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**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND  
AS AN ENTITY INFLUENCING PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS (1989–2010)\***

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Various aspects of the term Catholic Church can be considered: theological, sociological, legal or politological. For the purpose of this article the definition of the Church as formulated by political science will be essential, although in this discipline various connotations exist. The Church is referred to as a denomination, religious community, an interest group or a political entity. Among authors writing about the Church as a denomination are Wolfgang Ernst Böckenförde<sup>1</sup> and Heindrun Abromeit<sup>2</sup>. Both of them focus on the spiritual-religious aspect of Church activities, at the same time emphasizing that political activity is not the principal aim of the Church. Broader theories of Church activities as an interest group are presented by Carolyn M. Warner and Dietrich Hierlemann. Classifying the Catholic Church as an interest group C.M. Warner claims that this institution makes efforts to get preferential treatment by political authorities, and its goal is to gain certain resources from the

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<sup>1</sup> W.-E. Böckenförde, *Wolność – państwo – Kościół*, Kraków 1994, pp. 92–93.

<sup>2</sup> H. Abromeit, *Sind die Kirchen Interessenverbände?*, [in:] *Die Kirchen und die Politik. Beiträge zu einem ungeklärten Verhältnis*, eds. H. Abromeit, G. Wewer, Opladen 1989, pp. 244–260.

economic and political systems. The Church attempts to lobby democratic governments through political parties and other means, as it intends to have an influence on the educational system, impose its moral values on society through legislation, or retain certain tax reliefs. The Church tries to provide its members with certain collective goods (such as answers to moral and philosophical dilemmas), affiliation-based (e.g. cult site), or individual incentives (e.g. sacraments). The Catholic Church, therefore, in addition to an organized religion, can be referred to as an untypical interest group<sup>3</sup>. D. Hierlemann similarly states that the Church acts as a representative of interests and a lobbyist that attempts to make influential contacts, establish good relations with decision makers and play for resources. The Church acting in the secular sphere is subject to the same principles as other associations (Verbände)<sup>4</sup>. This entity tries to promote its interests in the political process. In reference to theories describing the functioning of associations in the lay-political area we can examine the activities of the Church within the political system. From this perspective D. Hierlemann analyzes various forms of lobbying done by the Catholic Church in Poland<sup>5</sup>.

In this article the Church is defined as an entity influencing the political system. The subjectivity in this context means the Church can act to realize its objectives and intentions; in this sense the Church is an institutionalized causative entity. The Church is an organized and hierarchized structure. Members of a causative entity transfer part of their attributes onto the level of a group to which they belong. This relationship – delega-

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<sup>3</sup> C.M. Warner, *Confessions of an Interest Group. The Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe*, New Jersey 2000.

<sup>4</sup> In this approach associations are groups of natural or legal persons united by a joint objective, and have an organizational structure and internal rules and regulations. Associations combine interests of its members in order to reach joint objectives and values. The term Verbände in German politological literature is then close to interest groups. Cf.: *Interesseverbände in Deutschland*, eds. T. von Winter, U. Willems, Wiesbaden 2007; *Organisierte Interessen in der Bundesrepublik. Lehrbuch*, eds. U. von Alemann, 1997, Opladen 1989; M. Sebaldt, A. Straßner, *Verbände in der Republik Deutschland*, Wiesbaden 2004.

<sup>5</sup> D. Hierlemann, *Lobbying der katholische Kirchen: Das Einflussentz des Klerus in Polen*, Wiesbaden 2005.

tion of rights reveals itself as loyalty and subordinate to decisions made at the group level<sup>6</sup>. At the level of the common Church key decisions are made by the Pope, in the group of particular Churches (within a State) by the Episcopate and its Presidium, while in a particular Church decisions belong to the bishop.

