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Religiousness of villagers in family transmission – continuity and change

The studies on the religiousness of the modern Polish village are interesting but also difficult to generalize or organize. The expression “religiousness of villagers” marks a start for many paths leading to some related notions, especially in the field of ethnography and anthropology. The first terms which appear are “traditional religiousness of the village”, “folk religiousness”, “folk Catholicism”. Moreover, many researchers investigating the social issues, especially cultural ones, in rural areas often refer to or just mention the categories of “people”, “folklore” and “tradition”. What is searched for are the traces of tradition and folk culture in contemporary patterns of life in rural communities. This is an interesting quest but requires the verification of many images or even stereotypes concerning rural life, which are deeply rooted in human consciousness. Over many decades, the social and economic structure of the Polish village was unchangeable – it was a place of food farming and agricultural economy, which with time involved the participation of a special category of peasant-workers. These were the foundations of villagers’ daily life and of the created cultural models in all sectors of culture: social culture, culture of being and of the symbolic (also religious) sphere. The search for associations with tradition, mainly meant as folk culture, had some sense – if this consistency of the keystones of village life was taken into account. Such an image of the country does not befit modern times – in almost three last decades, the transformations initiated in Poland at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s have also comprised the country and changed these keystones (the social and economic structure), which triggered off many new processes. One of them is the specific model of migration: since the early 21st century from the country to the town and for over twenty years in the opposite direction – from the town to the country. Apart from a few regions in Poland, the significance of agriculture in the modern rural economy has fallen dramatically. As a result, there are fewer farmers among rural communities, the

urban lifestyle is getting more popular and it does not mean performing agricultural tasks any longer. The contemporary country is changing its functions towards recreational or residential ones¹.

The modern village and folk religiousness

While undertaking the research into the symbolic culture of the modern village, also into the religiousness of its inhabitants, in this situation, is it right to refer to the past, to what has been customarily associated with the country – in other words, to tradition and ethnographically understood “folklore”? With no doubt, the answer is yes, which might be particularly inspiring for ethnologists and anthropologists. The anthropological standpoint allows for treating religion and religiousness as a cultural value, a behavior pattern which fulfills some particular human needs and as cultural heritage. These are categories which are not easy to describe, because – in widely applied classifications – they are situated not only in the symbolic, but also social culture, as well as the culture of being. In ethnographic, anthropological and sociological analyses, the following functions of religion have been emphasized: cognitive, psychological-preservative and normative. In the five last decades, Polish researchers have also paid attention to the increasing integrating function of religion. Among other things, this phenomenon is manifested in communality behavior and a revival in the tradition concerning contemporary religiousness of villagers. These are the behavior patterns, religious attitudes and beliefs which originate from the mindset, reasoning (often magic one), knowledge and experiencing the faith in the way typical of the so called traditional folk culture². This term is associated with the religiousness of rural population – however, it should be taken into account that also in urban conditions, owing to many decades of the migration from the country to the town, some traditional behavior patterns, customs and rituals have survived – those related to church liturgy and stemming from folk religiousness. Today, this form of religiousness can be seen in daily routine, custom norms, ritual and religious practices³. Yet, this standpoint of an ethnographer requires verification: religiousness is subjected to quantitative and qualitative changes and the features which still last are subjected to transformations due to the changing social and cultural context as well as the changes in religiousness

¹ H. Podedworna, *Styl życia mieszkańców wsi*, in: *Między miastem a wsią. V Kongres Obywatelski*, B. Łaciak (ed.), Gdańsk 2010, p. 39.

² See: R. Tomicki, *Religijność ludowa*, in: *Etnografia Polski. Przemiany kultury ludowej*, vol. 2, M. Biernacka, M. Frankowska, W. Paprocka (eds.), Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk – Łódź 1981, p. 29.

³ I. Bukowska-Floreńska, *Współczesna polska religijność ludowa – zachowania, normy obyczajowe, praktyki obrzędowe*, in: *Kultury regionalne i pogranicza kulturowe a świadomość etniczna, Kultury regionalne i pogranicza kulturowe a świadomość etniczna*, I. Bukowska-Floreńska (ed.), “*Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*”, 1999, vol. 2, p. 15.

of Poles and the population of many other European countries. Some qualities attributed to folk religiousness are present in the contemporary religious culture or they return to this culture, which researchers interpret as a reconstitution of religiousness which partially comprises the features once treated as typical of folk religiousness⁴.

