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Extra ecclesiam nulla salus? **Students' trust in the Catholic Church on the Eve of the Women's Strike**

Abstract. The topic of this article is female students' trust in the Catholic Church. The interest in the beliefs of female students stems from the fact that until recently, numerous sociological studies have shown that women were characterised by a high degree of conformism towards the teachings of the Church and a high level of involvement in religious life. Currently, it is observed that the differences in religiousness between men and women are blurring. Their attitudes and religious behaviour are similar, liberalised and deinstitutionalised. The inference regarding the trust of female students in the Catholic Church presented in this article refers to the foundational research, whose findings complement the interpretation of the results of the empirical research carried out in 2020 (research sample of 621 people), in which the author of this text, among others, participated. The result of this inference shows, among other things, that women's trust in the institution of the Church is declining. Female students distance themselves in all basic dimensions of its social activity (institutional authority, charitable, educational activity) and religious activity (mediation in salvation).

Keywords: trust, distrust, Catholic Church, female students

Topic of this article is female students trust in the Catholic Church. The definition of trust and its operationalization is described in the meth-

odological note of this article. It is worth explaining here that the focus on the beliefs of female students is due to the fact that until recently numerous sociological studies have described gender as a differentiating variable of religiosity. Discrepancies also appeared in analyses where respondents were in similar life situations (e.g. male and female students). Results, according to which this variable did not polarise attitudes towards faith were of exceptional nature. According to the faith, women were characterised by a higher degree of conformism to Church teaching and a greater commitment to religious life (Mariański, 1984). This relationship had the status of regularity. On the other hand, it is currently observed that the differences in religiousness between men and women are diminishing. Their religious attitudes and behaviours are similar, subject to liberalisation and deinstitutionalisation (Mariański, 2018a), even on issues formerly strictly covered by religious rigour and taboos (sexual morality) (Klimski, 2020). With these statements in mind, we would like to examine the trust of female students in the institution of the Catholic Church, taking into account the social and cultural transformations of Polish society observed by sociologists.

The title term “The Eve of the Women’s Strike” refers to the protests that erupted after the Constitutional Court announced its decision in the matter of abortion¹. These were manifestations supported by Polish women (60%), in which participation was mainly declared by young women aged 18–24 (41%) and 25–34 (21%) (Felixiak & Rogulska, 2020). In them, they called for liberalisation of the right to abortion, but also manifested their distrust of the institution of the Church – one of the influential actors in public life, representing a *pro-life* position. When diagnosing the state of trust of female students towards the Church (on the basis of research carried out in spring), one cannot ignore their autumn protests (from the same year), which most probably were not only a reaction to the pandemic isolation, but above all (cautiously judging) resulted from the separation of young people from the Church for a long time. In short, the beliefs of female students that were declared by them before the October women’s demonstrations will be the subject matter of this article.

¹ The decision was announced by the Constitutional Court on 22 October 2020. It stated that the article (Article 4a (1)(2) of the Act on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Foetus and Conditions for the Permissibility of Termination of Pregnancy), which allows abortion in a situation where there is a high probability of severe and irreversible impairment of the foetus or an incurable disease threatening its life, is incompatible with the Basic Law. The women’s demonstrations were held under the slogan “Women’s Strike.” Their main organiser was the feminist organisation Nationwide Women’s Strike.

Empirical material and interpretative assumptions

Conclusions on the trust of female students in the Catholic Church will refer to the foundational research, the findings of which will complement the interpretation of the results of the empirical research carried out from April to June 2020 by the Laboratory of the Polish Measurement of Attitudes and Values². The author of this text, among others, took part in them. This was an on-line survey conducted among students³ using the CAWI (Computer Assisted (Aided) Web Interviews) technique, using the LimeSurvey system. Statistical analysis was performed on an IBM SPSS/PASW Statistics data matrix. The link to the survey was distributed to the respondents using the so-called snowball methodology, which involved research and teaching staff from the individual academic centres. Respondents completed 1,362 surveys, 621 of which were complete and analysed. The survey was multi-thematic and consisted of 37 questions and 12 metric questions (socioeconomic and demographic factors)