The political system is understood as all political institutions through which political decisions are made and general norms and principles regulating the relations between these institutions. In the institutional approach, the term of political institution refers to organized political actors, primarily state bodies or political parties. In the non-institutional approach political institutions are defined as rules of the game and as structures embodying certain values and systems of power and determining appropriate behaviour of individuals in certain contexts. In order to implement its values and formulate its interests the Church exerts its influence on political parties so that they can affect the legislation and government's decisions and, directly, on State bodies – the parliament, government, courts and tribunals. The Church also affects formal and informal rules regulating the functioning of the political system, thus the behaviour of collective and individual political actors. From the viewpoint of normative neo-institutionalism the influence of the Church on the political system can be analyzed dynamically.

In documents of the Second Vatican Council the Church was defined as a community autonomous within the state, not identified with a specific political system. It was agreed that politics is an area of activities of lay Catholics<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, when the communist system was about to collapse in Poland the Catholic Church played an important political role, resulting from several factors: Polish tradition, the denomination structure of the nation, model of religious relations in the Polish People's Republic. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Poland lost its independence and was under the occupation of foreign powers, Catholic religion became an indicator of national identity, a 'centre of resistance against invaders'. The Church underlined its faithfulness to the nation, expressing the nation's aspirations,

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<sup>6</sup> E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Socjologia życia publicznego*, Warszawa 2005, p. 89.

<sup>7</sup> J. Krukowski, *Kościół i państwo. Podstawy relacji prawnych*, Lublin 2000, pp. 105–116.

and strengthening the national community. The fight for maintaining national identity led to a situation where the Catholic was identified as the Polish. Consequently, the Church was believed to be the mainstay of Polish statehood. That is how the model of Pole-Catholic evolved. After Poland regained independence in 1918, the Catholic Church retained its privileged position, confirmed by two subsequent constitutions of 1921 and 1935 and by the concordat with the Holy See as of 1925<sup>8</sup>. After 1945 communist authorities made efforts to oust the Catholic Church from public space and to build a lay society. The concordat was broken, and the clergy suffered repressions. In the fight for peoples' hearts and minds the Catholic Church was probably the only institutional force that, as an exponent of the views of the people, could resist communists. The Church, therefore, in addition to significant pastoral tasks, began to play a role as the nation's defender. Actions taken by Primate Stefan Wyszyński and his successor Józef Glemp aimed at defending the rights of individual, family and the nation in a situation where these rights were violated by communist authorities, and acting as a mediator between the authorities and the political opposition. The Catholic Church played a particular role as a mediator and guarantor of agreements concluded at 'round table' talks in 1989 between the communist government and the Solidarity opposition<sup>9</sup>.

The key factor affecting the position of the Catholic Church was the denomination structure of society. In this respect Poland was an almost homogeneous country. In 1972 Catholics, assuming baptism as the criterion, accounted for 93.5% of the population, while in 1980 and 1988 these figures were, respectively, 93.7% and 95.3%. For comparison, the corresponding average European in 1972 was 40%, in 1980–39.9%, and in 1988–39.6%<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> H. Misztal, *Polskie prawo wyznaniowe*, t. I, *Zagadnienia wstępne. Rys historyczny*, Lublin 1996, pp. 111–133.

<sup>9</sup> A. Dudek, R. Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945–1989)*, Kraków 2003; Z. Zieliński, *Kościół w Polsce 1944–2002*, Radom 2003; J. Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce 1945–1989*, Warszawa 2003.

<sup>10</sup> L. Adamczuk, J. Mariański, W. Zdaniewicz, *Życie religijne*, [in:] *Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918–1990*, eds. L. Adamczuk, W. Zdaniewicz, Warszawa 1991, p. 171.

When the communist regime was about to fall – after a ‘round table’ agreement was signed – the formal and legal status of the Catholic Church changed critically, as the system of ‘hostile separation’ of Church and State turned into ‘friendly separation.’ This was manifested by events of a legal and diplomatic nature. On 17 May, 1989 the Sejm of the People’s Republic of Poland adopted a package of Church laws, referred to as the May laws. Another step significant to the position of the Church in Poland and the normalization of religious situations was made when diplomatic relations were resumed between Poland and the Holy See upon the decision of 17 July 1989<sup>11</sup>.