Almost forty years ago, Michał Buchowski, an anthropologist, made an attempt at constructing a model of folk religiousness in reference to the concepts of eminent researchers into this subject matter – among others, S. Czarnowski and E. Ciupak. In those years, the diagnosis of the rural population's way of life was based on the thesis on strong dependence of this population's (farmers') efforts on natural phenomena. Buchowski writes that, being unable to take control over the powers of nature, peasantry looks for other ways of gaining their favour: "in their conduct, rural population is not guided by rational premises, forcing all members of the group to implement their own models of religious behavior. Villagers also show a lot of credulity, proneness to fantasy, creating legends and myths around exceptional events (...). The peasant ideology is soaked with magical thinking which is inseparably connected with any religious beliefs. Masses need a person who will enable them contacts with divine powers, a priest who is their representative"⁵. These are characteristic features of rural population's way of life, which have determined the shape of its religiousness. According to S. Czarnowski, what distinguishes it from other types of religiousness is the traditionalism of beliefs, their sensualism, particularism, ritualism, collectivism, the soaking with magic, as well as combining religiousness with other, non-religious values and patterns, a kind of specific selection of doctrinal and dogmatic contents⁶. In science, there are some more detailed – though referring to Czarnowski's definition – concepts of folk religiousness, for example the one formulated by I. Bukraba: folk religiousness is characterized by the emphasis on collective participation, the need for mass manifestation of religious experiences, strong conformism in implementing practices, traditionalism, love to showy ceremonies, naïve sensualism, faith nationalism, particularism, ritualism and emotionality, with a simultaneous low level of religious awareness, weak relation to morality and the lack of personal experience of the religious contents⁷.

Until today, such a model of folk religiousness – in Poland often identified with folk Catholicism, based on the concepts of S. Czarnowski, F. Znaniński and R. Tomicki – has been the starting point in the studies on the transformations of Catholicism. It was even claimed for many years that the folk type prevailed in Polish religiousness. A lot of experts in these issues do not deny the relevance of many elements of this model but they state that the overall image emerging from these elements has serious flaws – the one-sidedness of the approach, superficiality of ascertainment, and – first of all – clearly visible criticism, "which reveals an intrusive intention to evaluate peasants'

⁴ M. Zowczak, *Między tradycją a komercją*, "Znak", 2008, no 3, pp. 31-44.

⁵ M. Buchowski, *Model religijności ludowej – próba konstrukcji*, "Lud", 1979, vol. 63, pp. 96-97.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 97.

⁷ I. Bukraba, *Religijność ludowa i jej niemuzyczny krytycy*, "Znak", 2008, vol. 634, p. 6.

piety from completely alien to them perspectives, in the situation when the researchers' perspectives either ignore or criticize exactly what is most significant in the sociological view on religion – its collective, social character"⁸.

The descriptions of the Polish village made over fifty, or even thirty or twenty years ago have lost their topicality. The socio-economic and cultural context of the religiousness of villagers has changed, therefore – the question should be raised what has remained from the old folklore. It seems that not much, because the researchers claim that religiousness is reconstituting itself, preserving merely a part of the qualities once attributed to folk religiousness. This is not so much a sign of firm tradition but rather its creative continuation, updating by being placed in contemporary contexts⁹. Both in Poland and in Europe, there is no such peasantry as Znaniecki or Czarnowski describe – folk religiousness as a conglomerate of specific qualities generated in the processes of adjusting universal religion to the specificity of life in an isolated rural community is comprised mostly in historical resources¹⁰. Still, this was the religiousness of pre-modern peasant community.

Coming back to the question whether something or what has remained from the religiousness of Polish peasantry, over twenty years ago Janusz Mariański, a sociologist, wrote that modern folk religiousness in Poland could be more adequately described in the categories of cultural continuity than of innovative dynamics¹¹. Andrzej Potocki expresses a similar opinion by writing that although folk religiousness counts as a relic of the past, it is re-discovered and wrongly regarded as folklore, marginal religiousness. In the country, the significance is decreasing of these elements of religiousness which are associated with a farmer's work, whereas at the background of the interesting process of the ruralization of towns, more significance is attributed to the elements of religiousness that have peasant (which does not mean agricultural) origin. In this way, folk religiousness becomes a type of religiousness which comprises broad masses¹².

