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Exploring the Potential of Roman Catholic Clergy to Strengthen Societal Security in Poland Based on Empirical Research among Members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security. The presented conclusions are based on the results of an empirical study carried out among members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. The used research method was a diagnostic survey, the technique was a questionnaire, and the research tool was a survey questionnaire. This research combines perspectives inherent in theology (namely, pastoral theology) and security sciences (focused on societal security).

Key words: Church, pastoral theology, Theologians, parish functioning, societal security.

Background

In view of contemporary trends towards the development of interdisciplinary research, it makes sense to reflect on a seemingly rarely

explored common research domain in the Polish societal context. This is particularly relevant in the interface between theology – especially pastoral theology¹ – and security sciences, with a particular focus on societal security². Detailed analyses of the functioning of the Roman Catholic Church and the accomplishment of its mission in the world, based on theology and custom, increasingly benefit from empirical research. The aim of such research is to objectively identify the phenomena of interest, especially those relevant to ministrative activity and the socio-cultural preconditions of the Church's salvific work under analysis³. A similar approach is found in security sciences⁴, where it is precisely security that is often interpreted as a societal phenomenon⁵. In Polish research into societal security there is even an axiom stating the necessity of including the activities of churches and religious associations in analyses specific to the research domain mentioned here. This includes the role of churches and religious associations in charitable and care activities⁶.

Observations of the Polish reality reveal that collective religious entities, such as parishes and various groups and associations operating in the ecclesiastic domain or inspired by the Gospel, have the potential to do good for society. Sometimes, however, this potential goes unnoticed or remains inactive. It can be assumed that the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in this area are, from a theological point of view, so ordinary and every day that they are not understood in non-religious terms – they are not seen as a significant contribution to improving societal security. The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security on

¹ T. Wielebski, M. Tutak, *Meandry interdyscyplinarności teologii pastoralnej. Przyczynek do dyskusji*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2016, 17, pp. 25-4.

² M. Leszczyński, A. Szydlik-Leszczynska, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne w wymiarze lokalnym*, "Res Politicae" 2022, 14, pp. 99-11.

³ W. Przygoda, *Paradygmaty metodologiczne we współczesnej teologii pastoralnej*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2009, 10, pp. 31-43.

⁴ J. Gierszewski, *The Importance of the System Category in Security Studies*, "Historia i Polityka" 2023, 44(51), pp. 55-72; M. Ciesielski, *Socjologia bezpieczeństwa jako subdyscyplina nauk o bezpieczeństwie*, "Cybersecurity and Law" 2019, 2, pp. 109-134.

⁵ A. Kołodziejczyk, *Bezpieczeństwo jako fenomen społeczny: pojęcie bezpieczeństwa, jego interpretacje i odmiany*, "Saeculum Christianum: Pismo Historyczno-Społeczne" 2007, 14(1), pp. 223-252.

⁶ J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Studium z zakresu teorii bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Difin, Warszawa 2013, p. 201; A. Skrabacz, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Podstawy teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Warszawa 2012, p. 233.

the example of the feedback from members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. It is worth noting that the Society of Dogmatic Theologians is made up of both lay and ordained persons. This research belongs to the shared space of theology (especially pastoral theology) and security sciences (specifically, societal security).

2. Research methodology

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security. In order to realise this aim, we invited members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians (hereafter TTD) to the survey, whom we asked about:

- What are the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry?
- What can priests do in the parish, for the sake of societal well-being, beyond the sacramental ministry?

The survey was conducted on 12-14 September 2022 among 64 members of the TTD. This group included ordained clergy but also lay theologians. It is an organisation that featured (as at the time of the research) 239 scholars engaged in dogmatic theology in their research and teaching work.

The group participating in the study consisted of current lecturers in seminaries and theological faculties, i.e. those responsible for teaching and for the formation of future priests⁷. The selection of respondents was intentional due to their profession and knowledge of the research subject.