The Church stepped into the 1990s as an institution with a strong moral authority and robust structure, „surrounded by an aura of victory” over the communist regime. The institutional Church was in 1989 one of the political decision-making centres. It was a mediator and guarantor of the round table agreement, it legitimized Solidarity elites, and supported the activities of Civic Solidarity Committees. At the same time the Church maintained correct relations with the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR), which enabled it to affect political decisions. The Catholic Church at the end of communist Poland became in fact the spiritual leader of the nation as well as a political entity.

In partly free elections in June 1989 the Church promoted candidates of the Solidarity opposition. The communication of the 234. Plenary Conference of the Episcopate of Poland reads: „Polish bishops are convinced that the coming elections will be a great step towards the subjectivity of society and departure from the monopolistic role »one leadership « as no single social group (...) has the right to usurp it”<sup>12</sup>. Even though the communication indirectly discouraged people from voting for the „only leader”, i.e. PZPR (communist party), actually many bishops and parish priests actively joined the Civic Committee campaign. The clergy urged the faithful go and vote and advised people who they should vote for, and hosted meetings of Solidarity candidates with parishioners. Bishops were

<sup>11</sup> H. Misztal, *op.cit.*, p. 352.

<sup>12</sup> *Komunikat 234 Konferencji Plenarnej Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra, 2 maja 1989*, [in:] *Komunikaty Konferencji Episkopatu Polski 1945–2000*, preface and ed. J. Żaryn, Poznań 2006, p. 343.

generally unwilling to support candidates representing Solidarity „lay left-wing”, especially those who did not share the Church’s position on the protection of life since conception<sup>13</sup>. The Church in the „contractual” elections supported logistically and legitimized the Solidarity elite, was an outstanding creator of a new political stage (post-communist order) and a driver of the „nation’s spiritual renewal”. In the elections of 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 1989 the Civic Committee won 35% (161) mandates in the Sejm and 99 out of 100 in the Senate. The second round of presidential elections on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1990 was won by Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity leader.

Jarosław Gowin rightly observes that there was some ambivalence in the stance of bishops against the first truly democratic elections in 1991<sup>14</sup>. On the one hand the hierarchs claimed that they did not support any specific parties, on the other hand they strictly defined the catalogue of values that election committees or individual candidates should represent. The *Statement of the Episcopate of Poland on the parliamentary elections* of 27<sup>th</sup> August 1991 declared that: „We (bishops) do not indicate any electoral lists. We oblige priests not to run or allow to run any political campaigns for any candidate in churches and chapels”<sup>15</sup>. At the same time the faithful were encouraged to vote for candidates representing the evangelical system of values and Polish Christian tradition<sup>16</sup>. In the *Pastoral Address of Polish Bishops on Catholics’ tasks at the parliamentary elections* of 26<sup>th</sup> August 1991 one can find a detailed list of postulates addressed to those running for the parliamentary functions: supporting the State-Church model based not on separation, but on complementarity, merging and supplementing one another; approval of teaching religion at school; guarantee of the identity of the nation and its Christian values<sup>17</sup>. The

<sup>13</sup> K. Koseła, *Rola Kościoła katolickiego w kampanii przed wyborami czerwcowymi*, [in:] *Wyniki badań – wyniki wyborów 4 czerwca 1989*, eds. L. Kolarska-Bobińska, P. Łukasiewicz, Z.W. Rykowski, Warszawa 1990, pp. 95–142.

<sup>14</sup> J. Gowin, *Kościół w czasach wolności 1989–1999*, Kraków 1999, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> *Stanowisko Episkopatu Polski w sprawie wyborów parlamentarnych, Jasna Góra 27 sierpnia 1991 r.*, „Pismo Okólne” 1991, No. 36, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Komunikat 249 Konferencji Plenarnej Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra 27 sierpnia 1991 r.*, „Pismo Okólne” 1991, No. 35, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Słowo Pasterskie Biskupów Polski o zadaniach katolików wobec wyborów do parlamentu, Jasna Góra 26 sierpnia 1991 r.*, „Pismo Okólne” 1991, No. 38, pp. 1–3.

