

Janusz Mariański, *Religious Practices in Poland in the Process of Transformation. The Sociological Study*, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu, Sandomierz 2014, pp. 392.

In sociological research religious practices belong to the most frequently used indicators of measuring institutionalized religiosity, so called “ecclesiasticalness.” They are strongly connected with cultural patterns and are subject to the rhythms of their transformations, they are not constant, and the change in the participation of the faithful in religious practices is always a symptom of the reorientation of traditional religiosity. In the Polish conditions abandoning religious practices is almost always tantamount to the anaemia of faith, which may result in the loss of it.

One can think that the topic of religious practices has nowadays become not only unattractive, but simply boring for many religious sociologists of religion. The two decades of political transformations have not brought any distinct changes in this issue. In the Polish society in the time of great political transformation in the nineties and at the beginning of the twenty-first century declared beliefs and religious practices remained at a relatively stable level. In the light of existing sociological research, the religious practices of Catholics were characterized by stability – in the eighties they increased slightly, and in the nineties they declined insignificantly. To date around half of the Poles declare themselves as believing and practicing regularly, one third define themselves as believing, but not practising regularly, ten per cent define themselves as believing but non-practising, one per cent describe themselves as practising, but non-believing, and half per cent declare themselves as neither believing nor practising.

The sociological research has shown that the Polish have not abandoned religion, and intensive and deep processes of social modernization have not exerted any distinct influence on the condition of religious practices. However one has to remember that the change in religiosity, also in the parameter of religious practices, is a long-term process. Therefore the idea of the

continuation of portraying religious practices in the Polish society seems reasonable. The reviewed title *Religious practices in Poland in the process of transformation. Sociological study* by J. Mariański undoubtedly fits within this landscape. The book is a precious continuation of previously published works by the author, which deal with the issue of religious practices in Poland – among others *Religion and church in the pluralistic society. Poland of the nineties*, Lublin 1993; *Sunday and Easter practices*, in: *Religiosity of Poles 1991-1998*, ed. W. Zdaniewicz, Warszawa 2001, pp. 82-99, *Religiosity of Polish youth in the conditions of social transformation*, Lublin 2008; *Participation of secular Catholics in Parish's life (assumptions and reality)*, Płock 2008; *Religious practices in Poland in the process of transformation*, in: *Social-religious attitudes of Poles 1991-2012*, eds. L. Adamczuk, E. Firlit, W. Zdaniewicz, Warszawa 2013, pp. 59-101.

The book here reviewed consists of five chapters devoted to the following issues: presentation of the problem of religious practices in modern societies from the sociological perspective; obligatory and non-obligatory religious practices; social conditioning of external and internal religious practices. The author is then interested not only in the condition of religious practices in the Polish society, but also in their dynamics, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century. J. Mariański pays attention both to the participation of Catholics in obligatory religious practices (Sunday Mass, confession, Easter Communion), and to non-obligatory ones (everyday prayer, frequent Communion, church services, religious customs and rituals). In all those cases the author attempts to determine what is the level of participation in the cult, and what are the differences on the grounds of demographic and social characteristics. Looking carefully at the results of sociological research he attempts to analyse the processes of “ecclesiastifying” and “disecclesiastifying” religiosity of Catholics, exemplifying the frequency of their participation in religious practices.

In the book reviewed J. Mariański attempts to verify the hypothesis claiming that religious practices are going to remain at a relatively high level, and some distinct shifts will be visible in some social categories, e.g. among the youth. At the same time he remarks that rapid decline in obligatory religious practices at the turn of the first and the second decade of the twenty-first century signifies the reinforcement of the process of secularization

in Poland (crawling and accelerating secularization). The author draws some general conclusions from the analysis performed. Some scenarios have not been confirmed, for example the one assuming that the change in socio-cultural context and forming more pluralistic society will result in the wave of rapid secularization in the form of a drastic decline in the participation of Catholics in Sunday and Easter practices. This decline in the Polish society may be estimated at 10-15% in the years 1989-2012. The duty of participating in mass every, or almost every Sunday was performed by approximately 50% of the Poles surveyed. Some careful observations and calculating church attendance lead to a conclusion that the participation in Sunday practices at the turn of two first decades of the twenty-first century is visibly declining.

