

## EXAMINING RELIGIOUS LIFE FROM A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE. REFLECTION ON THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE ANNULMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE EXAMPLE OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN POLAND\*\*



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Submitted: 31 January 2024

Accepted for publication: 10 May 2024

First published: 29 May © *Acta Missiologica* | Volume 18 | Number 1 | 2024

### Abstract

**Background:** Religious life is an area of scientific research in different parts of knowledge and requires an appropriate methodological approach. The purpose of this article is to present the results of the research about the social functioning of the annulment of marriage in the Catholic Church. The method conducted using this research was a multidisciplinary one.

**Conclusion:** The study shows that the faithful in the situation of divorce and seeking the annulment, experience the complexity of their social existence combining the realities of secular and religious reality.

**Keywords:** Religious life – Divorce – Annulment of marriage – Law – Canon law.

### Introduction

In this paper we will present the methodology and results of the research on the social functioning of the annulment of marriage. This research was conducted in Poland in the years 2017-2021 in two projects<sup>23</sup>. The first of the projects was carried out in the form of a quantitative survey using the paper questionnaire technique, completed by persons seeking the annulment of their marriage at tribunal of the Catholic Church in the Kraków Archdiocese. The number of respondents participating in this study was 326 people, including 203 women and 123 men. The second project was implemented in the years 2021-2022 in the form of a qualitative survey using the technique of in-depth interview. The sample size in this study was 30 people, including 20 women and 10 men. The participants in the study were people who had initiated the canonical process of annulment earlier and received the judgment of the church tribunal.

\* **Acknowledgment:** This paper was produced as part of the project financed by the National Science Centre Poland, in accordance with the contract for the execution and funding of project no: UMO-2019/33/B/HS1/00625. Full information about these projects and the research results obtained is contained in the monograph Kisiel P., Kroczek P., Ulman P., *Diagnoza kondycji współczesnej rodziny poprzez pryzmat procesu orzekania nieważności małżeństwa*, Unum Publishin House, Kraków 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21906/9788376432458>

\* **Acknowledgment:** This paper was produced as part of the project financed by the National Science Centre Poland, project no: UMO-2019/33/B/HS1/00625

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In our research, to describe the phenomenon we have used not only theories from the area of theology and canon law, but we used also statistical data, characterizing the scale of the presence of the study and two above mentioned empirical research projects, which are the source of sociological, anthropological knowledge and from the field of cultural and religious sciences as well as family sciences. The scientific project was considered novel due to the intricate methodology utilized in our research. The diverse range of data sources necessitated the use of a detailed approach, ultimately leading to a unique and groundbreaking outcome.

### **Multidisciplinary perspective of research**

Crossing disciplinary divides in scientific research is undoubtedly an important cognitive challenge. The need for interdisciplinary research arises when the problem being addressed is too vast and complex to be dealt with within a single discipline<sup>1</sup>. Referring to several disciplines and integrally linking them in the research process makes it possible to combine not only the insights, but also the methodologies of different disciplines and then create a scientific synthesis, to ultimately achieve the integration of the knowledge obtained<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to this, the studied reality does not have to be reduced to a disciplinary specific aspect but can be presented as a panorama of diverse elements, forming a comprehensive, multifaceted, complementary, and holistic narrative<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time, it is worth noting that knowledge integration can take place at different levels. This is because the creation of integrated knowledge is related only to the mere potential possibility of linking two or more basic subjects of research, assigned to different disciplines. Integrating basic subjects into the formula of complex subjects can be done in three ways. The first is the specialization approach, the second is the interdisciplinary approach and the third is the multidisciplinary approach<sup>4</sup>.

The problem of integrated knowledge can be approached somewhat differently. The key condition for such knowledge is not only the coexistence of interest of different disciplines in the same research area, but the emergence of interaction between these disciplines. However, the scope and nature of this interaction can vary, and as a result, we can specify: multidisciplinary research (in which the integration of the obtained knowledge takes place at the very end of the research process and does not result from the integration of research assumptions and methods), interdisciplinary research (in which the integration of knowledge is grounded in the integration of research methods and assumptions), and transdisciplinary research (in which there is also an integration of academic knowledge with non-academic knowledge)<sup>5</sup>.

