world. This system has been adapted to the Christian ministry in the United States and carried to Europe by Fr. P. G. Perini, rector of the Saint Eustorgio parish in Milan. He decided that the system of evangelizing parish cells should become a method of renewal of his parish. He proposed adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and reading the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Paul VI. Then, he organized a course in leadership and set a few temporary cells. In 1998 the parochial community was acquainted with a plan of introducing the system. Today in this parish there are over 110 cells comprised of 1350 people.³⁸

The core of the system of parish cells is to build pastoral structures which are based on small groups and allow establishing interpersonal relationships. A sense of belonging to such a group overcomes anonymity and helps participate in common life, sharing love and faith.³⁹ This method follows the principle that the real evangelization leads the evangelized not only to know Christ and experience His love but also to integrate fully into the life of the Church. It is about re-evangelization concerned with rebuilding the Church as a society organized in parish communities.⁴⁰

“Evangelizing parish cells” are small groups that “live” to evangelize non-practicing or non-believers, disengaged from the life of the Church. They consist of six to twelve people. “Parish” means that their circle of interest is parish, parochial environment where the rector is the person who bears the main responsibility. One of the features of the cell is an ability to multiply, as cells of the human body, which grow by division or die.⁴¹ When such a cell “feels” mature, it gives birth to new ones by division, taking care of the new

37 Cf. ROBEK, E.: Apostolat świeckich dzisiaj: duchowość czy działanie? Inspiracje z nauczania św. Wincentego Pallottiego i współczesnych teologów. In: *Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne*, 2012, no. 15, p. 74–75.

38 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako propozycja dla duszpasterstwa. In: *Teologia praktyczna*, 2008, vol. 9, p. 112–113.

39 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 100.

40 Cf. PINDEL, R.: System komórek parafialnych. In: *Zeszyty Odnowy w Duchu Świętym*, 1996, no. 13, p. 48–53.

41 Cf. COMISKEY, J.: *Home Cell Group Explosion*. Houston, 1998, p. 97.

parish member.⁴² In the presented conception, there is an important Greek term “oikos” which means “house”, “hearth and home”. “Oikos” is the closest environment and a place to build permanent relationships. Then, it is not necessary to seek people but use relationships that life brings.⁴³ “Oikos” should be entrusted to the Lord during prayers to start effective evangelization which is divided into the following steps: prayer, service, faith sharing, leading to receive Jesus as Lord, joining a cell and finally introduction to the parish community. Evangelizer is responsible for carrying a person through all these steps of evangelization.⁴⁴

The system of parish cells has its own structure.⁴⁵ At the top of the structure is the executive cell which consists of: the priest of the community, the director of the system who helps the priest of the community and is his closest associate, leaders of the area and secretaries. Secretaries collect reports, prepare texts for meetings and announcements for leaders. At an executive cell meeting, one discusses current operating problems of cells and seeks the best pastoral proposals. The executive cell is the most important part of the system, which leads the evangelizing process in the parish.⁴⁶

The place of meetings of “evangelizing cells of the parish” is usually a flat of its leader because it naturally makes a friendly atmosphere, especially for the people who are just stepping on the path of evangelization. It takes place near a cross and painting of Our Lady, with a lighted candle, in the atmosphere of praying contemplation. Such a meeting must contain a few important elements: praising God, sharing the experiences of the past week in the context of God’s love, catechesis, deepening catechesis, familiarization with current issues of the parish, prayer.⁴⁷ A catechesis prepared by the rector is an important element of such a meeting. This teaching is to be based on the grounds of the Bible and theology and should maintain contact with the diocese Church.⁴⁸ The first textbook of the cells is the Bible. The teaching of the rector is not a closed circle of catecheses but depends on the current situation and needs. It is not an explanation of the Sunday Liturgy of Word or a form of homily.⁴⁹

42 Cf. MACCHIOMI, G.: *Ewangelizacja w parafii : Metoda komórek*. Kraków, 1997, p. 82.

43 Cf. PERINI, P. G.: *Il grande sconosciuto*. Milano, 1998, p. 82

44 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 118.