Trust in the institution of the Catholic Church (an issue raised in several survey questions) is expressed in the belief that it is an institution that is competent in its core activities. They are defined by the term “pastoral ministry” and consist of preaching (preaching, catechesis), liturgical activity (sacraments, services), witness of life (attitudes of faith, hope, concern for the common good) and charitable activity (caritas) (Potocki, 2004). Trust in the Church means that its officers have the relevant knowledge, experience, skills to carry out pastoral care. Their actions also preserve a morality built on the axiology promoted by the Church (love of neighbour, honesty, justice, truthfulness, nobility, etc.). Individuals who trust the church are convinced that interactions with its representatives will not harm them, will be safe, honest, nobly motivated and will lead to religious (eternal) or non-religious (temporal) good (Kojder, 2014). These will be activities that benefit them or society. Trust understood in this way was translated into the following questions: whether the Church is an institutional authority; whether as a religious institution it is necessary for salvation; whether its charitable activities are valuable; whether respondents plan to enrol their children in the future in

² Laboratory of Polish Measurement of Attitudes and Values of the Institute of Sociological Sciences of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

³ Students from universities participated in the study (percentages of their participation in the sample $N = 621$ are shown in brackets): AGH (4.5%), APS (4.4%), KUL (8.9%), PW (2.3%), SGGW (1.4%), UW (4.2%), SGH (1.1%), UJK (22.2%), UKSW (15.6%), UŁ (5.2%), UMCS (3.9%), UJ (4.1%), USZ (4.5%), UwB (5.5%), UW r (2.2%) and others (6.4%).

a school run by a religious institution (e.g. the Catholic Church); whether recently revealed sex scandals have lowered respondents' religiosity.

These questions related to the four dimensions of the Church's pastoral activity mentioned above. Their problem level was adequate to the difficulty of the questions, so far used in sociological research on the state of faith and religious knowledge, and also referred to the current experience of the Church in Poland (paedophilia, sex scandals). The latter – in addition to the fact that trust is currently one of the most important variables determining the everyday life of individuals (Kwiatkowski, 2002) – are the reason for addressing the topic of trust in this article, as it is because of them that the Church in Poland is losing it. It ceases to be seen (in popular perception) as an institution that guards morality, and begins to be seen as an institution that clearly has problems with it. Doubts of various degrees (presented, for example, in the media discourse – also in Catholic discourse) concern rank-and-file clergymen, but also their superiors (bishops), and even the leader of Catholics – Saint John Paul II.

The presentation of the research results takes into account the general distribution and the structure of beliefs of female students coming from rural areas, from big cities, believers and regular practitioners and believers and irregular practitioners. This choice stems from the need to maintain a certain volume of the article, and also from the fact that these variables have so far differentiated attitudes towards the Catholic Church the most. We want to verify whether the deepening processes of socio-cultural pluralism in Polish society do not result (as suggested by more recent research) in the beliefs of women from culturally homogeneous environments (rural areas), as well as those declaring faith and systematic practice, correlating with selective religiosity and a liberal world view, resembling the beliefs of women from large cities and those who believe and practice irregularly. Before moving on to the presentation of the survey results, we will take a look at the results of the desk research on women's trust and concerns towards the Catholic Church.

Trust, distance and fear of women towards the Catholic Church in the light of existing surveys

Nationwide surveys show a decline in women's trust in the Roman Catholic Church. In 2008, 82% of them declared that they had confidence in this institution. The opposite view was held by 13% and 5% chose the answer "difficult to say." A similar percentage of women (83%) trusted the Great Orchestra of

Christmas Charity. Slightly less percentage trusted police (77%), European Union (69%) (Wciórka, 2008). In 2020, 64% of women trusted the Church, 30% did not, 6% could not take a position on the subject. More popular was trust in the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (85%) the army (81%), parish Caritas teams (80%), NATO (75%), the European Union (72%) and the police (72%) (Omyła-Rudzka, 2020).