Whether academic research is conducted in an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary formula depends primarily on whether the various disciplines used in the inquiry are able to develop integrated research assumptions and methods. The development of such integration usually becomes possible in the case of disciplines that border each other and the effect of this integration is the fusion of these disciplines. In this situation, however, paradoxically, a doubt arises as to whether such research still retains an interdisciplinary character? After all, the effect

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- 1 Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*. (Los Angeles & London: Sage, 2008), 5-12
- 2 Willy Østreng, *Science Without Boundaries: Interdisciplinarity in Research, Society and Politics*. (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2020), 13-33; Moti Nissani, "Ten cheers for interdisciplinarity: The case for interdisciplinary knowledge and research." *The Social Science Journal* 34 no. 2, (1997): 210.
- 3 Østreng, "Science Without Boundaries", 26.
- 4 MP Satija, "Relationships in Ranganathan's Colon Classification." in *Relationships in the Organization of Knowledge. Information Science and Knowledge Management*. ed. Bean, C.A., Green, R., (vol. 2. Springer, Dordrecht, 2001), 200-203.
- 5 Milena Palczewska, "The essence of interdisciplinary research." *UR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* nr 2(7) (2018): 74-75.

of deep integration in the form of fusion is de facto the creation of a new coherent whole, a new sub-discipline. And consequently, interdisciplinary research in the case of fusion of disciplines becomes monodisciplinary<sup>6</sup>.

In contrast, in the case of a multidisciplinary study, it is not possible to merge disciplines, since their integration occurs only at the level of the results of the study. The clustering of the referenced disciplines takes place based on a common area of interest using bridging concepts and the result of joint inquiry is the ability to see different aspects of the same phenomenon<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Theological starting point for a multidisciplinary study of religious life***

Religious life is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon. In order to grasp its peculiarities and understand the activity of its participants, not only an in-depth study of the phenomena associated with this life is necessary, but also an approach that considers their multi-faceted nature and location in the area of interest of various disciplines of knowledge, that is, a multidisciplinary approach, becomes inevitable. Only such an approach, in effect, will allow the integration of research findings, which should refer to both the religious and social dimensions of religious life, and will make it possible to see the holistic nature of the phenomena under study.

The study of the area of religious life cannot be confined within any one discipline. The multiple contexts, aspects or dimensions of this area of life require recourse to the concept of multidisciplinary research. There are interesting examples in the literature of the benefits of such an appeal<sup>8</sup>. How important it is to be able to conduct inquiries from the perspective of different disciplines can also be illustrated by the analysis of the functioning within the Catholic Church of the institution of recognizing a marriage as non-existent, the insightful description of which requires recourse to several scientific disciplines that are key to this problem.

The starting point for the considerations carried out in this area should undoubtedly be theological reflection. However, one should also be aware that the very institution of recognizing a marriage as non-existent from the beginning in the eyes of the Church, growing out of the theological context, is already a construct of precisely canon law, and it should also be considered in this context.

The very act of entering into a civil and church marriage, followed by a divorce and the course of the process of recognizing a marriage as non-existent from the beginning is not only an activity with a legal dimension (this is secular or state law) and a theological one including canon law, but also contains no less important components related to the broader social life. Thus, this means it is necessary to refer to analyses that consider the research perspectives of several disciplines belonging to three distinct fields of science: social sciences, humanities and family sciences<sup>9</sup>. In order to better illustrate the interaction between these disciplines and the process of integrating the results of research inquiries, we propose to take a closer look at one of the key

6 Monika Walczak, "Czy możliwa jest wiedza interdyscyplinarna?" *Zagadnienia Naukoznawstwa* no 1 (207) (2016): 125.

7 Jan Kozłowski, "Narodziny i rozwój dyscyplin naukowych." *Sprawy Nauki. Biuletyn Komitetu Badań Naukowych*, no 1 (1996): 3-8; Walczak, "Czy możliwa jest wiedza interdyscyplinarna?" 113-126.

8 Marilyn R. Tayler, "Jewish Marriage as an Expression of Israel's Conflicted Identity," in *Case Studies in Interdisciplinary Research*, ed. Allen F. Repko, William H. Newell, Rick Szostak, (London: Sage, 2012), 23-51.