The research conducted among lecturers of Roman Catholic seminaries in Poland is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, given the significant role that the Roman Catholic Church plays in Polish society, influencing the values, social norms, as well as attitudes and behaviours of citizens, this research can provide key information on the impact of the Church on the sense of societal security. Furthermore, by analysing the Church's contribution to security, which is a multidimensional concept that includes physical, psychological, economic and environmental aspects, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of which areas are emphasised by the Church and what strategies are used to promote them. The results of such research can therefore be applied to the formulation of public policies. The content of intellectual

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⁷ For more information on this study, see the following publication, cf. C. Smuniewski, I. Urych, K. Majka, M. Składanowski, B. Bado, *What to Do with Free Time? The Prospect of Strengthening Societal Security in the Opinion of Polish Theologians*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, 22, pp. 229-259.

formation in seminaries is also not insignificant. To a large extent, the way in which the future leaders of the Church function in society and their active participation (or non-participation) in building societal security depends on this content. Ultimately, these studies can reveal how the Church adapts its approach to the changing needs of society and the ways in which the Gospel is proclaimed.

A diagnostic survey method and questionnaire technique were used to explore respondents' opinions on the Church's potential to strengthen societal security⁸. The used research tool was a proprietary survey questionnaire.

The problem

From the point of view of Catholic theology, the concern of believers for society is simply a manifestation of the implementation of the commandment of love for the fellow men. It is also a manifestation of the communal nature of the human vocation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds people of this by stating: "The human person needs to live in society. For him society is not an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation"⁹. The next point of the Catechism is significant, where, in defining the community, it describes it in relation to its potential (the endowment of "talents"). The strength of this community is revealed in its pursuit of diachronic and synchronic communion: "A society is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each man is established as an 'heir' and receives certain 'talents' that enrich his identity and he must develop its fruits. He rightly owes loyalty to the communities of which he is part and respect to those of the authority who is in charge of the common good"¹⁰. The indication in the last sentence of this text – which treats "society" – of issues such as "communities", "authority" and "common good" mandates the interpretation of these indications of

⁸ J. Sztumski, *Wstęp do metodologii i technik badań społecznych*, Katowice 2010, pp. 190-192.

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., Citta del Vaticano 2019, no. 1879.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, no. 1880.

ecclesiastic provenance as symphonic with the reflection inherent in societal security research.

In the context of the creation of the common good, considering the use of the Church's potential – including its strength, agility and efficiency – in strengthening societal security seems reasonable. Note that research from the perspective of theology, including Catholic social teaching, as well as various social sciences, is underway and with great success. This research is concerned with the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in the process of societal security and, more broadly, its influence in the context of national security¹¹. To clarify terms, by societal security we mean the protection and development of the existential and basic living conditions of individuals and the functioning of society. This includes the provision of opportunities to meet material and spiritual needs; the realisation of life aspirations through the creation of conditions for work, parenthood, education, rest, health protection and social guarantees. An important aspect also regards the building of care spaces for the seniors, the sick and the socially maladjusted, and support in recovery from difficult life situations. Societal security encompasses all legal, organisational and educational measures by the central government, local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individual citizens. These measures are intended to ensure a certain standard of living for individuals, families, social groups and to prevent their marginalisation and social exclusion. The reflection on societal security focuses on the analysis of measures (actions) at the state level and their manifestations at the local level, such as local government. It also includes the measures (actions) of individuals and organisations that are part of the fabric of social life, such as NGOs, trade unions, churches and religious associations. When interpreting societal security in this way, it should be seen as a force influencing the material, demographic and

¹¹ S. Fel, K. Michaluk, *Religious Grammar of the Welfare State in Poland*, "Religions" 2023, 14(1), pp. 1-17; R. Zapart, *Kościół Katolicki w Polsce wobec nowych zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Polityka i Społeczeństwo" 2022, 3(20), pp. 221-237; S. Fel, K. Michaluk, *Idee i wartości katolickiej nauki społecznej a państwo dobrobytu w Polsce*, "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 2022, 65(4), pp. 5-22; S. Sowiński, *Kościół w sferze publicznej. Pewna strategia i jej ograniczenia*, "Chrześcijaństwo – Świat – Polityka" 2013/2014, 1/2(15/16), pp. 38-53; S. Sowiński, *Boskie, cesarskie, publiczne. Debata o legitymizacji Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce w sferze publicznej w latach 1989-2010*, Warszawa 2012; E. Nassalska, *Kościół Katolicki a bezpieczeństwo społeczne w Polsce*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu. Nauki Społeczne" 2011, 4(213), pp. 138-160.

spiritual development of the nation¹². Hence, societal security creation processes are closely tied to national security issues.