Some experts in the issues of rurality suggest using the phrase religious culture of village dwellers instead of folk religiousness. Thus, folk religiousness could be treated then as the empirically confirmed contemporary religiousness of village dwellers, regardless the structural or cultural changes. Such understanding makes it possible to capture the real state without the necessity to compare with the traditional point of reference¹³.

Here, the question is brought up again whether the model of folk religiousness should be referred to when the studies on the contemporary village are undertaken.

⁸ I. Bukraba, *Religijność ludowa i ich niemuzyczny krytycy*, "Znak", 2008, no 634, p. 6.

⁹ A. M. Królikowska, *Elementy „ludowe” w religijności współczesnej*, "Opuscula Sociologica", no 4, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 8.

¹¹ J. Mariański, *Przemiany religijności ludowej w środowisku wiejskim*, in: *Religijność ludowa. Ciągłość i zmiana*, W Piwowarski (ed.), Wrocław 1983, p. 278.

¹² A. Potocki, *Religijność polska na wsi i w mieście*, in: *Sociologia życia religijnego w Polsce*, S. H. Zaręba (ed.), Warszawa 2009, pp. 236-237.

¹³ I. Bukraba-Rylska, *Sociologia wsi polskiej*, Warszawa 2008, p. 509.

The answer here is positive again – this model can be used as a reference point for indicating modern variants of traditional patterns, especially during the examination of the villagers' cultural remembrance and the contents of cross-generation transmission concerning the patterns of religious behavior.

The village of Świętokrzyskie region in the context of socio-cultural transformations

The discussed social, cultural and economic transformations have not omitted the rural areas in Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, where the author has conducted her research – this village is a good (because not outstanding from other rural areas) example of the processes and phenomena described above.

Ludynia, a village in Włoszczowa County, has a long history, reaching the 15th century, although it has not been mentioned in the old sources. Ever since its beginning, it was a gentry village, which changed owners several times, also in the 16th century, when the manor house went into the hands of the Szafrński family – the supporters of the Polish reformation who built on their land a stone church of Polish Brethren, called the Arian Community until the present day. The building has been preserved in an almost unchanged form. It was active for several years and later, at the end of the 1750s, it housed a granary and a lumber room¹⁴. There is an imposing manor house, built in the 18th century, which probably replaced the earlier court building¹⁵. After World War II, when the last owner moved out, the main building was changed into a primary school, which functioned here until the 1980s. At that time, the “small manor house” (as local people call it) went into private hands again.

As the majority of villages in this region, Ludynia was an agricultural village – today, this adjective only partially describes it. There are 104 households (286 inhabitants), among which 13 can be called farmsteads (out of which 4 are relatively large). Many people work in the surrounding industrial (silicate, lime, wood) firms and in more distant ones in Kielce or in the sector of services. The elderly live on agricultural pensions, which they got after passing the land to children or the state, or on the pension due to their earlier non-agricultural work. The social and economic structure of this village reflects the general structure of the whole Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, especially its rural areas. It is an agricultural-industrial voivodeship, where the largest

¹⁴ E. Kosik, R. Nadgowski, *Krasocińskie sołectwa*, in: *W sarmackim Krasocinie. Monografia historyczno-gospodarcza gminy Krasocin*, E. Kosik, E. Madejski, R. Nadgowski (eds.), Kielce 1997, p. 274.

¹⁵ See: www.swietokrzyskie.org (September 2016); for more, see: D. Kalina, *Ludynia wieś z dworem i zbożem*, in: *Na włoszczowskich drogach historii. Materiały z sesji naukowych odbytych w Gruszczyńcu, Ludyni, Olesznie, Włoszczowie poświęconych dziejom powiatu włoszczowskiego*, D. Kalina, G. Dąbrowski (eds.), Włoszczowa – Krasocin 2012, pp. 151-166.

group are the people employed in agriculture (32,5%). The rural territories of the voivodeship is inhabited by almost 695 thousand people, out of whom about 15 thousand moved to the town in 2005-2015¹⁶.