9 Here we use the official classification of disciplines in force in Poland as of 2022 (see: Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of October 11, 2022 on scientific fields and disciplines and artistic disciplines (Dz.U. 2022 item 2202). However, it should be noted that in the scientific circulation there is no single classification of disciplines and often in the literature the classification of Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostak were cited, which distinguishes three categories of disciplines (the Natural Science, the Social Science and the Humanities) and within them the individual disciplines.

(Allen F. Repko, Rick Szostak, *Interdisciplinary research: process and theory*. (London: Sage, 2020).

moments in the process of recognizing a marriage as null and void - the situation of initiating proceedings before a church tribunal. Of course, it would be most desirable to consider the entire phenomenon multidimensionally and situate it in the necessary contexts. The implementation of such a task is a challenge for further examination in this field.

### **Reflection on the social functioning of the declaration of nullity of marriage**

The subject of the conducted analysis of the results (from a multidisciplinary perspective) is the situation of initiating proceedings before a church tribunal for the recognition of a marriage as never having existed. This situation is related to the first stage of the procedure under the canon law of recognition of marriage as null.

This institution of canon law is rooted in the theological (doctrinal) teaching of the Catholic Church. Its purpose is to establish the truth about the marriage bound. It is a judicial process aimed at giving a clear answer to the question of whether the marriage was invalid.

This process is usually initiated by those directly involved, after the marriage has ceased under secular law, usually, in the form of a divorce. Admittedly, obtaining a divorce is not a formal requirement, however, according to canon law, the judge in a canonical trial should be assured that the marriage has broken down irretrievably (Canon 1675 of the Code of Canon Law 1983), which is most easily established by a civil court decision.

At the same time, it is worth noting clearly that the processes of ruling by civil courts about the divorce and the processes of declaring marriage null by church tribunal are, under Polish law, completely independent of each other. The 1993 Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland<sup>10</sup> states in Article 10 (3) and (4) that „ It is within the exclusive competence of ecclesiastical authorities to make a judgement as to the validity of Canon Law marriage, as well as any other grounds laid down by Canon Law” and that “Passing judgements on matrimonial cases within the limits of Polish legislation falls within the exclusive competence of State civil courts”. This issue has also been finally and unequivocally resolved by the Polish Supreme Court, which in its judgment stressed that “the decision of a church tribunal on the validity or termination of a canonical marriage cannot have a preliminary effect on the decision of a civil court on the validity or termination of a secular marriage of the same spouses”<sup>11</sup>. This is primarily because the prerequisites for divorce and the prerequisites for declaring a marriage null by a church tribunal are different. In the case of divorce, the key premise is the complete breakdown of the marriage of the spouses, expressed in the severance of spiritual, physical and economic ties<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, in the case of declaring a marriage null and void, the grounds are that the marriage was not properly concluded (Canon 1057 of the Code of Canon Law 1983).

It is also worth noting that obtaining a divorce does not obligate anyone to initiate the process of recognizing a concluded marriage as null. This means that this type of action is completely voluntary, and that it is initiated or participated in only by those for whom the decision of the church tribunal is of significant importance.

At the same time, it can be thought that the decision to initiate the process of declaring a marriage invalid is usually made by those who are truly deeply attached to the Catholic Church or attached to religious values. This is confirmed by the results of the quantitative survey, which indicate that among those initiating the process of declaring a marriage null and void there were no non-believers and 73.9% declared faith in God and frequent (at least once a week) attendance

10 The Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, 1993, Dz.U. z 1998 r. Nr 51 poz. 318.

11 Judgment of the Supreme Court - Civil Chamber of November 17, 2000,, V CKN 1364/00, Legalis nr 49616.

12 Janusz Gajda, *Art. 56, [w:] Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy. Komentarz* ed. Krzysztof Pietrzykowski, Warszawa, Legalis, Marek Andrzejewski, (2018) *Prawo rodzinne i opiekuńcze*, (in:) *Prawna ochrona rodziny*, red. Marek Andrzejewski, Warszawa, 2015 p. 63.

at Mass and other religious services. The remaining applicants declared themselves believers, albeit less frequent participants in religious practices. Significantly, at the same time, the assessment of the religiosity of former spouses is much more critical - only 17.3% of respondents considered former spouses to be religious at least as much as themselves.