This decline in trust in the Church corresponds with the spread of negative evaluations of its activities among the female population. In 2000, 61% of them assessed the activities of the Catholic Church well, 29% badly and 10% were unable to take a position on the issue (Strzeszewski, 2000). In 2010, 54% of women rated its activities well, 35% badly, 12% chose the answer "difficult to say" (Kowalczyk, 2010). In 2020, the response rates were adequate: 53%, 37%, 10% (Feliński, 2020).

A study published in 2015, carried out among high school and university students, showed that 42.2% of women presented total trust in the Catholic Church, 17.2% partial, and 36.2% did not trust the institution. Complete trust in various church institutions was held by 48.8% of the female respondents and partial trust by 16.1%. They were not trusted by 30.7% (Baniak, 2015). Respondents also mentioned reasons that deepened their trust in the Church and those that weakened it. Women's confidence was fostered by its: founder Jesus Christ (78.5%), long existence (69.6%), religious mission (68.7%), concern for people's freedom (65.8%), charity (60.8%), holy sacraments (58.2%), moral authority (55.7%). In contrast, distrust was due to the vices of the clergy: paedophile scandals (90%), sex scandals (88.2%), politicisation (84.2%), desire for omnipresence (80.6%), practical materialism (77%), lust for secular power (75.9%), clericalisation (74.7%) and religious intolerance (72.9%) (Baniak, 2015).

In the same study, 24% of women admitted that they felt a total fear of the Church, 15.7% rated their fears as partial and 51.6% had no such feelings. The main reasons for this concern were the restriction of sexual activity (76.2%), the aggression of the Church (70.8%), its policies (68.3%), its conservatism (65.3%), the moral norms promoted (65.3%), the paedophilia of priests (62.9%) and the finances of the institution (Baniak, 2015).

According to the qualitative research, young people (regardless of gender) are concerned about the conservatism of the institution. It narrows the view of reality, limits the choices and possibilities for action. It refers to language and argumentation that is anachronistic and has been so for centuries. This is also reflected in the structures of and contact with the Church, which is hierarchical, ossified and does not correspond to the daily challenges. The liturgy is particularly tedious. One female respondent expressed the case in

this way: "The masses are boring and snotty and the sermons are silly and it is a shame to waste time attending such poor theatre, at the expense of more attractive affairs and events to enjoy at the time" (Baniak, 2015). The liturgy is sometimes seen as frightening in its consequences, the irreversibility of the sacraments, the possibility of condemnation, rejection and the violation of intimacy (Potocki, 2017).

The Catholic Church is also perceived by young people as a controlling and repressive institution. It imposes its doctrine, demanding total acceptance and determining ways of thinking through dogma. This is sometimes associated with indoctrination and "brainwashing" (Potocki, 2017). Distance is also evoked by the Church's morality, which is interpreted as meddling in personal affairs, old-fashioned, harsh and detrimental to moral autonomy (Potocki, 2017). Finally, fear of the Church is caused by the lifestyle of some of the clergy. Above all, young people accuse them of giving advice to laymen, but not following it themselves. Their environment is full of homosexuality, they succumb to consumption and strive for material goods (especially money). They are two-faced and treat others as if they were inferior people. The female respondent put it this way: "Young people believe that the clergy interferes too often and ruthlessly in people's lives, instructing them how they should live and when it is permissible for them to make love and have sex, while they themselves do not live according to their morals. This pusillanimity of the clergy creates fear in many young people because its influence is widespread" (Baniak, 2015). In addition, contacts with clergy can sometimes be unpleasant, especially when they speak out on political issues and on issues of moral upbringing of young people (Baniak, 2015). Recently, clerics have been accused of having paedophile tendencies and of their solidarity in covering up clerical paedophilia.

