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***Niedziela*, the Catholic Weekly, 1981–2014:  
Publishing Concepts and Positioning  
Among Polish Media**

**Tygodnik Katolicki „Niedziela” w latach 1981-2014.  
Koncepcja wydawnicza i miejsce  
w polskim systemie medialnym**

**ABSTRACT**

In the ninety-year-old history of “Niedziela” a number of periods can be distinguished. They are demarcated by subsequent editions of the magazine, chief editors’ visions of its handling and the role it played among the entirety of catholic press in Poland. The newest chapter in “Niedziela’s” history is tied with father Ireneusz Skubiś who edited the magazine for almost 33 years and since July 2014 serves as honorary editor in chief. He made “Niedziela” the second biggest catholic weekly magazine in Poland and one of the leading opinion-forming magazines in Polish media system.

**KEYWORDS:**

catholic press, “Niedziela” weekly magazine, publishing concept

**ABSTRAKT**

W dziewięćdziesięcioletniej historii „Niedzieli” można wyróżnić kilka etapów wyznaczanych kolejnymi edycjami pisma, koncepcjami prowadzenia tygodnika przez jego redaktorów naczelnych, rolą, jaką odgrywał w obrębie całej prasy katolickiej w Polsce. Najnowszy rozdział w dziejach „Niedzieli” wiąże się z osobą ks. Ireneusza Skubisia, który kierował tygodnikiem przez prawie 33 lata, a od lipca 2014 roku pełni funkcję honorowego redaktora naczelnego. Uczynił on z „Niedzieli” drugi co do wielkości tygodnik katolicki w Polsce i jedno z czołowych pism opiniotwórczych w polskim systemie medialnym.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**

prasa katolicka, tygodnik „Niedziela”, koncepcja wydawnicza

The 90-year history of *Niedziela* can be split into a few stages marked by subsequent editions,<sup>1</sup> the editor-in-chiefs' ideas<sup>2</sup> for running the weekly, and the circulation that was pivotal in reaching the whole Catholic press in Poland.<sup>3</sup> Father Ireneusz Skubis managed the weekly from 1981 to 2014. He made *Niedziela* the second largest Catholic weekly and one of the opinion-leading magazines in Poland.

In the People's Republic of Poland (1945–1989), after 1981 (when the weekly was reinstated after its closure in 1953), *Niedziela* was one of the few titles that published content other than the government's propaganda. It dealt mainly with ecclesiastic matters in Poland and abroad, the cult of Mary, Christian ethics, and beatifications as well as historical and cultural topics. The weekly avoided clear-cut evaluation of political matters and did not comment on current events until 1989, but its firm adherence to the Catholic model of family life, child-rearing, education, and national history stood in opposition to the contemporary ideas. Many of its articles were censored, particularly those concerning the rebirth of independent social movements, including "Solidarity." 1989 was a breakthrough in the history of the magazine, and not only because it could speak freely again. As Ireneusz Skubis said in numerous interviews, it was simply the end of the hitherto chronic shortage of paper that enabled the weekly to prosper by increasing its circulation and developing diocesan variations of, and numerous additions to, the magazine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The first issue was published on April 4, 1926 and the periodical was in circulation until the outbreak of the Second World War. The weekly had a rebirth with its reactivation on April 8, 1945 until its closure for political reasons on March 15, 1953. The third embodiment of the weekly was conceived on June 7, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> *Niedziela* had seven editors-in-chief: Father Wojciech Mondry (1926–1937), Father Stanisław Gałązka (1937–1939), Father Antoni Marchewka (1945–1953: his term was interrupted by his arrest in 1947), Fathers Władysław Soboń and Marian Rzeszewski (1947), Father Ireneusz Skubiś (1981–2014), and Ms. Lidia Dudkiewicz (2014–present).

<sup>3</sup> During the interbellum period, *Niedziela* was one of many diocesan periodicals and, depending on the source, had a circulation of 8,000 to 25,000. During the People's Republic period, it turned into a national magazine with a circulation of 80,000 to over 100,000. See Mielczarek, T. "Od *Monitora* do *Gonca Reklamowego*. Dzieje prasy częstochowskiej (1769-1994)." Kielce, 1996, pp. 98–99, 192, 248–249. After 1989, the weekly built a system of diocesan editions and its holiday circulation reached 450,000.

<sup>4</sup> Giżyńska, U. "Zwyczajna, normalna, wielka." *Gazeta Częstochowska*, 20/12/2001, no. 49/50; Kindziuk, M. "Niedziela prezent od Pana Boga." *Niedziela*, 2006, no. 38; Rajski, K. "Służyć normalności." [http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZS/kr\\_niedziela.html](http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZS/kr_niedziela.html). Accessed 5 August 2015.