The initiation of the process of declaring a concluded marriage as non-existent is a very important and traumatic, event in the life of a believer. Therefore, it can be thought that this is a deeply considered decision, especially since obtaining a declaration of nullity of marriage does not bring with it any pragmatic benefits beyond the regularization of one's own canonical position in terms of marriage. In this situation, the researchers should pay particular attention to the observed systematic increase, in recent decades, in the number of people initiating this process - in 1989, the application initiating the canonical process was filed by 1,250 people and in 2017 there were 3875 such applications. This increase is also evident in comparison with the number of divorces. In 1989, the ratio of the number of applications for annulment of marriage to the number of total divorces was 2.9%, while in 2017 it was already 5.9%<sup>13</sup>. These statistics clearly prove that the procedural path provided for in canon law, is becoming an increasingly important mechanism that supports the modern institution of sacramental marriage, and it can be assumed that its social importance will continue to grow.

The reasons for the increased interest in the possibility of verifying the validity of a marriage are, of course, many. Undoubtedly important is, observed not only in Poland, the growing trend of the breakup of both civil and canonical (sacramental) marriages. However, this trend overlaps with the process of transformation of the family model from the traditional model to the modern one. In families functioning on the basis of the traditional model, can also broke up, however, as a result of this, no divorce proceedings or annulment proceedings are initiated. On the other hand, in the case of families operating on the basis of the modern model, the formalization of the breakdown of marriage by obtaining a divorce is a much more frequent phenomenon. And this makes doubts about the validity of a church marriage and the making of related efforts much more common - albeit only for those genuinely affiliated with the Catholic Church.

In addition, it is worth noting that we are currently observing a transformation of the model of religiosity in Poland, which involves the transformation or replacement of forms of traditional folk religiosity by forms of hybrid or modern religiosity. This is important because, according to the rules of folk religiosity, the sacrament of marriage cannot be undermined in any way. The marriage concluded must therefore continue, even if situations have arisen that constitute, according to Church law, grounds for declaring it invalid. In the case of modern religiosity, on the other hand, there is no longer a fundamental rejection of the possibility of obtaining a ruling declaring a marriage invalid from the beginning. Thus, the validity of a marriage is not decided by family and neighborhood circles, but by a church tribunal, and its verdict is fully accepted by others<sup>14</sup>.

A proper understanding of the meaning of the act of initiating the procedure of declaring a marriage non-existent requires not only a multidisciplinary approach, but also a processual one. For the act of initiation itself, carried out by one of the spouses, is not an action that can be viewed in isolation from previous events, but is the end result of the entire process. This process begins at the moment of acquaintance between the future spouses and ends with the actual dissolution of the marriage bond. In order to reliably describe the social and religious context of this process, it is therefore necessary to look at the marriage relationship through

13 Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Kościół Katolicki w Polsce 1991–2011*. (Warszawa 2014), 175; data of 2017 – Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD 2019*. (Warszawa 2019), 25.

14 Marcin Lisak, "Transformacje religijności Polaków : wybrane aspekty religijnej zmiany." *Symposium* 19, nr 2 (29) (2015): 29–50.

the prism of a time frame that extends beyond the duration of the marriage. In doing so, it is necessary to pay attention first and foremost to what happened before the marriage took place. A key and conclusive argument in favor of applying such a perspective is undoubtedly the very legal construction of the institution of annulment of marriage, as presented in canon law, which not only requires noticing the importance of the premarital period, but even makes this period crucial in the adjudicatory proceedings. This is, of course, due to the fact that a marriage can be declared null and void only if it was invalidly concluded.

The Code of Canon Law from 1983 distinguishes three categories of causes of nullity of the marriage: 1) diriment impediments (Canons 1073-1094), 2) deficiencies and defects in matrimonial consent (Canons 1095-1107), and 3) lack of the required form of the celebration of marriage (Canons 1108-1123). The first category indicates circumstances that prevent a valid marriage, such as the spouses being too young too closely related<sup>15</sup>. The second category consists of incapacity of contracting marriage as, for example, lack of evaluative discernment as to the essential rights and obligations of marriage<sup>16</sup>. The third category includes formal legal defects, which make it so that the form of marriage has not been observed and thus cannot be considered as valid<sup>17</sup>.

By far the most common reason for declaring a marriage invalid are reasons related to deficiencies and defects in the marriage consent - they were the basis for declaring a marriage invalid in as many as 99% of proceedings in 2017<sup>18</sup>. This means that the most common reasons for the breakdown of the marital relationship are to be found in the improper conduct of the bride and groom period and mistakes made during the marriage preparation period. Therefore, it is precisely the premarital period that should be at the center of research interest.