All these faults are easily noticed and pointed out by the young, because due to their age and psychical and physical growth they are sensitive to truthfulness and sexuality. In the context of this last point, one girl commented thus: "The Church forbids contraception and abortion, and has recently gone crazy over *in vitro* fertilisation and compares this method to infanticide. Such rule over society fills young people with fear, so they avoid as much as possible contact with the Church because they want to live [...] as they think fit" (Baniak, 2015). Young people express their statements in the statement that there are no real priests – those with a vocation, living according to the gospel and being role models (Potocki, 2017).

Both national surveys and those carried out among high school and university students show the distance of women from the Church and its spread. Between 2008 and 2020, the Roman Catholic Church's position in the trust

rankings declined. It was overtaken by secular institutions (police, European Union). The cumulative percentages of respondents distrusting and partially distrusting the Church were more than half of the respondents (53.4%), and the numbers trusting and distrusting (totally or partially) particular institutions of the Church are similar: 48.8% and 46.8%. While their trust is due to a variety of reasons (the person of Christ, theological, social and moral arguments), distrust is mainly caused by the negative behaviour of the clergy. Moreover, these references are also expressed in the negative evaluations of the Church's activities that dominate the women's population. Ultimately, distrust is a characteristic of the female population.

The above research results correspond with the findings concerning the trust distribution in Polish society. The researchers stress that the crisis of the Church's authority has been deepening since the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Negative assessments of its public activities and clergy behaviour, although generally referring to individual cases, in the long term result in a decline in trust in the Church as a whole and the clergy in general (Mariański, 2018b). Both in the areas of religiosity, morality and social issues, both in society as a whole and among young people in education and study (Baniak 2015; Potocki, 2017; Mariański, 2018b).

Trust in the Catholic Church of female students

The above survey results show women's assessments to date. Let us now look at the beliefs of female students revealing levels of trust in the Catholic Church in the context of institutional authority, salvation, charity, education and clergy sex scandals. Table 1 shows the structure of the respondents' views.

Most students did not perceive the Catholic Church as an institutional authority. The cumulative percentage of such responses was 72.3%, with almost half (49.8%) of the female respondents clearly convinced of this. The popularity of different opinions was 10.1%. Also, respondents did not share the view that the Church is an institution that necessarily promotes salvation. The range of these perceptions was 64.1% of those questioned; 46.3% of these women had no doubts in this regard. This was seen as necessary by 17.2% of respondents, with 5.9% strongly in favour. The female students valued the Church's charitable work. 54.5% respected it, with 32% choosing the answer "rather yes" and 23% not able to take a position on this issue. The distance towards the Church was also revealed by the answers to the question about the possibility of enrolling their child in a school run by a religious institution in the future. 73% of female students had no such plans, 45.5% of them had

Table 1. Female students' views on the Catholic Church (in %)

Opinions on the Catholic Church in Poland	Categories of responses					In total
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Difficult to say	Rather not	Definitely not	
In my opinion, the Church in Poland is an Institutional authority	3.5	6.6	17.6	22.5	49.8	100.0
The church as a religious institution is necessary for salvation	5.9	11.3	18.6	17.8	46.3	100.0
I find the Church's charitable work valuable	22.5	32.0	23.0	9.4	13.1	100.0
If I have children in the future, I will enrol them in a school run by a religious institution (e.g. Catholic Church)	2.5	3.1	21.5	27.5	45.5	100.0
The recently revealed scandals in the Catholic Church have lowered my religiosity	22.5	14.5	21.7	20.1	21.1	100.0

Source: own calculations on the basis of the survey by PPPiW under the name "Młodzież akademicka o rodzinie i religii 2020" (Academic youth on family and religion 2020).

no doubts in this regard. One in twenty women (5.6%) were of the opposite opinion and 2.5% had such intentions. Most female students admitted that sex scandals involving clergy did not weaken their religiosity. This was admitted by 41.2% of those asked, one in five had no doubts here (21.1%). The opposite view was held by 37% of the respondents, 22.5% clearly felt that these behaviours had a negative impact on her religiosity. Female students from rural areas responded similarly. The distribution of their responses is shown in Table 2.

