

# POPREBEL

## **Populism, Neo-Traditionalism and the Backlash Against Catholic Church in Post-2015 Poland: the debates around “The Curse” and “Clergy”**

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ŁUCJA PIEKARSKA-DURAJ AND AGNIESZKA SADECKA  
INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN STUDIES  
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY



# “ONLY UNDER THE CROSS, UNDER THIS SIGN ONLY, A POLE WILL BE A POLE AND POLAND WILL BE POLAND”

## Symbolic images of Catholic Church in Poland

- Catholic Church as a guardian-shepherd
- Catholic Church as a protector of Polishness
- Catholic Church as the power aspiring to monopolise the normative order
- Catholic Church as a political player (strategic alliance with populists at government)

How are these images transmitted and contested by culture?

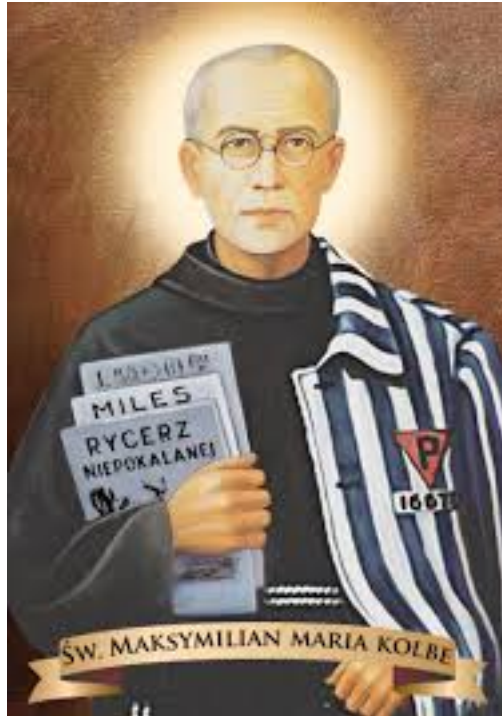
Theatre play “The Curse” (2017) directed by Oliver Frljić

Movie “Clergy” (2018) directed by Wojtek Smarzowski

How are these works inscribed in the political context? What is the debate on Catholic Church in times of populism?

## The Five Iconic Figures of post- ward Polish Catholic Church

- Sacrifice
- Victimhood
- Tradition
- Family





# "THE CURSE"

Oliver Frljić:  
"Testing of what  
is allowed in art  
is my duty"



Mariusz Max Kolonko,  
Youtuber: “an  
offensive of “cultural  
Marxism””

Jan Dziedziczak, PiS:  
“you think that the  
Jewish star needs to  
be protected, while  
the cross can be spit  
upon”

Paweł Lisicki, Do  
Rzeczy: “I would like  
to see how these  
outstanding artists  
offend other feelings,  
because so far, their  
breaking of taboo is  
only targeted at  
Catholics”





Maciej  
Świrski,  
Reduta  
Dobrego  
Imienia:  
such art  
contributes  
to the  
deconstructi  
on and  
destruction  
of the  
basics of  
European  
civilisation





- In right-wing discourses, the Catholic Church is seen as the only group that is attacked
- In this way, other groups are denied the status of victims (e.g. minorities)
- If Catholics are the only ones to be persecuted, then the demand of a multicultural, diverse society can be questioned.
- Catholic Church privileged by the state but threatened by secularisation.



# “CLERGY”

The Church is holy, but  
the people in the  
Church are sinners.

Cinematic storytelling  
vs. social image of  
clergy as a monolithic  
class





Metonymy and the logic of victimization: clergy as solid entity

Responses of the Church based on Church formats (rosaries, prayers etc.) and not democratic debate



Gazeta Polska  
“Clergy is our  
treasure in the fight  
with Nazism,  
communism, LGBT and  
Islamists”

Jarosław Kaczyński:  
“who raises their  
hand [attacks] on the  
Church, who wants to  
destroy it, raises their  
hand [attacks] on  
Poland”



# CONCLUSIONS

Various forms of backlash against the Catholic Church in Poland:

- Soft backlash among some Catholics: call to face the sins of Church, without denying fundamental Christian values)
- Decisive backlash among non-believers: various social and artistic independent reactions, aiming to context the dominance of Catholic Church in the public sphere
- Continuing debate on the Church's role in Poland by means of different spectacles (theatre play, feature movie, documentary – “Tell No One”) and growing awareness of paedophilia problem among the clergy, resulting in shifting the figure of enemy to LGBT community (the “real” danger of paedophilia, “the rainbow pest”) -> backlash to backlash?
- Populist binary division into good vs. evil (instead of rainbow diversity), Catholic/patriotic vs. Marxist/progressive as a way to define the social world