For sociologists and anthropologists, it is obvious that, without taking into consideration the social, economic, political and cultural context, the question how particular cultural phenomena and their conglomerates function (also within symbolic culture, hence – religion) will not be answered. In the case of the village in Świętokrzyskie region, the quality of this context is assessed as low. What is important for a researcher who investigates religiousness of village dwellers is the degree to which the village is modernized and similar to the most developed rural areas and the town.

Although Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship as an Eastern region of Poland is making up for developmental deficiencies with the fastest pace, the profile outlined within the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 for Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship allows for including this region to the least developed (in many respects) in Poland¹⁷.

¹⁶ *Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Świętokrzyskiego 2015* (see: www.kielce.stat.gov.pl – August 2016).

¹⁷ According to this Programme (see: www.rpo.swietokrzyskie.pl), the characteristic features of the region are: poor outer transport accessibility and poor inner transport network;

– it is far below the EU average concerning the IT use by inhabitants, firm owners and public institutions – this particularly refers to rural areas – 33.7% (2012) of households were equipped with a personal computer, this comprises learners as well;

– the demographic situation – one of the least favourable in Poland; an intensified process of migration of the young to other voivodeships at the level of upper education; the negative birthrate;

– low standards of the social infrastructure (lack of nurseries and kindergartens, especially in villages – 50,7% of children attend kindergartens there);

– the number of people at the post-productive age is increasing, life expectancy is growing, but the health condition of the inhabitants is deteriorating (one of the last positions as regards the access to specialist medical appliances and chronic disease centres – a level lower than the national average);

– education – the distance in the access to education and its good quality is growing in comparison to the best voivodeships;

– economy – a low GDP level, one of the highest unemployment rates (higher than the national average, long-term unemployment – the highest in Poland), particularly in the country and among women; low professional activity (especially among women living in the country);

– rural areas: a low share of non-agricultural activity in the employment structure, a lower (than in urban areas) level of incomes;

– the demographic situation in the country – one of the worst in Poland (ageing society, a growing number of people at non-productive age, negative birthrate, negative migration balance);

– education not adjusted to the needs of the work market and firm owners – the falling number of learners, a demographic decline, the growing number of people with upper education, poor results of outer examinations, especially in rural areas, a low rate of learners passing secondary school leaving exams, lack of the awareness and possibility of increasing the education (age 25 – 64);

– a serious threat of poverty, an insufficient support system;

– the deepest extreme poverty (shared with Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship) in 2015, according to the income gap index, and substantial depth of the shortage;

– a low level of satisfaction from the residence place – 55,7% of very satisfied and satisfied in 2015 (Pomeranian Voivodeship – 73,7%, Lesser Poland Voivodeship – 62,9%).

This situation is reflected in Włoszczowa County, where communes (*gminy* in Polish) have the agricultural profile and the town of Włoszczowa – the industrial one. The population of the county is 46 146, with the predominance of people in the post-productive age in comparison to those in pre-productive age. One of the characteristic features of the county is significant unemployment – 1,7%, which mostly concerns the young up to the age of 25 (20,8%)¹⁸.

Ludynia is one of nine villages (with 3 thousand inhabitants in total) belonging to the parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kozłów, which is a part of the Diocese of Kielce. The analysis of the statistical data collected by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics can lead to the conclusion that the intensity of religious practices among the diocese inhabitants is significant, though closer to the average than the high level. The Sunday Mass (dominicantes) is attended by 41,3% of the believers. This is a rather high rate of church practices (the national average in 2014 was 39,1%), although it has decreased over the last years: in 1980 it was 50,4%, 1991 – 45,8%, 2000 – 48,0%, 2009 – 43,8%. Over the last year, joining the holy communion (communicantes) remains at the stable level of 18% (the national average: 16,3%)¹⁹.