## BUILDING THE REACH

In early 1990s, the weekly faced a huge increase in publishing costs, the consequences of the pauperization of society and the boom in independent publications that undercut the market of opinion-leading Catholic titles. In 1990, the magazine's price was raised drastically and the circulation was reduced to 80,000 copies, but it continued to lose business. The editor-in-chief therefore asked readers for donations to save the weekly. He also encouraged the clergy to promote the weekly in their parishes.<sup>5</sup> The formula of the weekly as a national one was a challenge because, as Skubis noted, an increasing number of dioceses were founding their own titles that, naturally, were more interesting for local audiences and were promoted more vigorously by the local clergy. This is why *Niedziela* was more difficult to sell outside its native diocese.<sup>6</sup> According to Skubis, 25% of the circulation was sold to the 1.5 million people in the Częstochowa diocese.

Apart from the significant staff turnover in the editorial office,<sup>7</sup> this was the reason why the weekly started to pay increasingly more attention to matters of interest to Częstochowa, its region, and its diocese.<sup>8</sup> However, in time, the idea of retaining the national reach of the weekly prevailed and the coverage of local matters was entrusted to a monthly supplement established in early 1992, addressed to the Częstochowa Archdiocese.<sup>9</sup> The editorial office of *Niedziela* took measures to make the distribution more efficient and to recover readers in other dioceses. For instance, readers were asked to report instances when the weekly was unavailable or inadequately displayed in kiosk and to build independent distribution systems within parishes. These activities were supposed to be led by the Apostolic Movement of Friends of *Niedziela*, associating devoted readers, advocates

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<sup>5</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. "O przetrwanie prasy katolickiej." *Niedziela*, 1990, no. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Many Częstochowa journalists who found employment in *Niedziela* after the period of martial law of 1981 left for other periodicals. After the 1989 election, some journalists took up political careers. They were replaced by local journalists: Leszek Cichobłaziński, Wojciech Skrodzki, Marek A. Koprowski, and Katarzyna Woynarowska.

<sup>8</sup> The periodical reported on cultural events and celebrations of national holidays in Częstochowa and interviewed local politicians and government officials. See *Niedziela*, 01/07/1990, no. 26; 07/04/1991, no. 14; 14/04/1991, no. 15; and other 1990–1991 issues.

<sup>9</sup> The supplement was converted into a weekly supplement entitled *Niedziela Częstochowska* in 1993.

and distribution helpers.<sup>10</sup> Another such example is the Communities of Friends of the Catholic Weekly *Niedziela*, inspired by Bohdan Bejze, the Bishop of Łódź.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the weekly failed to grow a community of adherents as the “Radio of Mary’s Family”, possibly because of less charismatic leadership. Bishops’ decisions to establish diocesan variations of the weekly and to engage parish priests in collecting subscriptions turned out to be more important for the increase in circulation and improved presence of the weekly in parishes throughout Poland than the activity of its readers.

Many diocesan editions were established by converting existing diocesan periodicals into local inserts in a national title. This policy was dictated by both the market and decisions of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate, driving consolidation of diocesan press around the leading national weeklies.<sup>12</sup> The latter’s editors undertook to provide jobs for local staff, including at least one priest, at the diocese level.<sup>13</sup> In return, the dioceses arranged for widespread subscription and distribution of the weekly.<sup>14</sup>

The first weekly off-site edition of *Niedziela* was established in the Łódź diocese.

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***Niedziela Łódzka* was published on April 11, 1993, as a two-page insert to the national publication. By the end of the century, *Niedziela* had 18 diocesan editions.<sup>15</sup> *Gość Niedzielny* printed local**

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<sup>10</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Drodzy Przyjaciele *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 15/09/1991, no. 37.

<sup>11</sup> “*Niedziela* dla Łodzi, Łódź dla *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 26/09/1993, no. 39.

<sup>12</sup> For the decree of Archbishop Marian Przykucki on May 29, 1998 about the conversion of the diocesan periodical *Kościół nad Odrą i Bałtykiem* into a supplement to *Niedziela*, see *Niedziela*, 31/03/2002, no. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Drodzy Czytelnicy *Niedzieli Małych Ojczyzn*.” Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The agreements with dioceses assumed the sales of 1 copy per 100 residents. Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Apart from *Niedziela Częstochowska* and *Niedziela Łódzka*, there were *Niedziela Sosnowiecka*, *Niedziela Legnicka*, *Niedziela Lubelska*, *Niedziela Łowicka*, *Niedziela Przemyska*, *Niedziela Płocka*, *Głos z Torunia*, *Niedziela Podlaska* (the Drohiczyń diocese), *Niedziela Gnieźnieńska*, *Niedziela Warszawska* (the Prague diocese), *Aspekty* (the Zielona Góra & Gorzów diocese), *Głos Katolicki* (the Łomża diocese), *Niedziela Południowa* (the Rzeszów diocese), *Ład Boży* (the Wrocław diocese), *Kościół nad Odrą i Bałtykiem* (the Szczecin & Kamień diocese), and *Niedziela Zamojsko-Lubaczowska*.