For female students coming from rural areas, the Church was not an institutional authority. The answer was 64.3%, with the majority being clearly negative (35.2%). The opposite view was held by 13.8% of women. Neither was the Church seen as an institution necessarily mediating salvation. This was the opinion of 53.6% of the respondents, the vast majority of whom chose the "difficult to say" answer (35.2%). The percentage recognising this intermediation was 24.5%, of which 7.7% were unequivocally convinced. Charitable activities were seen as valuable. It was rated as such by 59.3%, with 32.7% having some doubts on this point. 12.2% did not respect it. Respondents did not intend to enrol their children in a Catholic school in the future 64.8%. 7.2% of the women surveyed had such plans. Finally, 43.3% admitted that the sex scandals

Table 2. Views on the Catholic Church of female students coming from rural areas (in %)

Opinions on the Catholic Church in Poland	Categories of responses					In total
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Difficult to say	Rather not	Definitely not	
In my opinion, the Church in Poland is an Institutional authority	6.1	7.7	21.9	29.1	35.2	100.0
The church as a religious institution is necessary for salvation	7.7	16.8	21.9	18.4	35.2	100.0
I find the Church's charitable work valuable	26.6	32.7	28.6	6.6	5.6	100.0
If I have children in the future, I will enrol them in a school run by a religious institution (e.g. Catholic Church)	3.6	3.6	28.1	32.7	32.1	100.0
The recently revealed scandals in the Catholic Church have lowered my religiosity	19.4	18.4	18.9	21.9	21.4	100.0

Source: own calculations on the basis of the survey by PPPiW under the name "Młodzież akademicka o rodzinie i religii 2020" (Academic youth on family and religion 2020).

had not negatively affected their religiosity. The opposite view was expressed by 37.8% of the surveyed. The beliefs of female students coming from large cities are shown in Table 3.

The vast majority of female students coming from a big city did not regard the Church as an institutional authority. 82.7% of those questioned responded in this way, of which 70.7% were definite. The opposite view was held by 6.7%, with 2.7% had no doubts here. A higher percentage of women did not see the need for the Church to mediate salvation. It amounted to 86.7%, with 72% of women having an unambiguous position on this issue. The Church's participation in salvation was affirmed by 4% of the female students. Above all, they valued the Church's charitable work. It was recognised by 48% of women, 20% of them had no doubts here. The opposite view was expressed by 37.3% of the surveyed. Female students did not intend to enrol their children in a school run by the Catholic Church in the future. This was the response of 84% of those questioned, 61.3% of whom said they would definitely not do this. Every twentieth woman (5.3%) was of the opposite opinion. Female students admitted that sex scandals did not weaken their religiosity. This

Table 3. Views on the Catholic Church of female students coming from a large city (in %)

Opinions on the Catholic Church in Poland	Categories of responses					In total
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Difficult to say	Rather not	Definitely not	
In my opinion, the Church in Poland is an Institutional authority	2.7	4.0	10.7	12.0	70.7	100.0
The church as a religious institution is necessary for salvation	1.3	2.7	9.3	14.7	72.0	100.0
I find the Church's charitable work valuable	20.0	28.0	14.7	8.0	29.3	100.0
If I have children in the future, I will enrol them in a school run by a religious institution (e.g. Catholic Church)	1.3	4.0	10.7	22.7	61.3	100.0
The recently revealed scandals in the Catholic Church have lowered my religiosity	26.7	14.7	21.3	14.7	22.7	100.0

Source: own calculations on the basis of the survey by PPPiW under the name "Młodzież akademicka o rodzinie i religii 2020" (Academic youth on family and religion 2020).

answer was given by 41.4%. 37.4% experienced this change. The percentages of the responses: "definitely yes" and "definitely no" were 26.7% and 22.7% respectively. The beliefs of female students who believe and practice their faith regularly are shown in Table 4.