But why do we even think about the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security in Poland? When looking for an answer to this question, it is worth noting the results of surveys on social trust in Poland. The data from the surveys is provided by Centre for Public Opinion Research (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej – CBOS)¹³, which presents the attitudes of Polish citizens towards the activities of Caritas, the largest Church charity organisation in Poland. The operations of Caritas are wide and diverse, including rehabilitation centres, nursing and care homes, social care homes, occupational therapy workshops, single mother's homes, soup kitchens for the poor and day care centres for children and senior citizens. According to a CBOS survey published in April 2020, Caritas enjoys a high level of public trust, reaching 78%. This result places Caritas second in Poland in terms of public trust in aid organisations, just behind Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy (The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity)¹⁴, which earned 84% trust¹⁵. These figures clearly show that Caritas is an organisation that is active in the area of building societal security in Poland and, at the same time, an institution that enjoys considerable public trust.

When further considering the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security in Poland, it is worth referring to the results of research by Marcin Składanowski. This scholar from the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), who is both a theologian and a securitologist, stresses the impossibility of separating Polish culture and statehood from Christianity. It recognises that Christianity is an

¹² P. Zając, *Definicja bezpieczeństwa społecznego okiem prawnika – krytyczna próba usystematyzowania pojęć*, "Roczniki Nauk Prawnych" 2019, 29(4), pp. 129-140; J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Historia i Polityka" 2018, 23(30), pp. 21-38.

¹³ CBOS – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Centre). It is one of the largest centres in Poland specialising in public opinion research and publishing information about changes in current states and trends. CBOS regularly provides research and survey results to state agencies and public institutions, issuing reports and carrying out projects that are marketing and scientific in nature.

¹⁴ WOŚP is a philanthropic non-governmental foundation. Its mission includes measures for health care by saving the lives of sick people, especially children, and working to improve their health, as well as working for health promotion and prevention.

¹⁵ M. Omyła-Rudzka, *Zaufanie społeczne*, CBOS Research Communication, no. 43, 2020, p. 11.

integral part of the Polish national identity and an important state-building factor. In the context of Poland, the Roman Catholic Church contributes to national security because: “(...) it integrates society, not only its own members, by upholding the rights of every individual, supporting what is good and valuable in the Polish public life – political, social and economic – while criticising and exposing those elements that harm humanity, disintegrate the national community and thus weaken the state (...)”¹⁶. This approach to the Polish specificity of the relationship between religion, and above all, the Roman Catholic Church, and public and even political life, was described by Krzysztof Kosela, a sociologist from the University of Warsaw – as an ‘entangled identity’. The term comes from the title of his monograph: *Pole and Catholic: An Entangled Identity (Polak i katolik. Splątana tożsamość)*¹⁷.

We can summarise the above discussion on the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security by referring to the research by Mirosława Grabowska, a sociologist from the University of Warsaw. Having analysed the collated data from nationwide surveys, Grabowska concluded that in Poland there is a correlation between religiosity (the religious practice – going to church, participating in public religious practices) and activity for other people and the common good. According to Grabowska, this shows that the Church, on the one hand, creates opportunities for such activities and, on the other hand, there are people who engage in these activities¹⁸. The activities can be considered as “community security actions”, even though Grabowska herself did not use such term. In her research, Grabowska refers to parishes undertaking a variety of activities, not only organising pilgrimages to places of worship, but also other, non-religious activities, such as helping the poorest, caring for children and young people (by way of holiday trips or clubs), caring for the seniors or sick (including hospice operations), holding cultural events (concerts or exhibitions), sports and tourist events, managing libraries, cafés, or various training or courses (such as computer skills)¹⁹. In the light of this data, Mirosława Grabowska makes a bold statement: “(...) we are dealing not with an atrophy of the social functions performed

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¹⁶ M. Składanowski, *Kościół, naród i państwo w perspektywie chrześcijańskiej. Refleksja ekumeniczna*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 2018, 61(4), p. 452.

¹⁷ K. Koseła, *Polak i katolik. Splątana tożsamość*, Warszawa 2003.

¹⁸ M. Grabowska, *Bóg a sprawa polska. Poza granicami teorii sekularyzacji*, Warszawa 2018, p. 201.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

by parishes, but rather with their hypertrophy”²⁰. This data clearly indicates the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security, which should be followed and studied. From the point of view of society, such study is important for its welfare, while from the point of view of the Church, it is important for its theologically grounded societal mission.