## inserts for 12 dioceses and the Krakow weekly *Źródło* for two dioceses.

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As a consequence, *Niedziela*'s circulation started to grow. The six initial variations increased sales by 50,000 in 1993.<sup>16</sup> Three years later, the weekly and its 13 local editions had a circulation of approximately 220,000.<sup>17</sup> In 1998, with 16 variations, it had 320,000 copies.<sup>18</sup> Some holiday issues of the weekly had 450,000 copies.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the editors continued to launch subsequent diocesan editions: in 2003 for Kielce, in October 2004 for Sandomierz (whose diocese already had a local insert to *Gość Niedzielny*<sup>19</sup>), and later that year for Warsaw.<sup>20</sup> By 2004, *Niedziela* had 22 local editions, including two foreign ones.<sup>21</sup> In 2005, the Italian edition (*Niedziela we Włoszech*) was closed, but a new one was opened for the Bielsko-Żywiec diocese (*Na Podbeskidziu*), so the overall number did not change. Today, the weekly has 19 diocesan editions and, according to its editors, the circulation, distributed mainly by parishes, ranges from 131,000 to 170,000 copies.<sup>22</sup>

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTENT

The weekly grew in volume and in variety. In March 1990, it started to print a TV guide.<sup>23</sup> In mid-1992, it launched a column for children (“*Niedziela Dzieciom*”)

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<sup>16</sup> Czuba, K. “Kościół – wielki nieznamy polskiej prasy.” *Niedziela*, 12/12/1993, no. 50.

<sup>17</sup> “Rozmowa o *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 14/04/1996, no. 15.

<sup>18</sup> “Nowe edycje *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 14/12/1997, no. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Andrzej Dziega, the bishop of Sandomierz, said the modest circulation of the diocesan version of *Gość Niedzielny* was responsible for the introduction of the new title. See “*Niedziela* w diecezji sandomierskiej.” *Niedziela*, 03/10/2004, no. 40.

<sup>20</sup> In September 2005, Leszek Sławoj Głódź, the bishop of the Warsaw & Prague diocese, suspended the publication of *Niedziela Warszawska* because of poor sales (8,200 copies sold from the 22,000 printed). In response, *Niedziela* launched its edition in the Warsaw (primate) archdiocese, where a diocesan edition of *Gość Niedzielny* was already in circulation. See “*Droży czytelnicy Niedzieli w Warszawie*.” *Niedziela*, 28/08/2005, no. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Inserts for the Polish diaspora in Chicago and Italy were established in 2003 and in 2004, respectively. The latter was not welcomed and was soon closed.

<sup>22</sup> *Niedziela* does not report to the Press Distribution Monitoring Union.

<sup>23</sup> Father Ireneusz Skubis lingered with the publication of the TV guide because of television's conflicts with Catholic ethics. See “*O przetrwanie prasy katolickiej*.” *Niedziela*, 11/02/1990, no. 6.

which was converted into a color add-on published under the same title in 1995. In 1993, *Niedziela* started to publish a supplement for academic circles edited jointly with the Catholic University of Lublin (“*Niedziela Akademicka*”), initially as a monthly and later on as an *ad hoc* publication. There were also columns for young people (“*Co się w nas pali*”) that evolved into the supplement “*Niedziela Młodych*” in 1995. The magazine invited authors of cooking, health care, plant growing, and even beauty care guides. From 1996 to 1998, *Niedziela* was accompanied by the weekly *Czyn Katolicki*, devoted to the group Akcja Katolicka [Catholic Action].<sup>24</sup> The weekly published special supplements on the occasion of the Pope’s visits, ecclesiastic anniversaries, readers’ pilgrimages to Częstochowa, parliamentary elections, and major public debates.

In time, the periodical turned into a multimedia company. Apart from the weekly and its diocesan entourage, the editors published a monthly for children (*Moje Pismo Tęcza*<sup>25</sup>) and book series (“*Biblioteka Niedzieli*” and “*Zeszyty Niedzieli*”). In 1997, the owner established a studio to prepare audio content for local and national Catholic radio channels and for the magazine’s website.<sup>26</sup> Soon, the company launched a TV studio working for the channel “*Niepokalanów TV*.”

As a consequence of this impressive growth, the editorial office employed 160 regular members of staff (100 in Częstochowa and 60 in local offices) and approximately 1,000 freelancers in 2001.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the company maintained the substantial technical assets required to produce approximately 130 pages of the national and diocesan issues. The costs of publishing were very high,

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<sup>24</sup> This was an attempt to reactivate the monthly *Czyn Katolicki* (1933–1939), designed to support evangelization and the charity activity of the organization Akcja Katolicka. However, the circles of Akcja Katolicka centered around parishes and dioceses ran their own publishing businesses, so *Czyn Katolicki* did not make it as an independent national title, even if this was the intention of the archbishop of Częstochowa. See “*Arcypasterz do Czytelników Czynu Katolickiego*.” *Niedziela*, 23/06/1996, no. 25.

<sup>25</sup> The Polish-language version of the French monthly *Mon journal arc-en-ciel* was launched in March 1993.

<sup>26</sup> “*Od słowa pisanego do słowa w eterze*.” *Niedziela*, 11/01/1998, no. 2; “*Rozmowa o Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 14/11/1999, no. 44.