In the years 2002-2012 the decline in all the indicators of cult engagement was noticed. This process is the most clearly manifested by the decline in the frequency of individual prayer practices, but also by the decline in Sunday practices. Some decline in Easter practices has been noticed. The *paschantes* (the reception of the Eucharist) amounts to approximately 75% of the society. The Easter duty is performed by a group of Catholics who rarely attend Sunday Mass and whose religious behaviour remain under the influence of the tradition and the family. According to all-Poland survey performed in the years 2006-2014 the indicator of persons who declare going to Easter confession decreased from 79% to 70%. It seems that Catholic Poland only after two decades of political and socio-cultural transformation, after joining the European Union, is beginning to face the challenges of post-Christian, or post-secular Europe in a more visible way.

A very interesting part of the book reviewed is an attempt to diagnose the reasons of changes in religious activity of Poles during political transformation in Poland. Religious practices performed out of religious motives undoubtedly form attitudes and moral behaviours as well as interaction between people, and the analysis of religious practices and their socio-cultural conditioning is undeniably an important element of comprehensive religion-moral diagnosis of the Polish society. However J. Mariański keeps a scientific distance from unambiguous diagnoses of model functioning of the church in a democratic state. The sociologist describes the Church from his own viewpoint. Even if he admits that an important role of the Church is to mediate between the

immanent and the transcendent, his attention is mainly focused on cultural, social, educational, charity, and to some extent political functions, which are fulfilled by the Church in public life.

Socially and culturally motivated religious practices tend to decline during the transformation from the traditional society to the modern, pluralistic one. Abandoning religious practices may result from various reasons. It may be influenced by the low level of activity of priests, personal neglect, accenting "this world" values, or competition on the plane of alternative ways of spending spare time. The Catholics surveyed far more often indicated religious motivation of their participation in Sunday cult than socio-cultural motivation. Perhaps the condition of religious practices is becoming a signal of a slow process of the erosion of religiosity of Polish Catholics, or laying stronger emphasis on dimensions of religiosity other than cult practices. Presumably also the motivation of participating in Sunday practices is changing. In the past it was social pressure and control which motivated people to participate. Nowadays the situation is different, it takes own initiative and will to participate in Sunday Eucharist.

The Polish society is still dominated by institutional religiosity, which is bequeathed by the two basic socializing institutions: the family and the Church. The family practices and customs are performed in all social environments, however, they are far more frequent in rural environments than in urban ones, and more frequent among adults than adolescents. In the situation of progressing pluralism and individualization traditional educational units, the Church being one of them, lose their socializing function. Individuals are subject to the influence of various socializing units, multitude of values, norms, patterns of behaviour and lifestyles. The strong process of secularization and a little weaker processes of individualization of the society, family and religion are faced with some evangelization activity of the Catholic Church in Poland. It seems that it is this factor, not the tradition, which makes religion remain the only system structuring everyday life of Poles, ensuring continuity with the past, and providing rituals, which create social framework for individual activities, at the same time making them meaningful. This fact would prove the thesis stating that the condition of the religiosity of the Polish society in the future will depend to a considerable extent on adequate changes in the field of pastoral activity of the Church. However, this activity should not be limited only to

the programme of saving popular religiosity. What is needed is its creative development, so that it combines traditional religious values with the values of modern society, values connected with technical and civilizational achievements.

J. Mariański has proved that the diagnosis of the change in religious practices and the attempt to seek for the conditioning of this change are again becoming an important and interesting research problem in the sociology of religion. The author is also searching for new sociological challenges in the field of empirical knowledge, which were not explored to a large extent before. It may be proved by the fact, that he devoted part of his work to a relatively new issue of foreign migration as a one of many internal factors conditioning religious practices. The author remarks that until a certain moment Poland was a stagnant country. Most of the Poles lived where they were born or moved to another place situated in the vicinity. Experiencing migration will mean confronting the existing tradition and lifestyle with a new way of understanding and experiencing the world, with something which is different and new. Migrations are almost always connected with the change of the way of life and values held, they may have influence on religious attitudes and behaviours, which results from the contact of what is local with what is global, both in beliefs and in the field of religious practices.