The inhabitants of Ludynia have their parish church in the neighbouring village, about four kilometers away. Yet, in the central part of their village, there is a shrine with roof shingles, in which during the school year the priests (usually the parochial vicar) celebrate the Holy Mass every Sunday at 2 p.m. None of the villagers knows how long the shrine has been there – they just say “always”. The elderly remember that one inhabitant of Ludynia, after his come back from World War II, decided to renovate and rebuild the shrine. He mobilized many other villagers and the shrine was enlarged into the current shape. It can be observed that a part of villagers attend the mass in the shrine and some go by car to the parish church. In every household in the village, there is at least someone going to church – sometimes the elderly cannot do this now but in the past they did religious practices; now it is someone else in their families who goes to church regularly or from time to time.

Religiousness of villagers in family transmission

The first stage of the studies on this issue was conducted from April to July 2016. In this period, the interviews were carried out with the members of twenty families consisting of two or three generations. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. What was used as an important research technique was systematic participant observation as well as the outer observation of Ludynia's inhabitants' behaviors related to religious practices.

¹⁸ See: www.kielce.stat.gov.pl (September 2016).

¹⁹ See: www.iskk.pl (September 2016).

The general image of religiousness among Kozłowo parishioners emerges from the contents of the interview with the priests in charge of this parish. This image comprises both the description and the evaluation of the religious behaviours of the parishioners and the whole village. This material constitutes an important and relevant introduction to what the parish members say, especially those living in Ludynia.

The priests start their description with the statement that the parish of Kozłowo has its own specificity: "It belongs to the so called post-court parishes, there were four manor houses on its territory. This must have influenced the profile of religiousness". The priests are of the opinion that this has resulted in certain unwillingness towards clergy. Even though there are no manor houses any longer, a priest is viewed as an ally of the "lord" – such an attitude is changing very slowly, according to the priests. Religious practices are kept at the level of 30%. Many people take the communion, which in the vicar's opinion is associated with poor familiarization with the faith – "daily life contradicts the religious faith, there is no recognition of sinfulness in life – I can take the Holy Communion because nothing has happened, I have not killed anybody". Only a small group of inhabitants is engaged in the parish life, there is poor responsibility for the material matters of the Church, many people do not offer any money at the mass as the material matters of the Church were the responsibility of the local manor houses in the past. Youth are the group whose commitment to religious life is the weakest, because, on a regular basis, they are out – either in boarding schools or coming home late from their schools. According to the vicar, unfortunately – a part of those who have stayed yields to serious pathology: alcohol, drugs, prostitution; some are in prison, sentenced for robberies and thefts.

The engagement of the inhabitants of Ludynia was not assessed positively either. Both the parish priest and the vicar claim that not all the people in Ludynia are committed to the parish life. A small group of activists emerges here with their creative and enterprising leader. This group is responsible for the shrine in which the Sunday mass is served, they have raised money for the renovation of the shrine, they pay its maintenance costs. The Village Women's Club has also got positive evaluation for organizing the Christmas Eve for the lonely and the elderly, preparing the harvest wreath for the indulgence church fete (every year on the 8th September) and other activities. "The rest is rather indifferent and inactive". There are 50 regular churchgoers out of 400 registered ones, only 20 people take the communion. The shrine is attended by 60 people, mostly elderly women. Most of the people do not practice at all, despite the sound system in the shrine, which reminds people of the mass. "It is worth reminding that their religious attitude results from the history of this place. For a long time, Ludynia was owned by the supporters of Arians. This is reflected in the profile of religiousness". The priests emphasize that at the most important church events, participation in the holy mass gets intensified – it is really big e.g. at the Christmas Eve and the Resurrection service, on Corpus Christi, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, because "it is improper not to be there".

The religious commitment of youth was also assessed as poor by the priests. They stress that many young people have gone away to learn or work abroad. Those who have stayed hardly ever engage in the parish life. "What can be seen is a weak but steady exodus of the young from the Church. It is clearly seen that they have a lot of claims, a demanding lifestyle, a critical attitude to the elderly and a kind of anti-clericalism. A certain regularity concerning rural people can be observed: they are both religious and anti-clerical at the same time. The anti- attitude in the times of globalization is associated with secularization, which is harvesting more and more. This takes place due to easy and fast communication via the Internet and social networks". The biggest challenges for "rural" priests are such phenomena as: the depopulation of villages, ageing society, a high suicide rate in the last years, the growing number of unmarried men (whose chances for marriage and raising a family are getting smaller), individualism, no attitudes of solidarity towards people in need²⁰.