<sup>27</sup> “*Dla nas Niedziela to codzienność. Czas milczenia i czas mówienia. 75 lat Tygodnika Katolickiego Niedziela. Księga Jubileuszowa*.” Częstochowa, 2001.

covered mainly by the retail price of the weekly because the sales of advertisements were marginal.<sup>28</sup>

The crisis of readership of the printed press, which also affected the weekly in spite of its reliance on non-market sales mechanisms, forced the company to stop printing the regular diocesan supplements, so the weekly became thinner. After the change in layout in 2002, the weekly retained only the TV guide as a regular add-on. On the other hand, it increased the number of infotainment pages, extended the letters section (“Listy do Niedzieli”), and introduced a communication-facilitating column (“Chcę korespondować”).

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In the end of 2006, *Niedziela* took on an even more magazine-like look. It switched sizes from A3 to A4 and began publishing more photographs and illustrations.<sup>29</sup> The articles became shorter, the layout more dynamic, and the content less formal. These changes were driven by a change in the proportion of ecclesiastic and religious texts to columns devoted to infotainment (opinions, reportage, interviews, and an absolute novelty: sports).

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Based on a 2008 review of the content, the proportions of church matters, secular topics, and infotainment (the TV guide, entertainment, contact with readers, and advertisements) were 36:34:30, respectively.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As a rule, each insert occupied just one column. The editor-in-chief attributed the advertising weakness to the fact that “Catholic press lends its pages mainly to the ministry.” Wyszyńska, A. “Z Chrystusem w samym środku życia.” *Niedziela*, 04/06/2000, no. 23.

<sup>29</sup> The first issue of the new format of *Niedziela*, number 42, was published on October 15, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Rygiel, B. “*Niedziela* i *Gość Niedzielny* jako przykłady tygodników katolickich.” *Rocznik Bibliologiczno-Prasoznawczy*, 2010, vol. 2/13, pp. 159–177. For comparison, the contents of ecclesiastic and secular topics in *Gość Niedzielny* occupied 20% and 48% of the space, respectively.

The changes were implemented to align with secular publications offering their audiences more fun, color, and “good vibes.”<sup>31</sup> The layout was updated again in September 2014, after a new editor-in-chief took over. The new leader, Lidia Dudkiewicz, promised new authors, more family topics, and more guides.

## ENCOURAGING THE PUBLIC TO READ THE CATHOLIC PRESS

The promotion of reading the weekly was a fixed idea of Editor-in-chief Skubis. He considered the reading of Catholic periodicals to be a Christian duty.<sup>32</sup> He appealed to parents to expose their children to Catholic titles.<sup>33</sup> He postulated that each Catholic family should buy at least one copy of *Niedziela*, preferably more as gifts for neighbors.<sup>34</sup> He regretted that Catholics were not very concerned with the Catholic press,<sup>35</sup> instead choosing “colorful, gossiping, or trivial” titles, watching sitcoms, and feeding themselves sensational news taken from the Internet.<sup>36</sup>

The editor-in-chief of *Niedziela* reminded readers in his numerous articles that Catholic media are the only forum that presents the teachings of the Pope, the voices of bishops, and suggestions on how to live a Christian and evangelical life.<sup>37</sup> He stressed that the media serve the Catholic electorate by helping them choose appropriate representatives for governments of various levels:

If I am to be represented by an atheist who, possibly, conceals his convictions today but, in the future, may contribute to the enactment of a non-Christian law aimed against the natural law, such as legalization of homosexual relationships, a Catholic must not vote for such people (...). This is why [we] announce lists with names and how they voted on important matters, to know what representatives we have and whether they are actually Christian.<sup>38</sup>

Father Skubis believed that providing believers with a “Catholic point of view” on contemporary matters and with evangelical arguments for discussions about the outlook was an important role of Catholic media.

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<sup>31</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Witamy w nowej *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 15/10/2006, no. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Słowo redaktora naczelnego *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 11/03/2001, no. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Drodzy młodzi czytelnicy *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 08/04/2001, no. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Podaruj sąsiadowi *Niedziele*.” *Niedziela*, 21/11/2010, no. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Dobry początek, *Niedziela*.” 14/10/2012, no. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Pod prąd pełzającej ateizacji.” *Niedziela*, 17/03/2013, no. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Rzeczywistość to także życie Kościoła.” *Niedziela*, 24/01/2010, no. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Katolik musi być dobrze zorientowany.” *Niedziela*, 02/10/2011, no. 40.

Meetings with readers arranged in parishes and weekly radio broadcasts on Catholic stations promoted the reading of *Niedziela*. Skubis presented current issues of the weekly and commented on major national and international events. The editors organized pilgrimages to Częstochowa for readers, rewarded those who supported the weekly with the “Materverbi” award, and held ceremonious promotions of publications from the “Biblioteka Niedzieli” series, during which they gave away “branded” pens, folders, and even T-shirts.