It turns out, that in the latest wave of emigrants only a small proportion is interested in engaging in parochial life, extending beyond participation in Sunday Mass. The group of people involved in the life of Polish parishes is not large, but these people are eager to perform very dynamic activities. For religious Polish emigrants the environment of Polish churches and parishes serves a very important role, it may even become a primary group in case of the lack of other groups of reference. It is not certain what proportion of emigrants participates in religious life. The *dominantes* (attendance in Sunday Mass) indicator is estimated at approximately 10% of the Catholics obliged to participate in Sunday Mass. It is also difficult to determine, how many emigrants remain out of touch with centres of religious life. Living in the society which is characterized by low indicators of religiosity undoubtedly contributes to the erosion of religious life among emigrants. However one has to emphasize that the impact of the secularized western societies on the Polish emigrants has not been examined enough by sociologists yet.

J. Mariański predicts that within a short period of time mass migrations may not change much in the Polish Catholicism. The author expects some changes in the long-term perspective, but the direction of these changes is not certain. Emigrants obtain new knowledge and experience, develop new relationships and social bonds, including marital and partner ones, change their mentality and the way of life, learn new ways of expressing religiosity and spirituality. Stay abroad and return home lead to re-defining the hierarchy of values.. The Poles travelling all over the world familiarize themselves with substantial religious diversity in the contemporary world. Presumably the religiosity of emigrants changes both while staying abroad and after return to Poland, and so does their attitude towards the Church and clergy, bonds with parishes to which they used to belong weaken. Migrations will gradually transform not only family and national identities, but also religious ones. Therefore it will not remain insignificant for the future of the Polish Catholicism.

In his book J. Mariański attempts to outline one of many possible scenarios of the change in the level of religious practices in Poland in the process of transformation. The processes of individualization connected with detraditionalization and weakening influence of the family on its members' attitudes and behaviours have rather negative impact on ecclesial religiosity, whereas they create favourable conditions for new forms of religiosity and spirituality to arise. The Polish society may remain traditional, but not traditionalistic. The family will still remain one of the most preferred values. However, it is expected that there will be a choice of various variants of family life. The society will remain the society of believers, but it will definitely become less orthodox. Today it is clearly visible that in the contemporary processes of detraditionalization and desinstitutionalization an individual aspires to the role of the creator of any systems of meanings, whereas the argument suggesting that the continuity of tradition is necessary does not appeal to the young generation.

The book by J. Mariański is a valuable title among sociological works, being worth noticing not only by the expert on the topic. The book is a valuable reading also for theologians, and, above all, for the institutional representatives of the Church. The sociologist of religion may make the Church aware of its extensive creative abilities. The European and Polish religiosity has suffered too many losses in modern socio-cultural context, but has

to try to recover in these conditions, find better ways of expression and ways of understanding reality. It is the theologians' task to translate this spiritual heritage of Christianity into a contemporary language, understandable to the secularized world.

Some theologians indicate limitations in the diagnosis and prognosis of social phenomena in sociological researches, cognitive deficiencies and limitations. They also appeal for cautiousness when talking about the future of the church exclusively in sociological terms. They often present an argument implying that the sociological descriptions of Christian religiosity and morality, which could help to think about the future of the Church, are not able to define what religion and the Church really is, whereas the results of sociological researches often cause the reader to suffer from "statistical depression." It is not sensible, however, to neglect sociological researches. Desirable critical attitude to their results is to mould interdisciplinary thinking about these attitudes and tendencies among contemporary believers and non-believers which show the Church the future perspective and build the structure of its hope. They may also help the community of the faithful to get rid of old habits and negative influences, and the structures which are no longer valid. Therefore the title hereby reviewed showing interdisciplinary genius of J. Mariański seems especially valuable for performing the diagnosis and detailed analysis of the state of affairs in the sphere of sociological interaction.

Jarosław Kozak
St. Patrick's Presbytery
Grange Gardens
CARDIFF UK