Functions of the Church to strengthen societal security

We were interested in the functions of the Church in strengthening societal security. We asked respondents “What are the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry?”. The respondents were given the opportunity to indicate more than one answer in a set of the following suggestions: a) protection of mothers and parenthood; b) dissemination of patriotic values; c) formation of national identity; d) organisation of leisure activities for young people; e) building of societal bonds; f) support of social security; g) organisation of support for victims of domestic violence; h) support for victims of persecution and discrimination; i) raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction; j) counteracting societal pathologies; k) social activation; l) raising awareness of societal problems; m) teaching the principles of societal morality; n) other, which? The obtained answers made it possible to observe distinctive responses in the group of theologians surveyed.

The most frequently indicated function of the Church (78.1%) was “building societal bonds” and “teaching the principles of societal morality”. While observing a trend, it is more common for younger theologians to indicate the Church’s function of “building societal bonds” and older theologians to indicate “teaching the principles of societal morality”. “Building societal bonds” was indicated by 86.7% of the respondents in the youngest age group (up to 40 y.o.), in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) it was 82.6% and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 69.2%. On the other hand, with regard to “teaching the principles of societal morality”, among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 60.0% of respondents indicated this function, among the older (41-55 y.o.) 87.0% and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 80.8%.

The difference in views by age is also evident in the responses to other non-sacramental functions of the Church – “dissemination of patriotic values”. Despite the fact that equally 50% of the interviewed theologians rank this activity among the main non-sacramental

²⁰ Ibidem.

functions of the Church and 50% of them do not indicate this activity, a difference in views by age of the respondents is apparent. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) theologians only 20.0% indicate this, among the older (41-55 y.o.) the result is 52.2% while the oldest (>55 y.o.) is 65.4%. This differentiation is even more pronounced on the question involving patriotism. The respondents were able to indicate in the survey that one of the main functions of the Church, besides the sacramental ministry, is “formation of a national identity”. Views on this issue are almost evenly distributed, with 48.4% agreeing with the view and 51.6% disagreeing. In contrast, there is a clear trend that mainly the older theologians who agree with this view. Among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 65.4% think so, among the middle-aged (41-55 y.o.) 52.2%, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 13.3%.

Given the observed tendency for older and younger theologians to differ on ideological (patriotism, national identity) and socio-fundamental (societal bonds and societal morality) issues, let's look at the following socio-fundamental issues: “protection of mothers and parenthood”, “organisation of support for victims of domestic violence”, “support for victims of persecution and discrimination”, “raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction”, “counteracting societal pathologies”. We omit here the issue of “organisation of leisure activities for young people” because the content related to it is presented in another study.²¹ With regard to the “protection of mothers and parenthood”, 54.7% of the survey participants recognise this action as one of the main functions of the Church, in addition to sacramental ministry. Those who are inclined towards this, however, are the older theologians. Among the oldest (>55 y.o.) it is 61.5%, in the middle group (41-55 y.o.) 65.2%, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 26.7%.

As far as the “organisation of support for victims of domestic violence” is concerned, only 26.6% of respondents recognise this activity as one of the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry. In this small group of respondents, if we juxtapose the three distinguished age groups, the youngest ones (up to 40 y.o.) stand out with 33.3%, the older ones obtaining successively: 26.1% (41-55 y.o.) and 23.1% (>55 y.o.). Let us now look at “raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction”. Less than half of the respondents think that this activity can be counted among the main functions of

²¹ See: C. Smuniewski, I. Urych, K. Majka, M. Składanowski, B. Bado, *What to Do with Free Time? The Prospect of Strengthening Societal Security in the Opinion of Polish Theologians*, “Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 2023, 22.

the Church (48.4%). Those who think so tend to be older theologians, 56.5% (41-55 y.o.) and 53.8% (>55 y.o.) respectively, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 26.7% share this view. Regarding “counteracting societal pathologies”, this Church activity was marked in the survey questionnaire by a slightly larger group of respondents (53.1%). In the group of the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) theologians, less than half (46.7%) are inclined towards this activity, among the older ones the result is higher and amounts to the following: 60.9% (41-55 y.o.) and 50.0% (>55 y.o.). The trend observed and described above is not exactly reproduced in the question of “support for victims of persecution and discrimination”. This action of the Church was indicated by less than half of the respondents (39.1%). This group consists of respectively: 40.0% (up to 40 y.o.), 47.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 30.8% (>55 y.o.). Among the oldest theologians, there is the least support for this activity.