Seniors were the predominant readers (more than half were aged 60+),<sup>39</sup> so the editorial office made efforts to rejuvenate the audience. The website of the weekly, [niedziela.pl](http://niedziela.pl) was one such means. Although the editor-in-chief boasted about the growth of the online readership of “N,” the site was positioned in the middle of the ranking of Catholic sites, lagging beyond not only the largest websites ([deon.pl](http://deon.pl) and [opoka.pl](http://opoka.pl)), but even that of “Gość Niedzielny.” According to Megapanel, the website of *Niedziela* had 165,000 users in November 2009 and 130,000 in July 2014, compared to 228,000 and 240,000 users of “Gość Niedzielny” online.

Seeing this, the editor-in-chief continued to ask priests to promote *Niedziela* during masses and meetings with believers. He also called on school catechists to use Catholic magazines as a teaching aid in religion lessons.<sup>40</sup> He was supported by bishops of the dioceses that published local supplements to the weekly. For instance, Archbishop Władysław Ziółtek wrote to provosts of the Łódź Archdiocese to remind them of the need to facilitate the distribution of *Niedziela* in parishes. He wrote the following in the conclusion of the letter: “I will be particularly glad if a provost notifies me of a growth of readership of *Niedziela* in his parish.”<sup>41</sup>

Referring to the words of the founder of *Niedziela*, Bishop Teodor Kubina, Father Skubis often compared the weekly to a curate helping a provost in his priestly work. He kept arguing that *Niedziela* helps readers to better understand matters of faith and the Church. He occasionally admonished clergy for their insufficient commitment to the distribution of the periodical: “I want to remind you of one provision of our agreements with the dioceses: We postulated a circulation

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<sup>39</sup> Stelmasiak, A. “*Niedziela* – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników.” <http://ekai.pl/wydarzenia/xll587/niedzi>. Accessed 20 July 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Ryszka, C. “*Niedziela* wystarczy na cały tydzień.” *Niedziela*, 22/09/2002, no. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Ziółtek, W. “*Niedziela* to wikary w parafii.” *Niedziela*, 20/10/2002, no. 42.

of one copy for every 100 residents of the diocese, both townspeople and villagers. Today we see that only some dioceses have managed to achieve this target. In most of them, the circulation is 1 per 150 or as little as 1 per 200."<sup>42</sup>

Their belief that "the fate of the Catholic press in Poland is in the hands of priests and it is up to their commitment to the ministry through the press whether Polish Catholics will buy it or not"<sup>43</sup> made the editors play two roles. On the one hand, they wished to serve their readers and "be a guidepost and help people live,"<sup>44</sup> and on the other hand, they denied the existence of such guideposts, recognizing that the readership of the Catholic press depends on the marketing skills of parish priests. As they concluded, "it can be easily noticed that demand for *Niedziela* follows the priest."<sup>45</sup> This approach affected the nature of the weekly's content. *Niedziela* had an ambition to make its content "serious, contemplative, requiring basic religious knowledge and thought"<sup>46</sup> and, at the same time, admitted that "many people do not understand the content of the Catholic press; they become shallow and such superficial Catholicism conserves immaturity and, often, a decline of faith and moral responsibility."<sup>47</sup> It is likely that the weekly published explicit evaluations and guides on how to interpret the social reality specifically for the latter category of readers. This focus was particularly strong in the context of information provided by non-Catholic media, concerning matters that are difficult for the Church, such as pedophilia, avarice, or its attitude to abortion, euthanasia, or homosexual marriages.<sup>48</sup> Readers were told which media wrote the truth about the Church and, accordingly, should be supported.<sup>49</sup>

This could have discouraged more demanding readers, particularly in view of the fact that, according to a 2006 survey of the Statistical Institute of the Catholic

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<sup>42</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Drodzy czytelnicy *Niedzieli Małych Ojczyzn*." *Niedziela*, 31/03/2002, no. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Wysznińska, A. "Z Chrystusem w samym środku życia." *Niedziela*, 04/06/2000, no. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Woynarowka, K., and Klauza, K. "*Niedziela* wierna Bogu i Ojczyźnie." *Niedziela*, 22/07/2001, no. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> "Nie wszystko jest towarem." *Niedziela*, 18/07/2004, no. 29; "Skandal czy prowokacja." *Niedziela*, 25/07/2004, no. 30; "Kościół z oszczerstwami." *Niedziela*, 12/12/2004, no. 50.

<sup>49</sup> "Radość budowania wspólnoty." *Niedziela Częstochowska*, 08/08/2004; "Pomagajmy pomagać." *Niedziela*, 12/09/2004, no. 37; The column "Dlaczego warto rozmawiać" promoting TV interviews by Jana Pospieszalski.