In the population of female students, who are believers and regular practitioners of their faith, the predominant response was that the Church is not an institutional authority for them. 41.2% of them said yes, 13.5% of them had no doubts on this matter. For 25.6% of the women, the church fulfilled this role, one in ten (10.1%) were unequivocal about this. The necessity of the Church's mediation in salvation was perceived by 40.5% of those asked, of which 16.9% did not hesitate here. This opinion was denied by 29% of the surveyed. The percentage of women unable to take any position was 30.4%. The majority of female students valued the Church's charitable work 75.7%, 41.2% strongly disagreed. Benevolent activity was not valued by 6.1% of those asked. The students were not planning to enrol their children in a school run by the Catholic Church. 49.3% of them did not have such intentions, whereas

Table 4. Opinions on the Catholic Church given by believing female students and practising their faith regularly (in %)

Opinions on the Catholic Church in Poland	Categories of responses					In total
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Difficult to say	Rather not	Definitely not	
In my opinion, the Church in Poland is an Institutional authority	10.1	15.5	33.1	27.7	13.5	100.0
The church as a religious institution is necessary for salvation	16.9	23.6	30.4	16.2	12.8	100.0
I find the Church's charitable work valuable	41.2	34.5	18.2	3.4	2.7	100.0
If I have children in the future, I will enrol them in a school run by a religious institution (e.g. Catholic Church)	4.1	6.1	40.5	35.1	14.2	100.0
The recently revealed scandals in the Catholic Church have lowered my religiosity	6.8	6.8	14.9	34.5	37.2	100.0

Source: own calculations on the basis of the survey by PPPiW under the name "Młodzież akademicka o rodzinie i religii 2020" (Academic youth on family and religion 2020).

one tenth (10.2%) did. 40.5% of female students were unable to take a position. The sex scandals exposed in the Church had no impact on their religiosity. 71.7% said yes, 13.6% of the women interviewed were of the opposite opinion. Table 5 shows the response structure of female students who are believers and irregular practitioners.

Female students who were believers and irregular practitioners did not regard the Church as an institutional authority. This answer was given by 64.9%, 31.6% of which had no doubt on this point. Of these, 8.8% were of the opposite opinion and 1.8% were unequivocal. They did not see that it was an institution whose mediation was necessary for salvation. 57% of the surveyed gave this answer. This role of the Church was confirmed by 19.3% of those asked, while 3.5% were unequivocally convinced of it. More than half of the respondents (57.9%) valued the Church's charitable activities, 21.9% were firm on this point. 17.5% did not see value in it, 3.5% were clear on this point.

Table 5. Opinions on the Catholic Church given by believing female students and practising their faith irregularly (in %)

Opinions on the Catholic Church in Poland	Categories of responses					In total
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Difficult to say	Rather not	Definitely not	
In my opinion, the Church in Poland is an Institutional authority	1.8	7.0	26.3	33.3	31.6	100.0
The church as a religious institution is necessary for salvation	3.5	15.8	23.7	30.7	26.3	100.0
I find the Church's charitable work valuable	21.9	36.0	24.6	14.0	3.5	100.0
If I have children in the future, I will enrol them in a school run by a religious institution (e.g. Catholic Church)	5.3	2.6	23.7	36.8	31.6	100.0
The recently revealed scandals in the Catholic Church have lowered my religiosity	23.7	18.4	25.4	21.1	11.4	100.0

Source: own calculations on the basis of the survey by PPPiW under the name "Młodzież akademicka o rodzinie i religii 2020" (Academic youth on family and religion 2020).

Female students also did not plan to enrol their children in a Catholic school in the future, 68.4% of them said so, 31.6%, took a clear position here. 7.9% of female students admitted to such intentions, 2.6% revealed some doubt. Finally, female students assessed that clergy sex scandals had weakened their religiosity. This was confirmed by 42.1% of them, while 32.5% denied it.