45 For each cell a concrete leader is responsible. He nominates the co-leader (his helper) of the cell. If the leader of the area has been nominated, his task is to make a link between the priest (minister) and a sector leader. The sector leader is a person who coordinates work between a few (three to five) cell leaders, organizes meetings (similar to meetings of parish evangelizing cells) with them, solves problems and receives written reports from the meetings. Cf. MACCHIOMI, G.: *Ewangelizacja w parafii : Metoda komórek*, p. 133.

46 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 102.

47 Cf. PALUCHNIAK, J.: W centrum Kościoła. In: *Zeszyty Odnowy w Duchu Świętym*, 1996, no. 13, p. 56–57.

48 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 103.

49 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 117–118.

The main goals of “parish evangelizing cells” can be named: growth in union with the Lord, growth in brotherly love, sharing Jesus with others, developing servant attitudes, supporting brothers and receiving support, care about increasing the number of people within a cell and its division at the time of reaching maturity, deepening Catholic identity.⁵⁰ These aims can be achieved thanks to the leaders. It is the leader who gives identity to a group, who is responsible for forming it, leading, animating and supporting it in overcoming any difficulties. He takes care that it is lively and multiplies. These tasks require preparations, which happen inside the cell itself but also through special courses. The leader should be a person of prayer and faith, sensitive to obedience and the common good. He should have experience of Christian life, a mature personality, internal stability, humility, ability to cooperate, real openness, and selfless love of neighbor. Such a candidate, through a rector’s nomination, is given power over a particular parish cell.⁵¹ It is worth reminding that only people who experienced a genuine conversion⁵² and are prepared for the uneasy mission of bearing witness to faith can be convincing witnesses of Gospel.⁵³

The presented “system of parish cells” is a proposal for parish renewal. On the basis of parish life, interviews with priests from the Saint Eustorgio Parish in Milan, parishioners’ opinions and the parish quarterly it can be concluded that the whole pastoral work of a parish introducing the system of cells is directed towards evangelizing. Liturgy celebrations became full of life and joy. Spiritual growth and the rising number of followers are the fruit of constant Eucharistic adoration. Charity took the form of free and selfless service. This system is a proposal for ministry and an attempt to meet the challenge of seeking the model of a parish reflecting Vatican Council Ecclesiology. Parishes based on the system of evangelizing cells already function in many countries, such as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, England, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, France, Canada, Mexico, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, San Domingo and even a few African countries.

50 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: *Odnowa parafii według systemu EkoPar : System Ewangelizacyjnych Komórek Parafialnych*. In: *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, 7, 2000, vol. 135, fasc. 548, p. 129–130.

51 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: *Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa*. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 101.