Church, *Niedziela* was mostly read by university graduates (approx. 40%) and colleges (30%). Also, more than half of Polish provosts read the periodical.<sup>50</sup> Father Leon Dyczewski asked Father Skubis directly whether placing the weekly in the role of a curate imposed the bounds on its thematic spectrum by confining it to teachings and accounts of religious ceremonies. He also suggested that *Niedziela*, as a periodical for Catholics with their own problems, doubts, and visions of the future, should be a forum for debate, dispute, and explanation.<sup>51</sup>

## **NIEDZIELA VERSUS THE PROBLEMS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD AND THE CHURCH**

*Niedziela* defined itself as an ecclesiastical and patriotic periodical serving “God and Homeland.”<sup>52</sup> It avoided evaluating current political events and moved away from any political affiliation, but admitted that it represented a specific, somewhat right-wing worldview as a defender of traditional Christian values. “The Polish right wing is certain to perceive *Niedziela* as their ally and a kind of a press secretary,” said the editor-in-chief.<sup>53</sup>

Before the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, the editor-in-chief praised the election campaign of PiS and appealed to readers: “Without disregarding the others, let’s consider the proposal of PiS because it seems to be worthy.”<sup>54</sup> This open support included an interview with Lech Kaczyński, who was running for the office of president,<sup>55</sup> a series of articles on state reforms (“Witaj IV Rzeczpospolita,” written by PiS), an interview with Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz,<sup>56</sup> the newly elected prime minister), an account of the swearing-in of the new president, and even a reprint of the president’s address.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Stelmasiak, A. “Niedziela – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników.” <http://ekai.pl/wydarzenia/xll587/niedziela-jeden-z-najpoczytniejszych-tygodnikow>. Accessed 20 July 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Dyczewski, L. “Tygodnik katolicki *Niedziela* – to więcej niż prasa.” *Niedziela*, 20/01/2015, no. 4.

<sup>52</sup> “Słowo ks. red. Ireneusza Skubisia.” *Niedziela*, 06/07/2014, no. 27.

<sup>53</sup> “Rozmowa o *Niedzieli*.” *Niedziela*, 14/04/1996, no. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Z karta wyborcza w rękę.” *Niedziela*, 18/09/2005, no. 38.

<sup>55</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “W trosce o silną uczciwą Polskę.” *Niedziela*, 25/09/2005, no. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “To państwo trzeba naprawić.” *Niedziela*, 27/11/2005, no. 48.

<sup>57</sup> *Niedziela*, 08/01/2006, no. 2.

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The weekly's pages were shared with right-wing politicians more frequently during election campaigns. Before the 1997 election, *Niedziela* presented the platforms and candidates of AWS and ROP and evaluated the previous terms of the parliament, particularly in terms of the attitudes of individual political parties to subjects such as abortion or the ratification of the concordat.<sup>58</sup>

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The involvement of "Niedziela Częstochowska" in the parliamentary election campaign of Czesław Ryszka, a journalist of the weekly and a member of PiS – particularly the article published before the repeated Senate election in the Częstochowa district, entitled "We hope you win again,"<sup>59</sup> and the letter sent by the editor-in-chief to provosts of the Częstochowa Archdiocese – raised controversies and a sharp response from *Gazeta Wyborcza Częstochowa*. The article under the symptomatic headline, "To the Senate via the Vestry," cited the words of Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek: "The letter of Father Skubis involved the Church in politics, which should not have occurred. I regret that this happened because getting political harms the image of the Church."<sup>60</sup> In his polemic with this statement, Father Skubis called it a "denunciation of the Church and priests aimed to deprive us of our influence on the Homeland."<sup>61</sup> Father Marian Mikołajczyk, the chancellor of the Metropolitan Curia in Częstochowa, made a similar statement. He wrote in the pages of *Niedziela* that he had read the bishop's statement with distaste because it "reminded him of the language of journalists of the early People's

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<sup>58</sup> "Dwie kadencje Sejmu RP – kto i jak głosował oraz dodatek *Niedziela na wybory*." *Niedziela*, 14/09/1997, no. 37.

<sup>59</sup> *Niedziela Częstochowska*, 15/01/2006, no. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Jaremko-Siarska, M. "Przez zakrystie do Senatu." *Gazeta Wyborcza – Częstochowa*, 14–15/01/2006.

<sup>61</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. "W odpowiedzi *Gazecie Wyborczej*." *Niedziela*, 29/01/2006, no. 5.

Republic, dreaming about locking priests in vestries and depriving them of the right to talk about public matters other than in concord with the official propaganda.”<sup>62</sup>

*Niedziela* took a dual approach to the parliamentary election campaigns of 2007 and 2011. Right-wing political sympathies of the weekly were more prominent in the diocesan supplements than in the national content. However, the problem of political involvement continued. Father Prof. Leon Dyczewski, a frequent contributor to the weekly, advised distinguishing the “political” from the “partisan” and allowed Catholic periodicals the right to speak about political matters and to disagree with parties and politicians who voiced views and moral norms inconsistent with Christianity, particularly on subjects so important to Catholics as family, marriage, social ownership, truth, etc.<sup>63</sup> Father Skubis denied that he favored any party but admitted that “indeed, as in any home one needs to lend someone else some place sometimes, let them speak because, sometimes, on matters important to the Homeland, people do not have the penetrative force of the media, but this does not mean that we practice politics or that we side with this or that party. We simply follow the rule of subsidiarity.”<sup>64</sup>

Because of this “following the rule of subsidiarity,” the weekly was often associated with a specific social and political environment. *Gazeta Wyborcza* wrote directly about affiliation with PiS and *Radio Maryja*.<sup>65</sup> A publicist for *Gość Niedzielny* attributed to *Niedziela* nationalistic and Catholic sympathies, reminding readers that *Niedziela* had been supporting the right wing (ZChN and PC) since the 1990s, while *Gość Niedzielny* was identified with more centrist post-Solidarity parties (UD and its successor, UW).<sup>66</sup>