There is not the slightest doubt that the premarital period is crucial from the point of view of the future sustainability of the marital relationship, since it is during this time that the spouses should get to know each other and the vision of the future marital relationship should crystallize. At the same time, it is very rich in all sorts of challenges and dangers that future spouses must face. The empirical material obtained in the qualitative study made it possible to identify the basic dangers that directly and definitely negatively affect the subsequent relationship in marriage.

The main dangers in this period for future spouses arise, on the one hand, from the presence of deficits in their social cognitive competence, which prevent them from properly recognizing the person of the future spouse, his or her personality traits and also the nature of the relationships he or she forms with other people important to him or her. On the other hand, a very significant threat to mutual cognition can be various types of manipulation, lies and even falsification of the future spouse or those around them, aimed at concealing important facts from the past or personal qualities that affect the mutual evaluation of the future spouses and their decisions to marry.

As a result of both the lack of adequate social cognitive competence and in the case of manipulation, misrecognition in terms of:

- assessing the maturity of the other person to take on the responsibilities of starting a family, as a result of which it may turn out that the spouse is not sufficiently prepared to enter new social roles in marriage or parenthood,

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15 Wojciech Góralski, "Kanoniczne przeszkody małżeńskie „in genere”, *Prawo Kanoniczne* 55 nr 3, (2012): 3-17.

16 Wojciech Góralski, "Systematyka tytułów nieważności małżeństwa w zakresie zgody małżeńskiej w KPK z 1983 r." *Prawo Kanoniczne*, nr 1-2, (1992): 201-211.

17 Piotr Kroczek, "Does Obligatory Canonical Form of Marriage Contribute to "salus animarum"?" *Folia Canonica. Review of Eastern and Western Canon Law* 12 (2009): 23-30.

18 Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia AD 2019*. (Warszawa, 2019), 26.

- assessing the maturity of the other person to maintain marital fidelity. As a result of the misjudgment, the ability to see that fidelity in the relationship may not be maintained did not appear,
- assessing the other person's level of awareness of the importance of the decision to marry and the consequences associated with it,
- assessing the level of addiction to stimulants (e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling) that prevents normal married life,
- to assess the level of dependence on or third parties (e.g., parents, family, friends) whose excessive presence in the spouses' lives prevents the proper formation of relationships in marriage,
- the proper identification of the intentions to marry or the inability to recognize the incompatibility of the spouses' goals (e.g., to have children). As a result of the discrepancies that arise, the normal functioning of the family becomes impossible,
- the proper interpretation of the declaration of intent to marry, since the lack of a clear declaration of intent often prevents consensual marital life,
- the possibility of inducing a transformation in the spouse (wife), which would allow the construction of a consensual marital relationship.

In this context, it is also worth noting the dangers that may affect future spouses and which originate from cultural conditions and customary rules associated with certain models of religiosity. These are primarily situations in which environmental pressures are exerted on future spouses and which definitely limit their ability to make their own autonomous decisions about choosing a spouse or getting married. Two mechanisms seem to be the most relevant here.

The first, consists in treating the prolonged acquaintance or friendship between future spouses as an undeclared period of fiancéhood, which must necessarily lead to future marriage. As a result of this pressure, individual people in the social environment force these future spouses to take the next steps toward marriage, treating them as obvious and expected, even though the interested parties themselves are not sufficiently convinced of this and their relationship is not supported by an adequate emotional foundation.

The second mechanism is much less subtle and delicate and consists in the obvious forcing of future spouses to marry – this happens most often in the case of unplanned pregnancies, in the name of the principle that a child must be born after marriage. The two mechanisms indicated at the level of specific situations are obviously significantly different, but their common feature is that the future spouses do not make the decision on their own, are not ready for this decision and there is no emotional bond between them, which is able to ensure the durability of the marriage.