Episcopate Commission for Families, assisted by the Family Chaplaincy and Catholic associations, referring to *the Family Rights' Charter of the Holy See*, prepared a list of 18 questions for parliamentary candidates to answer. They were asked, *inter alia*, about the role of the family in the life of society and the State; family rights observance in Poland; pro-family policy and legislation; approach to the indissolubility of marriage, divorces and abortion; teaching of religion at public schools; model of state education<sup>18</sup>.

Right before the elections the communication of the 250. Plenary Conference of the Episcopate of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1991 the bishops unambiguously concluded that the faithful should concentrate around (i.e. vote for) a few civic committees that represented values conforming with Christian ethics and Catholic social science<sup>19</sup>. In some diocesan curiae the communication was announced with an accompanying instruction that urged to vote for the specific lists, i.e. Catholic Electoral Action, Centre Civic Alliance (POC), Peasants' Agreement (PL), Christian Democracy, Party of Christian Democrats. The Episcopate Secretariat denied the instruction, emphasizing that the bishops did not want to call for voting for a specific lists of candidates<sup>20</sup>. However, the Conference of the Polish Episcopate did not object when the Christian-National Union (ZChN) and smaller organizations of the electoral committee formed the Catholic Electoral Action (WAK). According to the *Code of Canon Law* no association can be named Catholic unless it is given the consent of the competent church authority<sup>21</sup>. WAK and other right-wing electoral committees made use of support offered by individual priests, who opened their churches for the campaign. As a result, protests were submitted in several Voivodeship Electoral Offices<sup>22</sup>. In many churches political canvassing was

<sup>18</sup> *Zestaw pytań przeznaczonych dla kandydatów na posłów i senatorów, Warszawa, 19 września 1991 r.*, "Pismo Okólne" 1991, No. 39, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Komunikat 250 Konferencji Plenarnej Episkopatu Polski, Warszawa 17 października 1992*, ibidem 1991, No. 42, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> A. Dudek, *Historia polityczna Polski 1989–2005*, Kraków 2007, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici \* Kodeks Prawa Kanonicznego*, Poznań 2008, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> A. Dudek, op.cit., p. 172.



observed on the day of elections<sup>23</sup>. In 1991 the Church engaged in the electoral campaign, thus marking its presence in politics. The elections of 27<sup>th</sup> October 1991 polarized the party system, as 29 electoral committees made it to the Sejm, of which 11 got one mandate each. More than 3% of the mandates went to various post-Solidarity groups: liberal – Democratic Union (UD, 13%), Liberal Democratic Congress, Christian Democratic – WAK (10.7%), POC (9.6%), Independent Trade Union SOLIDARITY (5.9%), rural Peasants' Party (5.47%); radical anti-communist Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN 10%); post-communist: Democratic Left Alliance (SLD 13%), rural Polish Peasants' Party-Program Alliance (10.4%); the frivolous party – Polish Beer Lovers' Party (3.5%). Consequently, minority governments were formed by post-Solidarity groupings. on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1993 the cabinet of Hanna Suchocka signed a concordat with the Holy See.

Before the next early parliamentary elections in 1993 the Church gave up direct support of certain groups, at least verbally. In the *Address of Polish Bishops on parliamentary elections* of June 1993 Catholics were urged to go and vote, since you cannot be a good Catholic if you are not a good citizen. It was also stated that „Catholics cannot elect such candidates or programmes that are hostile to the good of the nation, society and State and that do not conform with the principles of Christian morality”<sup>24</sup>. Under the patronage of Archbishop Tadeusz Gocłowski on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1993 a Catholic Electoral Committee *Homeland* was established, consisting of the Christian-National Union, smaller parties belonging in the first term of the Sejm to the club called Polish Convention (Conservative Party, Peasants-Christian Party, Christian Democrats' Party) and the Federation of Polish Entrepreneurship<sup>25</sup>. The elections of 19<sup>th</sup> September 1993 ended in defeat for the right-wing by post-communist parties. Those that entered parliament included the postcommunist Democratic Left Alliance (37.2% of mandates) and Polish Peasants' Party (28.7%); the Democratic Union won 16.1% of the votes, social-democratic Labour Union (UP) 8.9%,