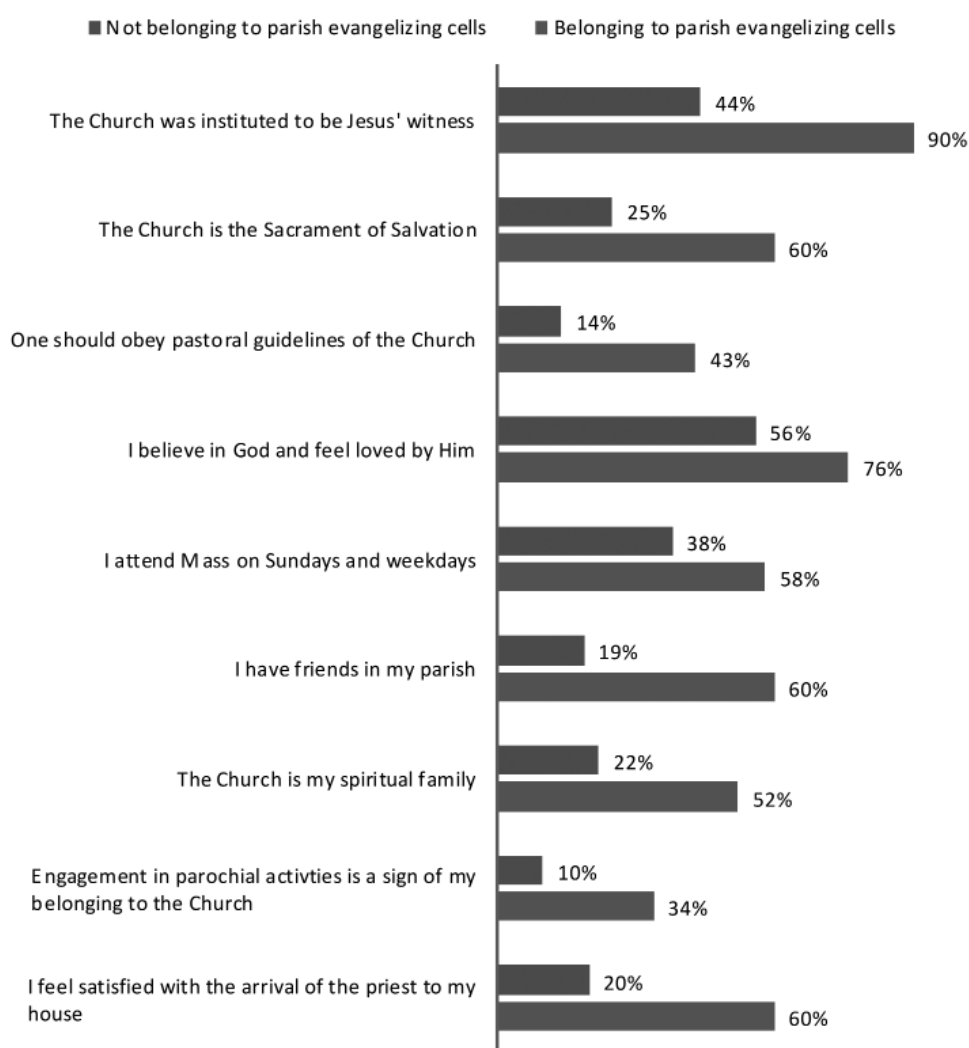
52 Cf. ROBEK, E.: *Apostolat świeckich dzisiaj: duchowość czy działanie? Inspiracje z nauczania św. Wincentego Pallottiego i współczesnych teologów*. In: *Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne*, 2012, no. 15, p. 75.

53 Cf. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 28.

Implementation of the system of parish cells in Poland

The system of parish evangelizing cells is relatively poorly known in Poland.⁵⁴ Therefore, the pioneering research conducted by Magdalena Kudelka

Chart 1
The influence of belonging to parish evangelizing cells on life



⁵⁴ Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 111–124.

seems to be very important in Poland.⁵⁵ In pastoral theology, it constitutes a very useful source of knowledge about belonging to parish evangelizing cells and its impact on life. The selected results of this research on human and Christian maturity, identifying oneself with the Church and ties with a parish are shown on the Chart below. The answers of two groups of people were presented: belonging and not belonging to parish evangelizing cells (only one answer was considered: “exclusively yes”).

In light of the presented empirical data the following conclusions, concerning people belonging to parish evangelizing cells, can be made:

- they declare more often that they believe in God and feel loved by Him;
- they more often attend Mass on Sundays and weekdays;
- they reach higher human and social maturity;
- they are more closely connected with the Church and have in-depth understanding of its nature and importance;
- they more often consider the Church a spiritual family which is a foundation of responsibility for its mission and have better knowledge and understanding of the Church teaching;
- they are more often inclined to obey pastoral guidelines of the Church;
- they are more engaged in the life of the parish and the Church;
- they more often think highly of a priest and put more trust in him.

It is worth asking an important question at this point: If the results of the research of Magdalena Kudęka are so optimistic, then why evangelizing through cells in parishes in Poland almost does not occur?

Seeking an answer to this question, it should be perhaps admitted that the reasons are various and not always related with one another. One of them is priests' distrust of pastoral experience in Western Europe and a conviction that since churches in Poland are full, the system is not needed. There is also, often unfounded, fear of novelty (fear of the new), an aversion to risk, some independence and disinclination to orderliness. A lack of due cooperation between a rector and the laity can also be mentioned. An important matter is whether a rector is convinced that the Church should approach with love those who do not come to the Church.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is still narrow-mindedness in understanding a role of a parish, which limits parochial growth. Activities done in such a parish are often purely ritual. Juridical approach and

55 In her research she took advantage of the method of sociological survey and an interview with a priest of the Saint Eustorgio Parish in Milan and secretaries of the parish cells in Warsaw and Wrocław. The survey was conducted in the Parish Matki Bożej Królowej Pokoju, Wrocław (questionnaires) and the Parish Matki Bożej w Lourdes, Warszawa (interviews with a secretary and a leader). The questionnaires were completed by members and non-members of parish cells, to compare these two groups. Each group had 80 people. Respondents were mainly middle-aged, with the majority of women, their average education was completed secondary-school. Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 99–104.