Among the suggestions included in the survey questionnaire, we proposed three general themes of a social-theoretical nature: “social activation”, “raising awareness of societal problems” and “support for social security”. Regarding the first theme, among those surveyed, 46.9% recognise it as one of the main functions of the Church, in addition to sacramental ministry. Among those who indicated this activity, older theologians predominate. While in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) 56.5% think so and among the oldest 50.0% (>55 y.o.), among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) it is only 26.7%. The activity “raising awareness of societal issues” was indicated by 51.6%. In this group, the youngest theologians stand out, albeit slightly. In their age group (up to 40 y.o.), 40.0% support this view. Among older theologians, the results are higher: 47.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 61.5% (>55 y.o.). On the other hand, the issue of “supporting social security” as one of the main functions of the Church was indicated by only 28.1%. In this group, the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) also stand out with a score of 13.3%, while the older ones reach 34.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 30.8% (>55 y.o.) respectively.

For a more comprehensive picture of the above analyses it should be added that respondents were given the opportunity to list their own proposals for the main functions of the Church. Ten respondents took advantage of this opportunity. They listed: “Creating culture”, “Conducting biblical studies”, “Spreading the principles of natural law”, “Creating bonds, relationships”, “Helping people on the periphery”, “Preaching the Gospel, catechisation, philosophical and theological education”, “Charitable work”, “Helping those in need”, “Formation of the young, catechesis of adults, being with people, support (not necessarily social and material)”. One respondent wrote: “The Church is not

one of many organisations for the societal good, if it can be reduced to the same understanding, it will be ‘salt that loses its taste!’”. It was this last answer (repeated by the respondent in the question concerning the possible activities of priests in the parish, for the sake of societal good – referred to in the next section of this article) identified in the questionnaires already on the day of the survey that prompted us to conduct additional individual interviews among the respondents on the subject of the activity of the Church in Poland in societal issues. On the basis of the twelve interviews, we deduced that theologians in Poland do not perceive the Church as an organisation with links to societal security-building processes. The very notion of ‘security’ seems rather alien to them in relation to theological concepts. Perhaps this is the result of their use of a hermetic theological language to describe the present. For in this language, the word ‘security’ is not associated with social or societal issues. However, it is to be expected that in the language of theology this concept will be increasingly used, if only in those areas of theology that concern moral theology and, above all, Catholic social teaching.

Considering the answers given to the question “What are the main functions of the Church, apart from the sacramental ministry?” and summarising the above analysis, it can be concluded that in the surveyed group of Polish theologians there is a division in views between younger (up to 40 y.o.) and older (>41 y.o.). The younger ones are more likely to think about building societal bonds without references to patriotism and national identity. It is also noticeable that the views of younger theologians on societal issues differ from those of older theologians. However, the sources as well as the possible consequences of this phenomenon need to be clarified in further research.

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The role of priests in strengthening societal security

We were interested in the role of priests in strengthening societal security. We therefore asked in the survey: “What can priests do in the parish, for the sake of societal well-being, beyond the sacramental ministry?”. Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate more than one answer in a set of the following suggestions: a) organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults (e.g. running interest circles, sports clubs, dance groups); b) volunteering; c) social animation (e.g. activating the local community to take action for the development of the neighbourhood/commune/village/town, work in the local government, organising debates, discussions

on the problems of the local community); d) societal diagnosis (e.g. identifying socially disadvantageous phenomena); e) prevention (e.g. prevention of addiction and other dysfunctional behaviour, like alcoholism, drug addiction, risky sexual behaviour and criminality); f) cultural animation (e.g. developing the creative skills and inventiveness of children, young people and adults, raising the level of cultural life in society); g) care and rearing (e.g. organising care for neglected children, abandoned children, chronically ill children; shaping moral attitudes in children and young people, the ability to make choices and hierarchise ethical values); h) re-socialisation (e.g. bringing socially maladjusted children and young people into forms of behaviour that conform to current societal norms); i) preparing children and young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour, to be independent in life and to interact with others; j) cooperation with NGOs; k) promoting the culture of national minorities, folk culture and regional culture; l) activity in local and national organisations aiding children, young people and adults; m) establishment (founding) and participation in the activities of social and educational institutions, associations (e.g. parish daycare centres) providing aid, especially to children and young people; n) counselling (e.g. helplines, consultation points, family counselling centres at parishes); o) celebration of national holidays (e.g. Independence Day); p) promotion of self and civil defence (e.g. altar servers taken to shooting range practice); q) other, which? The obtained results made it possible to observe distinctive responses. For the sake of clarity, in the following description we will present the indicated roles starting with the one that was most frequently selected by respondents.