<sup>23</sup> J. Gowin, op.cit., p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> *Słowo biskupów polskich w sprawie wyborów do parlamentu*, czerwiec 1993 r., „Pismo Okólne” 1993, No. 25, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> A. Dudek, *Historia*, op.cit., p. 265.



KPN – 4.8%, while Non-party Block for Reforms Promotion, formed under the patronage of Lech Wałęsa, President of the Republic of Poland (RP), obtained 3.5% of the votes. The coalition cabinet was formed by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and Polish Peasants' Party (PSL).

The defeat of right-wing parties in 1993 and President Lech Wałęsa in presidential elections in 1995 (running for re-election, he lost the second round on 19<sup>th</sup> November to Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the candidate of the Democratic Left Alliance) led to a more reserved stance of the Church before 1997 parliamentary elections. Those elections witnessed a political polarization between the governing post-communist parties SLD and PSL and post-Solidarity: Christian-Democratic Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), radically anti-communist Movement for Reconstruction of Poland (ROP) and liberal Freedom Union (UW). In May 1997 the parliamentary constitutional bill (drawn up by SLD, PSL, UW and UP), negatively assessed by the Church, was adopted through a referendum. In their campaigns, SLD and UP continued their anti-clerical rhetoric (the position of these parties in the years 1993–97 made parliament cancel the ratification of the Concordat). The programs of the Solidarity Electoral Action (particularly of candidates affiliated with the Christian-National Union, Polish Family Association and ROP underlined Christian and national values<sup>26</sup>. The position of the Church in respect to the elections was precisely formulated during the 290. Plenary Conference of the Episcopate of Poland 26<sup>th</sup>–27<sup>th</sup> August 1997. The bishops appealed to Catholics to vote in the parliamentary elections, assuring at the same time, that in line with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, they would not relate the Church mission with a specific political party. The hierarchs put it in these words: 'It does matter to us that some parties refer in their programmes to Catholic social science, while others reject these principles and Christian values. The governing parties were negatively evaluated: no reforms of medicare services, social insurance, no measures taken to improve the situation in agriculture, heavy industry, party members sitting on supervisory boards of radio and TV stations and the Constitutional Tribunal. It was noted that the Sejm had been more preoccupied with

<sup>26</sup> Z. Nosowski, *Kościół a wolna gra sumień*, "Więź" 1997, No. 11, pp. 59–61.

eliminating religion from kindergartens, deleting marks in religion from school reports but it had time to liberalize the statute that „allows to kill the unborn for the so called social reasons”<sup>27</sup>. In the parliamentary elections of 21<sup>st</sup> September 1997 the mandate winning parties were: AWS (43.7%), SLD (35.7%), UW (13%), PSL (5.9%) and ROP (1.3%). The coalition cabinet was formed by AWS and UW, which the bishops accepted with satisfaction. One of the first decisions of the coalition was to ratify the Concordat, which took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1998.

The parliamentary elections in 2001 were held at the time of a declining rate of economic growth, increasing unemployment, political scandals associated with the ruling elite. In parallel, the Solidarity Electoral Action was splitting and the support was dropping for its electoral emanation – Solidarity Electoral Action of the Right (AWSP) and Freedom Union, while SLD enjoyed rising popularity<sup>28</sup>. The position of SLD was strengthened by its supporter, President A. Kwaśniewski (on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2000 he was re-elected president in the first round). In its communication of 25<sup>th</sup> August 2001 The Permanent Council of the Episcopate of Poland did not point out specific parties, but urged to vote for those candidates and committees that in everyday life observe principles of Christian ethics, defending human life from its conception to natural death, caring for the good of the family, particularly a multi-child family and being in favour of continued social and economic reforms<sup>29</sup>. While in the above communication the Council did not discredit directly any particular party, its pastoral address of 26<sup>th</sup> August 2001 actually warned against voting for SLD: „The party referring to the ideological continuity of the communist party now announces, through its prominent representatives as well as its published »Programme presentations« (Warsaw 2001, p. 59) the intention to »revise the law on family planning, protection of human fetus and conditions for allowed abortions«. That announces the right to kill conceived children for the so