The presented profile based on the description made by the priests in charge of the parish in Kozłów is a thoughtful study of religiousness among the inhabitants of the modern Polish village. This profile is determined by various social and cultural processes, relevantly collected and described by the speakers. The conclusion can be drawn that the belief that rural population is not prone to the (rather urban) tendencies to drift apart from the Church – to reduce religious behavior, in other words to what is generally (not always aptly) called secularization processes – is erroneous. These processes have become omnipresent.

The observations and analyses of the priests are reflected in the words of the inhabitants of Ludynia – from the oldest to the youngest.

One of the most frequently described indicators of religiousness is the frequency of religious practices, mostly of "going to church". As mentioned earlier, people in Ludynia have several options here, but two are the most frequent: going to the parish church in the neighbouring village or the participation in the services performed in the shrine in their village. The latter is popular among a relatively large group – the oldest who have not enough power to go to the parish church, also some middle-aged parishioners and a few of the young. Children usually go to the parish church. The biggest generation loophole is seen in the case of youth – both in the church and in the shrine they constitute the smallest group of participants of the holy mass. For example, last year – on the 5th November, 48 believers took part in the mass performed in the shrine, out of which there were only few representatives of youth.

With a lot of willingness, the oldest female villagers described the "old times" – of what nature the religious practices were in their family homes. These "old times" were the years before World War II and the post-war period. Then, going to church on every Sunday and treating this as a duty, obligation, was common – "How not to go, it is a sin" (Bronisława, aged 79), also at all important church holidays. The inhabitants of

²⁰ Excerpted from the interview with the priests from the parish in Kozłów, November 2016.

Ludynia went to the parish church in the neighbouring village by horse cart or on foot, later also by bike or even by tractor. The old road to the church was sandy – therefore since early spring till late autumn people went barefooted and put their “Sunday” shoes at the church entrance. However, it sometimes happened that some individuals broke from the duty of going to church on Sunday – “my mother often went to church but she worked hard in the manor house, she could not go every Sunday, but she went to church each time she could till late senility” (Bronisława, aged 79). Another respondent (Zofia, aged 91) talks about pre-war years: “You did not go to church every Sunday because you had nothing to do it in, there were no decent clothes and shoes, summer was the best as you could go barefooted. Father sang the Book of Hours in church in the morning probably every Sunday, so he had to come early in the morning, before the mass. At home, he sang “Kiedy ranne wstają zorze [When the aurora is raising]”. When he died, my brothers claimed the priest charged less for the funeral due to this Book of Hours, but he did not agree”. In the early post-war years, the same model of “going to church” was binding – the villagers took part in the mass every or nearly every Sunday. “My parents did not go to church regularly, just occasionally, they had no time, father was anti-clerical as he got discouraged to priests in youth” (Irena1, aged 75). “When kids were small, parents did not go to school every Sunday, but later – they always did, most often to our shrine” (Grażyna, aged 70). “As long as they were healthy, my parents went to church every Sunday, mum went for the 10 o’clock mass and later she was busy with dinner, father went for the noon mass – and in this way they shared household duties. In particular, my father was very religious” (Mirosława, aged 64).

The observations and interviews confirm that the older inhabitants of Ludynia (over 65), as well as middle-aged ones and people in late middle age (40-64) go to church rather regularly – every or almost every Sunday (either to the parish church or the local shrine) and on church holidays and such occasions as funerals, christenings, weddings. Their children (aged 24-40) are less active in this respect, especially those who have left their home village.

Irena2 (aged 58) has two children aged 36 (daughter) and 32 (son). “My son lives in Warsaw, both he and his wife do not go to church, but my daughter does when she has to with her daughter as she will have the first communion next year. My granddaughter goes to church from time to time with her grandma”. Why do the young drift apart from church? Irena2 says: “A lot depends on the priest, they cannot attract the young. Now, priests are oriented towards taking money, you have to pay for everything. Nothing for “God bless you”. The young do not like it. If all priests were like Pope Francis, it would be better”.

Teresa (aged 76) has one daughter who lives in a nearby village: “she goes with her husband to church, but not every Sunday, one of them has to stay in their homestead, take care of the grandparents and home, the other one goes for the mass. And then they change shifts”.