Conclusion

The research carried out shows the distance of female students towards the Catholic Church. It manifests itself in several dimensions. It is directly evidenced by the statements of female respondents denying that the Church is their institutional authority (72.3%). They then reveal themselves in questioning the necessity of her mediation in the salvation of a man (64.1%). The Church's charitable activities are well recognised (54.5%), but at the same time 32% of women have some doubts (answering "rather yes") on this issue. The relatively high percentage of women (23%) who are unable to assess

this activity ("difficult to say" answers) should also not be overlooked. These are ultimately clear indicators of reserve towards the Church, especially as its charitable work has hitherto been widely appreciated (Mariański, 2017). Finally, a clear manifestation of this reserve is the widespread reluctance of respondents to enrol their children in a Catholic school in the future (73%). Education and upbringing in these schools was generally held in high esteem by many communities, including non-believers (Świerdzewska, 2021). In short, the collective of women interviewed is dominated by distance and distrust towards the Church both in terms of its social activities (institutional authority, aid activities, education) and religious activities (mediation in salvation).

The structure of these beliefs is repeated in all the social and demographic categories identified. Lack of trust in the Church is particularly declared by female students coming from large cities. The percentages of these responses range from 82.7% to 86.7%, with the range of unequivocally distancing responses also significant here, ranging from 61.3% to 72%. This is the social category most prejudiced against the Church, which only values its charitable activities. Similar opinions were expressed by female students who believe and practice irregularly, as well as by students from categories so far close to the Church – coming from the countryside and believing and practising their faith regularly. The latter are mainly positive about the Church's charitable activities (75.7%), while in other issues (including religion), reserve towards the Church dominates, manifesting itself, among other things, in the frequent choice of the answer "difficult to say." The necessity of the Church's mediation in salvation is perceived by a minority of believing and practising female students (40.5%) and one in ten (10.2%) plan to enrol their children in a Catholic school in the future.

Let us further look at the structure of the opinions of female students on the weakening of their religiosity by clergy sex scandals. In almost all distributions, the range of responses questioning the negative impact of these events on piety (from 32.5% to 43.3%) is similar to the range of opinions against them (from 37% to 42.1%). Only in the category of women who believe and practice regularly is this disproportion greater (71.7% do not confirm this negative influence, 13.6% perceive it). Sex scandals therefore do not make revolutionary changes *in minus* in the religiosity of female students, although their impact is visible. It is fair to think that their adverse effects affect not so much the religiosity of female students as their attitude towards Catholic schools. Female students from all the categories distinguished, even those who are believers and regular practitioners, cut themselves off from the possibility of sending their children to such educational institutions in the future. They either do not have such intentions (49.3%) or have doubts about them (40.5%).

In the surveyed population it is still worth noting the significant percentage of undecided women – choosing answers: “difficult to say,” “rather yes,” “rather no.” These are students who are connected to faith and religious practices, they have participated in religious socialisation, and religious culture and the Church are not something unknown to them. However, their attitude towards the Church is ambiguous and characterized by doubts. The bond with him is not so weak that they cut themselves off from him completely, but it is also not so strong that their objections disappear. Their relationship with the Church is at a “crossroads” – between weakening and strengthening. Most likely, in these categories the processes of transformation of the religious bond will be most intense and, as the processes of secularisation and socio-cultural pluralism deepen, their distance from religion and its institutions will increase. After all, socio-cultural pluralism mainly leads to the weakening of religiosity, not to its deepening (Mariański, 2004). This is demonstrated by the beliefs of inhabitants of large cities (including the female students interviewed who come from them), which are diverse environments in terms of worldviews, and what is more, the beliefs of inhabitants of other communities are similar to them. Today it is not the village but the city that profiles the contemporary condition of religiosity and relations with the Church (Korporowicz, 2010).