Let us look at the most frequently indicated roles, taking into account the age of the surveyed theologians. **(1)** The most frequently indicated role of priests apart from sacramental ministry was “cultural animation” (70.3%). The respondents who indicated this activity were members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 78.3% and (>55 y.o.) 76.9%. In the age group of the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.), this view is shared by less than half of the respondents – 46.7%. **(2)** Taking into account the number of answers selected by the respondents, the “volunteering” role came in second place with a result of 68.8%. As in the role of priests described above, also in this case, those who indicated this activity of the clergy are members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 82.6% and (>55 y.o.) 65.4%. Only 53.3% of the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) indicated this role. **(3)** The role of priests “care and rearing” was indicated by 65.6% of respondents. In

this case, however, the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) were the most frequent choice with 80.0%. In the other age groups, the choices are distributed as follows: 73.9% (41-55 y.o.) and 50.0% (>55 y.o.). Thus, the older the theologians are, the more sceptical they are about this role of the clergy. (4) The next – fourth – function indicated by respondents was “organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults” – result 64.1%. We skip discussing this function in detail because the content related to it is presented in another study²². (5) In the fifth place there is “counselling”, indicated by 60.9% of respondents. This role of clergy was marked in the survey mainly by older theologians: (41-55 y.o.) 60.9% and (>55 y.o.) 65.4%. Younger theologians (up to 40 y.o.) once again differed in their responses from their older colleagues, as 53.3% of them indicated this function. (6) In the sixth place, with a score of 57.8%, there is the role “preparing children and young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour, to be independent in life and to interact with others”. Those who identify this role with possible activities of priests are mainly older theologians: (41-55 y.o.) 65.2% and (>55 y.o.) 57.7%. Younger theologians (up to 40 y.o.) marked this role less frequently – 46.7%. (7) The clergy’s role of “celebration of national holidays” came in the seventh place with a result of 56.3%. Here, the gap between the two age groups of the oldest theologians and that of the youngest is particularly apparent. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.), only one in four – 26.7% – indicated this role, while among the oldest it is two in three respondents: (41-55 y.o.) 69.6% and (>55 y.o.) 61.5%. (8) The eighth place in terms of frequency – 54.7% – was given to the function “establishment (founding) and participation in the activities of social and educational institutions, associations (e.g. parish daycare centres) providing aid, especially to children and young people”. Here, too, the trend of differentiation by age is confirmed. In the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) 52.2% share this view and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 61.5%. Among the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.), less than half of them recognise this role of the clergy – 46.7%. (9) In the ninth place there was “social animation” with a result of 51.6%. As in the role of priests described above and also in this case, those who indicated this clergy activity were members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 65.2% and (>55 y.o.) 50.0%. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.), only one in three theologians – 33.3% – indicated this role. (10) The role of priests in “Cooperation with NGOs” was indicated by 50.0% of respondents. As a result, this role was ranked as the tenth. The aloofness of the

²² Ibidem.

youngest theologians is also evident in this case. While 60.9% of theologians (41-55 y.o.) and 46.2% of theologians (>55 y.o.) indicate this role, it is only 40.0% for the youngest (up to 40 y.o.). Thus, the tendency of the youngest theologians to have a slightly distinct position is also confirmed in this case.

In the remaining six categories, in which the frequency of choice is below 50%, the respondents' selections were distributed as follows (consistently given in descending order from position 11):

(11) "prevention (e.g. prevention of addiction and other dysfunctional behaviour, like alcoholism, drug addiction, risky sexual behaviour and criminality)" 42,2% – (up to 40 y.o. 33,3%), (41-55 y.o. 60,9%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

(12) "promoting the culture of national minorities, folk culture and regional culture" 37,5% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 47,8%), (>55 y.o. 38,5%);

(13) "promotion of self and civil defence (e.g. altar servers taken to shooting range practice)" 32,8% – (up to 40 y.o. 6,7%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 42,3%);

(14) "activity in local and national organisations aiding children, young people and adults" 31,2% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

(15) "societal diagnosis" 28,1% – (up to 40 y.o. 6,7%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

(16) "re-socialisation" 26,6% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 30,4%), (>55 y.o. 26,9%).