Irena1 (aged 75) has two adult children, a son and a daughter, who live in the neighbouring town. They do not go to church regularly – they did when their children prepared for the first communion and the confirmation. “The young leave church because they see the hypocrisy of clergy. Besides, many people go to church to be seen. Going for pilgrimages has become fashionable, just like in the past the 1st May or 22nd July – because something was going on somewhere”. Irena1’s daughter (aged 47) says: “I do not feel the inner need of frequent going to church, though I am a believer (...) There are young people who go to church regularly – their parents have imprinted the habit of going for the Sunday mass in them, so they go and this is the most frequent reason. The young rebel when they feel compulsion, so they drift apart from the Church. Obligatory religion at school is also treated as obligation, besides this, they know that priests are not a good example for them. Priests who are animators are needed, such priests attract to the Church, in their parishes – youth is active. Moreover, the formula of the mass is schematic, boring, if there is something aimed at children and youth, it is better”.

Grażyna’s (aged 69) son, who is 38, rarely goes to church. In her opinion, this is because “the priest’s role as well as the Church’s role are decreasing. Fewer people, especially among the young, attend the holy mass, they are critical to the priest’s sermons – and in the past, a priest was an oracle”.

Bronisława (aged 79) has three children and six grandchildren. Apart from one son, her children go to church rather regularly, but her grandchildren do this rarely. “I do not know why the young do not go to church. Here, parents have no influence on children. My granddaughter says ‘Grandma, I pray in my own way’. Now, the young only have cars in their mind and – ‘gee up’ – they rush into the world”.

The current young generation of village dwellers (learners of lower- and upper secondary schools) do not perceive going to church as a kind of obligation or pressure which the rural community used to impose. Even the expressing of critical attitudes to the Church and clergy is treated as an evident issue, which a couple of decades ago was considered unacceptable. This can be exemplified by the case of a young inhabitant of Ludynia, who – not having found agreement with a priest in his parish – refused to take the confirmation. This unprecedented case, which took place several years ago, was widely commented by the inhabitants, the news spread very fast throughout the village, some treated it with indifference, but the majority of older villagers recognized it as something exceptional, worth deeper interest, and a substantial number of people – as something to condemn. Until this event, the obvious (for the majority) pattern involving taking the first communion and confirmation had been transmitted without any disturbance across generations, being perceived in the categories of obligation. For the first time, the mechanism of such cross-generation transmission was interrupted and such cases have repeated since that time.

Communal, ritual and customary activities

Such activities used to be common, they took place at various religious holidays, and were treated as village holidays. What has remained from this are poor leftovers.

Only one form of these activities takes place – blessing the fields on Whit Sunday. As the villagers remember, a couple of Sundays after this holiday, the priest blessed the fields in all the villages of the parish. In the period from post-war years to the 1980s, it was an important event in the village, the procession consisting of the majority of inhabitants and the priest as the leader went from one altar to another (out of four placed at four corners of the village) and sang songs. After the procession, birch twigs with which the altars were decorated were brought home and put to vases or to the ground among cabbages, so that “all vermin omits them – they were meant to have such power” (Zofia, aged 91). Houses were decorated with sweet flag, every year it was the responsibility of children to pick it up. The villagers do not know why sweet flag was chosen for decoration – maybe because it smelt nicely. The whole village took part in the blessing of the fields: “Who would not have joined the blessing, the whole village went in the procession, because everybody had a field” (Grażyna, aged 69). Currently, blessing the fields starts with a mass in the local shrine, the inhabitants prepare three modest altars at three exit roads and several people gather at each of them. Last year, for the first time the priest moved from an altar to an altar by car – maybe this form will get consolidated.

The traditional blessing of fields in the region has been substantially reduced and replaced by a new form of celebrating this holiday, which came into being in Ludynia. It was initiated last year by the present owner of the Ludynia manor house by organizing (for the first time) a holy mass in his estates in the porch of the manor house. This mass was celebrated by the parish priest and was devoted to village dwellers. The organizer announced his wish to continue that form of celebrating Whit Sunday.