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<sup>27</sup> *Komunikat z 290. Zebrania Plenarnego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra, 27 sierpnia 1997 r.*, „Biuletyn KAI” 1997, No. 35, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> A. Dudek, *op.cit.*, pp. 401–413.

<sup>29</sup> *Komunikat Rady Stałej Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, Jasna Góra, 25 sierpnia 2001 r.*, „Wiadomości KAI” 2001, No. 35, p. 7.

called social reasons”<sup>30</sup>. The programme indicator of SLD, according to the bishops, was the stance in favour of legal abortion, “the lay vision of the nation and the State”. In the parliamentary elections of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2001 the coalition committee SLD-UP gained as many as 47% of mandates, PSL 9.1%. The Sejm was also entered by parties formed after the decomposition of post-Solidarity groupings: liberal Civic Platform (PO) – 14.1%, conservative Law and Justice (PiS) – 9.6% and the populist Self-defence – 11.5% and national-Catholic League of Polish Families (LPR) – 8.3%. The government was formed by SLD-UP and PSL. Commenting on the electoral victory of SLD-UP the bishops predicted that the Church would find its way in any political reality<sup>31</sup>.

The political situation before the successive parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 was as follows: the SLD-UP government was losing the support of the nation, due to increased unemployment, an enormous public debt and scandals; both post-Solidarity parties PO and PiS were gaining popularity; Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, SLD’s candidate resigned from running for president<sup>32</sup>. The situation where the pre-electoral competition took place between post-Solidarity parties and candidates (the party leaders were running for president: Donald Tusk (PO) and Lech Kaczyński (PiS)) resulted in a verified position of the Episcopate Conference concerning the elections. This time the threat from SLD was not demonized. The Church did not support any political party, and only highlighted a set of values and principles that each candidate should demonstrate and follow. In the Episcopate’s statement on parliamentary elections, issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005, the bishops indicated the following values: respecting the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death; defence of the family and marriage as a permanent bond of woman and man; putting the common good above personal benefits

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<sup>30</sup> *Cóż mamy uczynić? Słowo pasterskie Rady Stałej Episkopatu Polski przed wyborami parlamentarnymi, Częstochowa, w Uroczystość Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej RP 2001, ibidem, p. 20.*

<sup>31</sup> 314. *Zebranie Plenarne KEP, Gospodarka wymaga właściwej interwencji państwa, ibidem 2001, No. 41, p. 8.*

<sup>32</sup> A. Dudek, *op.cit.*, pp. 434–503.

or party interests; abstaining from instrumental treatment of the Church in the electoral campaign; bear testimony to personal culture and responsibility, marked by respect shown to every human being<sup>33</sup>. In the elections to the Sejm of 25<sup>th</sup> September 2005 PiS, with 33.7 % of mandates, won over PO (28.9%) by a few points. Other parties that managed to enter the Sejm were Self-defence (12.2%), SLD (12%), LPR (7.4%) and PSL (5.4%). In the meantime, the second round of presidential elections on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005 brought victory to the PiS candidate Lech Kaczyński who defeated Donald Tusk from PO. As the post-Solidarity parties won, the bishops expected they would create a joint coalition, referred to as POPiS. To this end talks were held between the party leaders Jarosław Kaczyński and Donald Tusk at the Gdańsk-based residence of Archbishop T. Gołowski<sup>34</sup>. Programme and personal discrepancies concerning the composition of a future cabinet resulted in a fiasco at the talks. Consequently, PiS formed a government supported by the populist Self-defence and Catholic-national League of Polish Families<sup>35</sup>.