In the above list, it is only in the eleventh position that the trend is disturbed, with the youngest theologians achieving a result of 33.3%, placing them between the older ones, who have 60.9% and 30.8% respectively. However, given that this is the eleventh position (marked by less than 50% of respondents), this result does not significantly distort the general trend evident in the survey.

For a more comprehensive picture of the above analyses it should be added that respondents were given the opportunity to list their own suggestions for possible roles of priests in the parish, for the sake of social welfare, beyond the sacramental ministry. Five respondents took advantage of this opportunity. They listed: "Marches in defence of the life of the unborn"; "Organising an eatery for the poor. Making parish Caritas the main parish organisation"; "Catechisation at the parish, developing the informed Christian faith through education, pastoral care". One respondent argued that the sentences we indicated in the survey questionnaire "can hardly be considered dedicated to priests

– because they can only undertake them if they are activities of their parish, communities”. Another survey participant repeated the answer “The Church is not one of many organisations for the societal good, if She can be reduced to the same understanding, She will be ‘salt that loses its taste!’” that he had noted at the previous question, which had been commented on earlier.

In light of the above, it can be said with great conviction that the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) stand out from the rest of the community in their views. In this context, two statements must be made. Firstly, the youngest theologians point above all to the involvement of priests (not counting sacramental ministry) in “care and rearing (e.g. organising care for neglected children, abandoned children, chronically ill children; shaping moral attitudes in children and young people, the ability to make choices and hierarchise ethical values)” – this function was indicated by 80.0% of the theologians in this age group. Secondly, the role that was chosen just as frequently was “organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults (e.g. running interest circles, sports clubs, dance groups)” – 60.0% in this age group.

It is significant that the greatest extent of non-sacramental activity among clergy is seen by theologians who are in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.). However, this issue calls for further recognition and research, which is beyond the accepted scope of this study.

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Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security on the example of the feedback from members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. The analysis of the results of the empirical study carried out and presented in this paper made it possible to answer research problems and the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. Young theologians differ from older theologians not only in their approach to societal issues but also to national issues. They do not recognise, for example, the spreading of patriotic values and the formation of national identity as tasks that the Church should carry out. Similarly, many of them do not see the need for priests in parishes to be involved in celebrating national holidays (e.g. the restoration of independence) or promoting defensive attitudes.
2. Younger theologians’ approach the contemporary agency of priests in the non-sacramental field with greater distance. This

distance is particularly noticeable in their frequency of marked responses in the surveys. Of the 16 proposed functions of priests, only four received approval from more than 50% of the young theologians. However, we do not know whether this state of affairs is due to their scepticism or perhaps to a desire to specialise in functions they considered important. Nevertheless, there is a discernible difference between the specified age groups of the respondents in this regard. Indeed, older theologians have a broader perspective on the role of priests in the modern world. However, through the present research, we know that this perspective is narrowing.

3. Theologians categorised in the age group (41-55 y.o.) are the most optimistic about the issue of priests' agency. Indeed, of all the listed age groups, they are the ones who indicate the most functions of priests as ones that should be carried out by them. The frequency of their indication is also high. However, the explanation of this phenomenon goes beyond the planned research framework of this study. This finding, however, should be treated as a stimulus for further in-depth research.
4. Theologians in Poland do not perceive the Church as an organisation with links to societal security-building processes. Moreover, this notion seems rather unknown to them in relation to theological concepts.
5. Despite the fact that the studied group of Theologians is a hermetic group, there are significant differences of a societal nature within it. It is also to be expected that future clergy, whose current teachers are mostly young theologians in the study group, will adopt positions close to those presented and analysed within the up to 40 y.o. age group.

In the light of the above, one more conclusion of a general nature can be formulated. The societal activity of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland should be the subject of theological and securitological studies. Such studies could contribute to the creation of a set of effective practices regarding the cooperation of religious organisations with local and central authorities. In turn, an interdisciplinary approach would allow for an in-depth analysis of societal activity and its optimisation. A scientific diagnosis of this phenomenon can support the development of coordinated cooperation between the state and the church that serves the common good, i.e. the well-being of society. In this way, research can contribute to a synthesis of the perspectives of pastoral theology and societal security sciences.

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