Because of this political content, *Niedziela* was perceived as integralistic and fundamentalist. However, Cezary Gmyz noted that these terms were illegitimate

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<sup>62</sup> “Odpowiedzialność za słowo.” Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See Skubis’s interview with Leon Dyczewski: “Dziennikarz jest po to, żeby ludzie myśleli.” *Niedziela*, 20/01/2013, no. 3 and Dyczewski’s polemic with *Gazeta Wyborcza*: “Mnie wolno, wam nie.” *Niedziela*, 08/06/2014, no. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Kościół – moja miłość.” *Niedziela*, 27/04/2014, no. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Wielowieyska, D. “Jaka diecezja, taka kościelna gazeta. Preferencje polityczne odzwierciedleniem poglądów biskupów.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17–18/05/2014.

<sup>66</sup> Grajewski, A., and Father Tkocz. “Gosc.” <http://gosc.pl/doc/1770435.Ks-Tkocz-i-jego-Gosc>. Accessed 5 August 2015.

and the management of *Niedziela* protested against the forced distinction between open/progressive and fundamentalist/traditional Catholic press.<sup>67</sup>

Responding to the expectations of readers for articles about the teachings of John Paul II (71.4%), information about the life of the Church in Poland (72.4%), local communities (60%), and journalism (62.6%),<sup>68</sup> the weekly published important papal statements and documents, dealt with theological, biblical, Mariological, and canon-law subjects, and wrote about the life of the contemporary Church in Poland and worldwide. In light of these interests, it is surprising that *Niedziela*, drawing information from Vatican Radio and the Polish Catholic Information Agency, did not produce a special issue after the death of John Paul II. Issue 15 was published after this event, on April 10, 2005, merely noting it on the title page with a cursory comment by the editor-in-chief, "The Good Shepherd has passed away." Father Skubis explained this "fault" in one of his interviews by claiming his disbelief in the passing of the pope and his lack of courage to write about him in the past tense.<sup>69</sup> Not until later issues did the weekly make up for the delay by publishing numerous memoirs devoted to the funeral, summarizing his pontificate, and following up the process of the pope's beatification and canonization.

The weekly also dealt with other problems that troubled its readers. It led campaigns for the return of religion lessons to schools and against abortion, arranged for the collection of signatures in defense of the cross in public spaces, and took efforts to strengthen the position of Catholic media.

The weekly made a solid contribution to the formation of the media market in Poland and to the promotion of Catholic media in the contemporary world by publishing numerous articles written by Bishop Adam Lepa, his successors as chair of the Mass Media Commission of the Polish Episcopate, and Catholic media experts – who consistently reminded the clergy about the evangelical merits of the media and the opportunities for using them in priestly and catechetical work. The editor-in-chief of *Niedziela* especially raised these topics on the occasion of pilgrimages of journalists, media people, and *Niedziela* readers to Częstochowa, subsequent anniversaries of the periodical, celebrations of St. Francis de Sales Day (the patron saint of journalists), and, most importantly, in the context of a "threat

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<sup>67</sup> Gmyz, C. "Gość w Niedziele." *Wież*, 1998, no. 12, pp. 94–103.

<sup>68</sup> Stelmasiak, A. "Niedziela – jeden z najpoczytniejszych tygodników."

<sup>69</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. "Niedziela. Prezent od pana Boga." *Niedziela*, 17/09/2006, no. 38.

to the freedom of speech in Poland,” recognized as any attempt to curb the role of Catholic media, such as the Polish Media Board’s (KRRiT’s) refusal to license “TV Trwam” to broadcast through the national digital multiplex platform. *Niedziela* devoted a dozen or so articles to this refusal in 2012 and 2013 and joined the campaign for collecting signatures in defense of “TV Trwam.”

The pages of *Niedziela* were also used for promoting other Catholic periodicals, books, radio stations, and TV channels, which occasionally attracted criticism because of the polemic temper of the editor-in-chief. For instance, Father Skubiś’s article “Stone the Church” criticized a publication of *Tygodnik Powszechny* that opposed Father Tadeusz Rydzyk and the bishops supporting “TV Trwam”;<sup>70</sup> his commentary “It is important what one represents” was aimed against the publication *Gość Niedzielny*.<sup>71</sup>

The attitude of *Niedziela* towards the secular media was more adverse. While writing about the world of contemporary media and about their effect on audiences, Catholic publicists most frequently stressed related threats: the escalation of social tensions, the dissemination of consumerist attitudes, the corruption of the youth, journalistic dishonesty and, most of all, systemic anti-Catholicism.<sup>72</sup> Father Skubiś blamed them directly because “they work very hard to smash the Church and destroy it to destroy Christianity.”<sup>73</sup> He even claimed that he was under the impression that the Polish media space had been domesticated by “descendants of party officials, or maybe even security officers who used to murder members of the National Army.”<sup>74</sup> However, the principled defense of Christian values often turned into a defense of the clergy and into the equating of criticism of certain steps they take with an attack on the Church. For example, he considered “the hunt for various alleged scandals involving the clergy, such as homosexual scandals, to show that the Church is not sacred and its representatives are

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<sup>70</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Kamieniami w Kościół.” *Niedziela*, 01/07/2012, no. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Ważne co się reprezentuje.” *Niedziela*, 01/06/2014, no. 22.