The bishops behaved with far-fetched reserve to accelerated parliamentary elections in 2007, having considered that the competition was between two post-Solidarity parties, axiologically close to the Church (PiS and PO). In the document *Responsibility for the common good* of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007 the hierarchs indicated that the Church had no political representation that would have a right to speak on its behalf or to invoke the Church. The bishops, requesting people to take part in the elections, advised voters to carefully get familiar with the programmes, bearing in mind that some of them are closer to the Christian vision of the human and society, while the other is far from it or contrary to what the Church teaches<sup>36</sup>. On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2007 PO won 45.43% of the mandates, PiS – 36.09%, The Left

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<sup>33</sup> Oświadczenie Konferencji Episkopatu Polski w sprawie wyborów, Wrocław, dnia 23 września 2005 r., "Wiadomości KAI" 2005, No. 39, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Tadeusz Gołowski. Świadek. Z abp. Tadeuszem Gołowskim rozmawia Adam Hlebowicz, Warszawa 2008, p. 173.

<sup>35</sup> A. Małkiewicz, *Rząd Marcinkiewicza*, Wrocław 2006, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> *Odpowiedzialność za dobro wspólne. Słowo biskupów polskich przed wyborami parlamentarnymi 2007 roku*, "Wiadomości KAI" 2007, No. 41, p. 29.

and Democrats – 11.52%, PSL – 6.74%. The coalition government was formed by PO and PSL. The Smolensk aircraft disaster on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010 that took the lives of President L. Kaczyński and 95 other people necessitated earlier presidential elections. In the second round on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2010 PO's candidate, Sejm Marshal Bronisław Komorowski won against PiS Chairman J. Kaczyński, which strengthened the PO's position in the ruling power system.

In the 2011 parliamentary elections the Church did not support directly any political party. Nevertheless, the communication from the session of Diocese Bishops Council on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011 states that the Church does not identify itself with any party, and „it is a Catholic's duty to vote for those people and circles who stand for the defence of human dignity and life from conception to natural death”<sup>37</sup>. What it reads between the lines is that voters should elect mainly those candidates who in late August 2011 were in favour of sending the civic anti-abortion bill for further parliamentary work, i.e. PiS, PSL and the minority conservative wing of PO. Individual bishops also voiced their advice that it was necessary to vote for candidates believing in the protection of human life from conception to natural death. In the campaign, occasional incidents of direct support given to PiS candidates by the clergy were recorded. The elections of 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011 confirmed PO's high position. The party got 45% of seats in the Sejm, PiS – 34.13%, Palikot's Movement – 8.40%, SLD – 6.09%, PSL – 5.87%. The new actor then appeared on the political stage: anti-clerical, liberal movement initiated by Janusz Palikot, a former PO deputy.

The involvement of bishops in electoral processes after 1989 in fact led to bringing politics into the Church. Its engagement in politics manifested itself in direct or indirect legitimization of some candidates and right-wing or post-Solidarity parties and on the contrary, delegitimization of candidates representing left-wing or post-communist parties. That position was far from the views developed by social teaching after the Vatican Council

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<sup>37</sup> *Komunikat z sesji Rady Biskupów Diecezjalnych oraz uroczystości na Jasnej Górze*, 26 sierpnia 2011 r., [http://www.episkopat.pl/?a=dokumentyKEP&doc=2011826\\_0](http://www.episkopat.pl/?a=dokumentyKEP&doc=2011826_0), [30.08.2011].

II, under which the Church shall not support any political party and politics is the domain of lay Catholics. Before each subsequent election in Poland, the Church will have to define its role between politics and metapolitics. Being active in politics, the Church becomes one of many political entities, while engaged in metapolitics, it can be one of the institutions whose authority rises above politics, and a major stabilizer of social order.