It should be remembered that the scale of the decrease in trust in the Church observed here is expressed not only by the range of statements critical of the Church, but also by the fact that their authors are women – representatives of categories that have long been characterised by a clear conformism towards the Church. Their current separation from it is the result of ongoing socio-cultural changes, in which the differences between men and women are disappearing. The roles of the latter are enriched with attitudes such as independence, self-reliance, entrepreneurship, subjectivity (Grotowska, 2003; Potocki 2017; Klimski, 2020). They are manifested, among other things, in attitudes towards the Church and in initiatives such as the Women’s Strike held in October. He, in the light of the results of the research presented here, was not just a rehash of pandemic isolation, but was preceded by changes that had been taking place for a long time in the mentality of women. It seems that the “world-view background” necessary for other actions (expressing distrust of the Church) is formed in society and seems to be sustainable.

The observed lack of trust of women towards the Church is likely to increase in the future and the bond with the Church will weaken. This is indicated by the above opinions, the accompanying development of secularisation and cultural pluralism, but is also suggested by the current state of female students’ religiosity. It is also a sign of trust in the institution of the Church, after all, from a theological and organisational perspective, it is the Church

that shows its followers how to deepen their contact with God and determines what does not serve this purpose. This leadership is primarily realised in the sphere of the content of faith, religious practice and morality. Recent research shows that trust in the Church is declining in these three aspects. Female students do not accept all of the faith content that he specifies. While the majority acknowledges the existence of God (77.2%), a minority accepts the interpretation of his existence in three persons and one nature (65.5%), the teaching of the creation of the world by God (64.7%), man (60.9%) and the existence of hell (60.4%). The same is true of religious practice. The Church's pronouncements in this regard are not shared by female students either. 17.9% of them attend Sunday Mass regularly, 24.5% pray daily and 16% pray every few days. In contrast, the disconnect with the Church's position is most evident in the area of morality. 73.2% of female students are in favour of the use of contraception, 83.4% allow sexual intercourse before a church wedding and 82% allow the use of IVF (Zareba, Zarzecki, 2018). Female students have the greatest confidence in the Church's teaching on the content of the faith. Less so in the dimension of religious practice, and few are guided by it in the area of morality. At the same time, the aforementioned processes of secularisation and cultural pluralism (described above) will also primarily weaken this aspect of trust (religiosity) in the Church.

Finally, it is to be expected that this low level of trust in the Church will not only deepen, but will also be reproduced and subsequent generations will inherit this type of loose bond. Today's students are the social category that in the future (or at least some part of them) will constitute the intellectual and managerial elite. This is the natural course of a generational relay. They will create culture, define prevailing axiological hierarchies, lifestyles, personal patterns and thus raise new generations (Zielińska, 2016). In light of the above, a deepened relationship with the Church and religion will not be the primary substrates of the content they promote.

The question posed in the title of the article, whether there is no salvation outside the Church, can be answered unequivocally today, that students see the possibility of achieving salvation outside the Church, but also do not seek authority in it, plan the future education of their children without it and even distance themselves from its charitable activities. Their lack of trust in the Catholic Church is revealed in all dimensions of its core activities and it seems that one of the most important reasons for this is the clergy sex scandals. The prevailing belief among Polish women is that the Church's response to the abuse of minors by clergy is inadequate (48%), insufficient (67%), and that through it the Church itself is lowering its authority (83%). They believe that the consequences of exploitation concern the perpetrators

as well as the bishops, hiding information about it (69%). Moreover, more than half of the Women disagree with the opinion that the problem of paedophilia among priests is exaggerated (59%), and almost half (51%) do not share the opinion that there is an attack on the Church in Poland to lower its credibility (Głowacki, 2019). In other words, it is an analogous model of the transformation of the Church's social status that has taken place in Ireland. There, clerical paedophilia and its concealment by the clergy were (besides deepening secularisation as an effect of economic development) one of the main reasons for the decline in trust in the Church and the deinstitutionalisation of religiosity (Lisak, 2011). In Polish society, the Irish scenario of transforming religiosity and ties with the Catholic Church is being realised, with women, among others, playing major roles.

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