The celebration of Corpus Christi, an important holiday for inhabitants of rural areas, celebrated 60 days after Easter, has also applied a slightly modified form. The traditional mass with a procession takes place in the parish church but four procession altars are prepared by the inhabitants of particular villages. Even today, this is a very popular holiday, in which a large group of parishioners takes part, even those who do not go to church during the rest of the year. This does not mean that the old forms of celebrating Corpus Christi have been preserved – the cultural framework of this holiday has been changed by pop culture. As one female inhabitant of Ludynia confesses, the women who prepare altars search for inspiration in the Internet and give rather rich forms to altars, in contrast to the old, modest decorations made of twigs and garden flowers. In the past, it was almost an obligation to celebrate the octave of Corpus Christi on the eighth day after the main holiday. The celebrations started in the afternoon so that farmers could fulfill their farming duties. Then, everybody went to church (usually in horse carts), where the mass was celebrated and there was a procession just

around the church. The priest blessed the wreaths made of herbs and flowers from home gardens. The wreaths were usually hung over the entrance door so that they could protect the house from lightening, fire and other disasters – “They were blessed so they must have had power. You could not throw them away, only burn them down” (Zofia, aged 91). Now, the celebrations of the Corpus Christi octave are much more modest – not many people take part in the mass and the small procession.

More than any other holiday, the Assumption of Mary, celebrated on the 15th August, is associated with the country and agriculture. The holiday has been also celebrated by the majority of Ludynia’s inhabitants. “We went to bless flower bunches even when it was not a state holiday. Obligatorily, there was a bunch in each home. Herbs and flowers were picked up from meadows and ears of grain, fruit and poppy-heads were added” (Grażyna, aged 69). After the blessing, herbs were dried and hung on the wall at home. The respondents remember that they were later used when, for example, a cow was to calve – the brew from the blessed bunch was added to the cow’s water “to make the animal stronger. What was blessed had its power, it was not allowed to destroy it, it was always useful in the farmstead” (Zofia, aged 91). Today, only a handful of villagers, mainly the oldest and children, get the bunches blessed on the 15th August. However, more people take part in the mass in the parish church on that day.

This last example is just one indicator of the popular (both in this and many other villages) phenomenon – religious practices of village dwellers have lost their previous universality and the mass participation in them, which still several decades ago was felt as a kind of inner duty, resulting from the cross-generation transmission of the models of religious life as well as from a kind of social pressure felt by both the older and the younger generations. The mechanism of this transmission has been disturbed now – the young implement only some patterns of religious practices passed down by parents and grandparents, keeping certain distance to religious practices. The reasons of this phenomenon are accurately recognized and described by the researchers dealing with contemporary manifestations of religious life.

The presented description of such life in regard to the inhabitants of the investigated village in Świętokrzyskie region allows for concluding that the religious practices (behaviours) of the villagers are related to old practices, customs and rituals, which are typical of folk religiousness, especially in its regional dimension – the religiousness which has never been the same as the professed religion. Even the contemporary rural religiousness comprises some magic-tinted rituals, though it often occurs in modern forms, influenced by pop culture. Yet, this is a research issue for ethnographers and ethnologists.

What seems to be an obvious conclusion in the context of the indicated phenomena and processes is that the religiousness of village dwellers is in the unceasing process of transformation, characterized by drifting away from traditional models of this religiousness and traditional patterns of its transmission across the generations.

HALINA RUSEK – RELIGIOUSNESS OF VILLAGERS IN FAMILY TRANSMISSION – CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Over many decades, religiousness among the inhabitants of rural Poland has been explored by representatives of different scientific disciplines, especially ethnology, cultural anthropology and sociology. This religiousness is frequently analyzed and described in the context of some past forms of villagers' life which can be situated in a spacious category of "folk culture". Contemporary patterns of rural life, also religious one, are related to the past with decreasing frequency, which is mostly manifested in the transmission of religious culture in families. Particularly big differences concern the oldest and the youngest residents of villages – the studies show that youth clearly distance themselves from religious practices, especially those based on tradition. In the context of the intensive social and cultural transformations in Poland and worldwide which have taken place in the last two decades, the issues discussed in this study do not lose their topicality and the changes in villagers' religiousness motivate researchers to the constant monitoring of these transformations in their studies.