The obtained picture of disorders and threats to the proper course of the premarital period also finds its confirmation when we look at the studied problem, recalling the results of the quantitative survey. This is because it indicates, among other things, that the families of origin of future spouses are often an environment exposed to pathological phenomena. In the case of the families of those who participated in the survey, 18% indicated alcoholism in their own family and, in addition, the phenomena of psychological (10%) and physical violence (8%). In the case of spouses' families, the intensity of pathological phenomena tended to be higher - alcohol problems were indicated by 35% of respondents, mental violence was indicated by 13% of respondents and physical violence by 21% of respondents. The marriages of the respondents were concluded after a relatively long period of acquaintance. For 29% of respondents, acquaintance between spouses lasted more than 4 years, for 45% of respondents it was between 1 and 4 years.

The engagement period most often lasted less than 6 months (35%) or 6-12 months (31%). And for 19% of respondents, there was no separate engagement period (no engagement was organized). During the engagement period, 53% of the future spouses met several times a week, meetings less than once a week were had by 20% of the respondents and they stayed together permanently by 13%. It is also worth mentioning that the attitude of the parents of future spouses to the decision to marry was most often accepting (46%), a neutral attitude was adopted for 40% of the relationships and for 15% of the relationships the attitudes were negative.

The premarital period is a time not only for the future spouses to get to know each other, but also to acquire the skills to solve mutual problems, which can give rise to tensions and conflicts. According to the respondents, these usually occurred quite rarely (52%). Frequent disagreements were mentioned by 32% of respondents. However, the effect of these situations was sometimes the temporary severance of acquaintance with the future spouse - 36% of respondents experienced this during the premarital period. In contrast, the resolution of conflict situations most often took place through concessions from the respondent (57%) or joint concessions (25%). In occasional situations, concessions were made by the partner (4%).

The premarital period should be a time set aside for building the rules of married life together. Conversations during the premarital period regarding the functioning of the future family were undertaken by 63% of the respondents and focused most often on the spouses' professional work (39%), financial issues (35%), household rules (33%) and raising children (31%). However, in the case of 37% of respondents, no discussions regarding the future family were undertaken.

The premarital period is also a time for maturing the decision to marry. No reservations or doubts about getting married had 28% of respondents, while 72% struggled with such doubts, with 48% of respondents justifying these doubts with specific behaviors of their partner(s) during the engagement period. Moreover, these doubts were accompanied by symptoms that the marriage might not work out (66%). Most often they were related to the partner's behavior (66%) and also sometimes to the respondent's behavior (20%), the partner's family (42%) or the respondent's family (14%).

Recognizing the diverse context of the situation of initiating proceedings for the recognition of a marriage as null and void, it is still worth looking at it from the perspective of analyzing the motives prompting such difficult, even traumatic, decisions. Looking from this perspective seems to be very important, since the initiation of canonical proceedings should be regarded as an intentional action (given the complex and demanding procedure of canonical proceedings, this issue seems obvious with the characteristics of social intentional-rational action<sup>19</sup>). And looking at it this way, we should consider it an action that is a consequence of the appearance of a certain premise(s), at least subjectively justifying this action.

An in-depth qualitative analysis of the phenomenon under study makes it possible to identify six key types of reasons for initiating canonical proceedings. The first type of rationale involves appealing to transcendent reality and restoring a proper relationship with God. The second type of rationale is related to the axiology applicable to the faithful in the Catholic Church and justifies the initiation of proceedings by the internal need to respect religious precepts. The next type of rationale refers to the institutional rules in the Church, which provide the opportunity to regain full rights within the community of the faithful, the opportunity to enjoy the sacraments. The next type of rationale is based on the pragmatism of those initiating the proceedings and is primarily related to planning for future life including remarriage. The fifth type of rationale, on the other hand, is related to the existential need for a sense of security, for ultimate liberation from a violent

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19 Max Weber, *Economy and Society, An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1978), 24-26.

and/or substance-addicted spouse. The last type of rationale is quite peculiar, as it is invoked by people who are not actually very religiously committed. The initiation of the process of annulment of their marriage is justified here primarily by the behavior of others and the unwillingness to close off any future possibilities.

In turn, statistical analysis makes it possible to indicate the hierarchy of importance of the reasons distinguished by the respondents. The most frequently indicated (in the quantitative survey) motives for initiating canonical proceedings is the possibility of regaining the right to receive the sacraments (91%) and also the possibility of remarrying sacramentally (82%). Further down the list, respondents cited the need to set a good example for their children (75%), to soothe their conscience and build a proper relationship with God (68%), to finally end a certain stage of their lives (52%) and to satisfy their current life partner (39%). It is also quite significant that meeting the expectations of loved ones and improving one's self-image are motives of relatively low importance (17% and 13% of indications, respectively).