56 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 175–178.

clerical imperative prevail.⁵⁷ It is worth realizing that effectiveness of evangelization demands overcoming pervasive tendency to regard a parish as a self-sufficient and autonomous entity.⁵⁸

Pastoral postulates

In conclusion, it is worth setting some general postulates concerning directions of the contemporary parish renewal and particular postulates regarding “cell evangelizing” itself. First, it should be noted that the current pastoral situation in Poland requires from parishes specific renewal.⁵⁹ It is not about rejecting the parish territoriality or marginalizing its basic functions but the renewal of the relationships within it.⁶⁰ A parish cannot divide people into “the good” and “the rest” but it should be opened to concrete needs of the life of a human and to reach him with the Gospel. One must not put preconditions and dictate anything. A parish should become “a home” for everyone, a place where a person can feel “at home”.⁶¹

Calling for the parish renewal, one should emphasize that priests must want it first, perceiving the contemporary challenges put to the Church.⁶² A mission ministry, preaching the same Gospel in a new way, ensuring transmission of the faith to new generations, meeting people’s needs, is a necessity. A parish must become a place supporting a gospel renewal of all local communities in order to serve authentic awakening and growth of faith.⁶³

It should be remembered that seeking paths of authentic parish renewal will only be apparent without the laity.⁶⁴ It is necessary that the leaders and people responsible for animating, who will be priests’ associates,⁶⁵ be formed in the spirit of dialogue and mutual trust.⁶⁶ Proclaiming Good News is not re-

57 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 214–215.

58 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 214.

59 Cf. KAMIŃSKI, R.: Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa. In: KAMIŃSKI, R. (ed.): *Teologia pastoralna*, p. 67.

60 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 211–212.

61 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 200–201.

62 Cf. JAN PAWEŁ II: Adhortacja apostolska *Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 32.

63 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 196–197.

64 “A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so.” JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 3.

65 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 215–216.

66 Cf. PÓŁTORAK, K.: Kierunki odnowy ewangelizacji w parafii i w diecezji. In: BIELA, B. (ed.): *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 212.

served only for the clergymen⁶⁷ but requires a convincing testimony of faith of the laity⁶⁸ who were given a sense of faith and a grace of word by God. Their proclaiming Christ is done through life and word. It is of a specific character and particular effectiveness because it happens in regular circumstances of the world.⁶⁹

As far as the "cell evangelizing" is concerned, movements and small religious communities of particular importance should be the ones that gather not only devout Catholics but will open to those who have lost their bearings. This is the way of evangelizing proposed by the system of parish cells, which by means of using regular relationships, reaches environments often inaccessible for priests. Their aim is to awake a "sleeping giant".⁷⁰ The whole system can be applied in Poland with regard to the particular culture and mindset. Some separate parts of the system can be adapted in existing parish communities, without introducing the whole system.⁷¹

The system of parish evangelizing cells makes it easier for the parish to take tasks that are a response to the call for new evangelization. It is a school of Christian maturity leading to in-depth understanding of the Church and its mission to proclaim Good News. Thus, it constitutes the optimal model of a parish creating conditions for fruitful evangelization with regard to its structures and leading to their growth and renewal.

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67 "The mission of Christ expressed in the words: 'You go into my vineyard too' (Mt 20:3-4), is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and religious men and women. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church."

JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 2.

68 Cf. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 1.

69 Cf. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: *Lumen gentium*, no. 35.

70 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 165.

71 Cf. KUDEŁKA, M.: *System parafialnych komórek ewangelizacyjnych jako nowa propozycja dla duszpasterstwa*, p. 161.

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