<sup>72</sup> “Środki przekazu w głoszeniu słowa Bożego.” *Niedziela*, 15/08/1993, no. 33; “Media – szanse i zagrożenia.” *Niedziela*, 19/09/1993, no. 38; “Kościół – wielki nieznamy polskiej prasy.” *Niedziela*, 12/12/1993, no. 50; the series “Kultura mediów, mass media, rodzina.” *Niedziela*, 03/10/1993, no. 40+.

<sup>73</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “Katolicka solidarność.” *Niedziela*, 21/11/2010, no. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Skubiś, Ireneusz. “O medialna przestrzeń dla katolików w Polsce.” *Niedziela*, 10/03/2013, no. 10.

sinner or even crooks” to be a strike against the Church and the gospel.<sup>75</sup> Other priests writing for the weekly represented a similar point of view.<sup>76</sup>

*Niedziela* reacted very sharply to critical remarks about it, which concerned both polemics with the weekly’s content and with its ratings on the media market.<sup>77</sup>

## SUMMARY

It is stressed in many scholarly and journalistic reviews that religious media operating on a free market have to balance “the *sacrum* of their evangelical mission with the *profanum* of their struggle for viewership, readership, or click rate.”<sup>78</sup> They do this in two ways. Using the terminology of Joseph Borg, these can be defined as the incarnational model and the intra-ecclesiastical devotion model.<sup>79</sup> As Damian Guzek explains, “the former model, based on theological solutions of the Second Vatican Council, consists in approaching all social issues from an ecclesiastical point of view without leaving the problems of the Church unstated. The latter, older model adopted by the Catholic media assumes that the institutional Church treats them as tools for disseminating information about the internal life and current initiatives of the Church. This model is also more involved in intra-ecclesiastical religious practices.”<sup>80</sup> Based on this differentiation, one can assume that *Niedziela*, as a Catholic weekly, follows the second model of communication. In the age of digital media, as a result of generational change, the weekly continues to lose its ability to attain its goals. This happens because it attaches more

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Krukowski, J. “Najnowsza metoda walki z Kościołem pod hasłem walki z pedofilią.”; Goraj, J. “Słowem można skazać na śmierć.” *Niedziela*, 03/11/2013, no. 44.

<sup>77</sup> Gawryś, Cezary. “Wolność, uczciwość, pluralizm.” *Rzeczpospolita*, 04/01/1993 (“Polemizujemy rzetelnie, piszemy uczciwie.” *Niedziela*, 28/02/1993, no. 9); Tochman, Wojciech. “Reportaż na niedziele zamieszczony.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07–08/08/1993 (“W związku z Reportażem na niedziele.” *Niedziela*, 29/08/1993, no. 35); Wielowieyska, Dominika. “Jaka diecezja, taka kościelna gazeta.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17–18/05/2014 (“Mnie wolno, wam nie.” *Niedziela*, 08/06/2014, no. 23)

<sup>78</sup> Czubkowska, S. “Wiara i oglądalność.” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 13/01/2001.

<sup>79</sup> Borg, J. “Malta’s Media Landscape: An Overview.” *Exploring the Maltese Media Landscape*, edited by J. Borg, A. Hillman, and M. A. Lauri. Valetta, 2009, pp. 27–28. As cited in Guzek, D. “System medialny Malty.” *Studia Me dioznawcze*, 2012, no. 4, pp. 138–139.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

weight to informative purposes, unilateral information, and persuasive communication than to integrational purposes, participation, and dialogue.

The change in editor-in-chief has certainly ended a chapter in the history of *Niedziela*, though it is still too early to say how the periodical may evolve. The new, secular editor-in-chief declared a continuation of the hitherto program line: "The strong foundations of *Niedziela* are certainly inviolable. We take up the good work done by my predecessors and, augmenting it, we will set off into the future walking the roads of new evangelization."<sup>81</sup> She also demonstrated a strong attachment to the church: "I sense I am in the hands of God and Mary,"<sup>82</sup> she said after her nomination, declaring that journalism was a special kind of calling to her and that she saw in Catholic media a sign of protest against the "modern world" imposing a consumerist way of life, damping the voice of conscience, and expelling God from public life.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Dudkiewicz, L. "Nowe wyzwania dla *Niedzieli*." *Niedziela*, 13/07/2014, no. 28.

<sup>82</sup> She is a Dame of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and she studied theology. See "Lidia Dudkiewicz nowym redaktorem naczelnym Tygodnika Katolickiego *Niedziela*." <http://www.nie-dziela.pl/arttykul/10280/Lidia-Dudkiewicz-nowym-redaktorem>. Accessed 25 July 2015.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

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