A qualitative as well as quantitative analysis of the motives prompting the initiation of canonical proceedings indicates, first of all, the variety of reasons justifying recourse to the institution of declaring a marriage void. This is, of course, due to the great variety of specific life situations in which people find themselves, deciding to resort to the procedure for adjudicating the validity of a concluded marriage. It is worth noting, however, that the grounds identified, however, revolve around challenges of a theological nature, as they relate primarily to the problem of building a relationship with God, are related to establishing a place in the structure of the Catholic Church and functioning within the community of the faithful. This confirms, therefore, the conviction formulated earlier, that the canonical proceedings and the judgment of the church tribunal are of significant importance only for those deeply connected with God, the Catholic Church and the community of the faithful. Thus, also, the effects of these legal proceedings should be considered primarily in the theological dimension, since the judgment of the church tribunal redefines the status of the individual in the religious community.

Proceedings for the annulment of a marriage are also of great importance in psychological terms, since the very fact of seeking to declare a concluded marriage null and void is an act that requires a transformation of one's identity<sup>20</sup> or a process of alteration<sup>21</sup> to enable redefinition of oneself. This allows the person involved in the process to look again at his past and conduct a reassessment and interpretation of his behavior and the situations in which he participated. However, this means constructing a completely new narrative regarding the beginning, duration and breakdown of the marriage. As a result, the events of the past begin to be perceived quite differently than they were seen before.

The initiation of canonical proceedings should also be situated in a no less important social dimension, however, limited primarily to relations within the community of believers. Analyzing the motivations that drive religiously committed people to initiate these proceedings, it should be strongly emphasized that these people are convinced that the situation in which they find themselves is not their fault. On the contrary, they feel aggrieved and, at the same time, they very often realize that their behavior (leaving their spouse, filing for divorce, initiating a process for declaring the concluded marriage null and void) is perceived by those around them as socially reprehensible behavior - this is especially true of people who come from communities associated with traditional folk religiosity. Thus, initiating proceedings to declare a marriage null and void is viewed by them not only as a way to regain full rights in the Church, but also as a confirmation of the rightness of the earlier proceedings. Of course, this is on the assumption that the com-

20 Anselm L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*. (London: Routledge, 2017), 91-133.

21 Peter L. Berger, *Invitation to sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 54-65.

munity in which the person initiating this action is located will accept the judgment of the church tribunal and its consequences - which is not so obvious in communities that subscribe to the rules of folk religiosity.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of the study carried out on the basis of a multidisciplinary perspective was not to seek fragmented knowledge, but to achieve integrated knowledge, so to speak, across disciplinary divides. We do not have the slightest doubt that the phenomena and processes in the area of religious life require just such an approach on the part of researchers. This is primarily due to the fact that participants in religious life experience in a special way the complexity of their social existence by combining the realities of secular and religious reality. And it is the complexity of this existence that we have tried to present in this article.

In this situation, describing, explaining and understanding all the activities of participants in religious life requires combining different contexts, which becomes possible only by referring to a multidisciplinary perspective. Its implementation, however, cannot assume a simple, as it were, mechanical combination of individual bodies of knowledge, but should be realized by extracting the threads relevant to the description of the analyzed phenomena of social and religious life, which should then be interwoven with each other to form a unified, multithreaded, but also holistic narrative.

With regard to phenomena and processes in the area of religious life, this means interweaving mainly theological, legal, cultural studies, psychological, sociological knowledge, since the phenomena and processes under observation are situated in these and still other areas. Reliable and valuable observations must, of course, refer to various disciplines for analytical purposes. However, the knowledge gained from different cognitive perspectives must be interwoven with each other in the next step, because only then will it be possible to look at the studied phenomena and processes in a multidimensional way, and only then does it become possible to see them as they really are from the perspective of their participants. For no phenomenon is merely a theological, legal cultural or social phenomenon. They only become such when we look at them one-dimensionally and therefore in a significantly impoverished way.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

All the mentioned authors significantly, directly, and intellectually contributed to the work and approved its publication.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

All the authors declare that the research involved in the article and the publication of the article were carried out without having any business, financial or other relations and/or circumstances that could be considered as a potential conflict of interest. At the same time, all the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this article or its review.

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