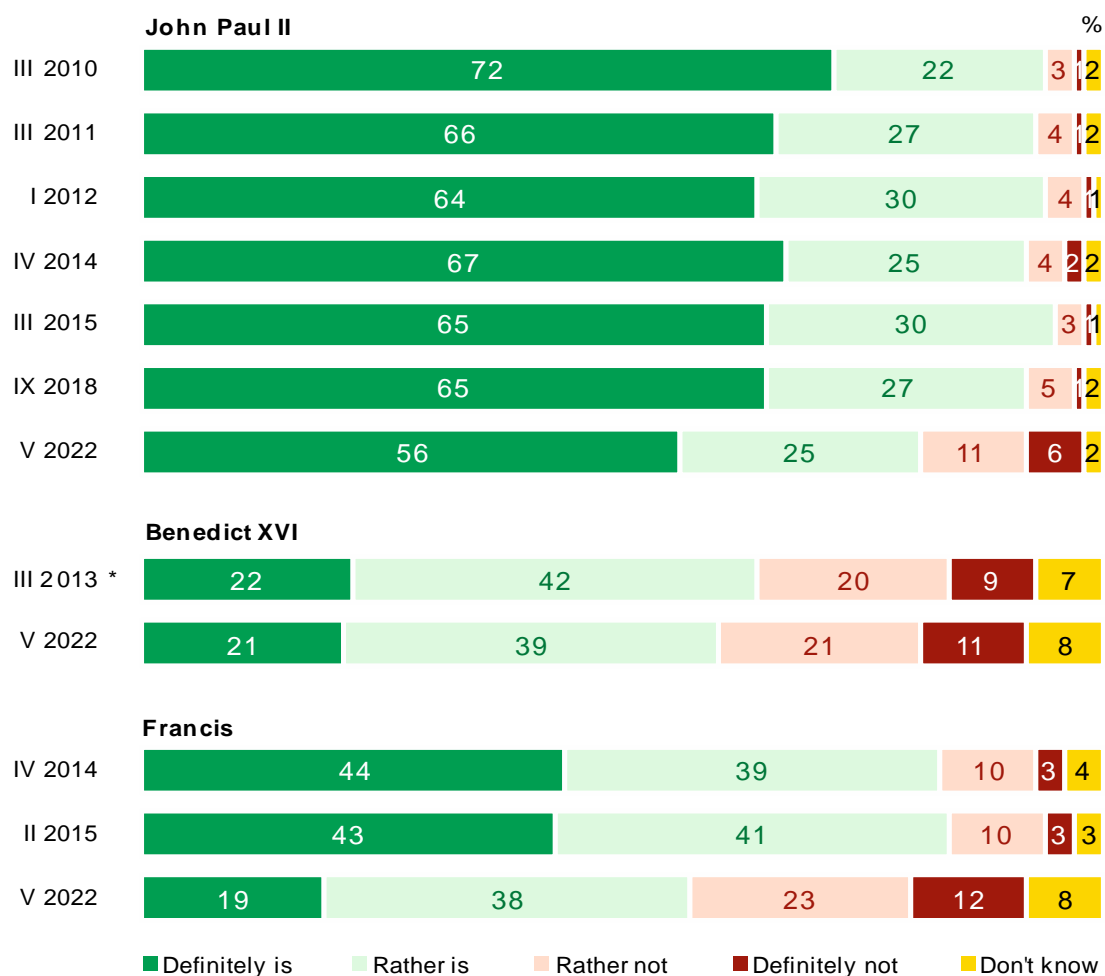


Social authority of the Catholic Church

Despite the deterioration in the perception of the Catholic Church in the last few years and clear symptoms of abandoning religion, the Church in Poland still enjoys considerable social authority. The person (not necessarily from the Church) who enjoyed the greatest authority among Poles over the last decades was Pope John Paul II. In a survey from September 2018, a total of 92% of respondents considered John Paul II as an important moral authority. Currently, such declarations are made by 81% of respondents, including 56% of definite answers. Thus, despite the significant decline in the authority of the Polish pope, for the vast majority of adults he remains a moral beacon.

None of the successors of John Paul II, neither Benedict XVI nor Francis, can equal him in terms of recognition. Benedict XVI is an authority for 60% of adults. Compared to the previous measurement, carried out in 2013, the percentage of such people decreased by 4 percentage points. The most dramatic changes took place in the perception of Pope Francis, who although he enjoyed less authority than John Paul II, nevertheless quite commonly elicited positive reactions. In the studies carried out in 2014 and 2015, more than four-fifths of respondents recognized his moral guidance (83% and 84%, respectively). Currently, he remains an authority for 57% of adult Poles. Undoubtedly, the deterioration of the image of Pope Francis is largely the result of his reactions to the war in Ukraine, differing from common sentiments.

Is Pope John Paul II / Benedict XVI / Francis an important moral authority for you?



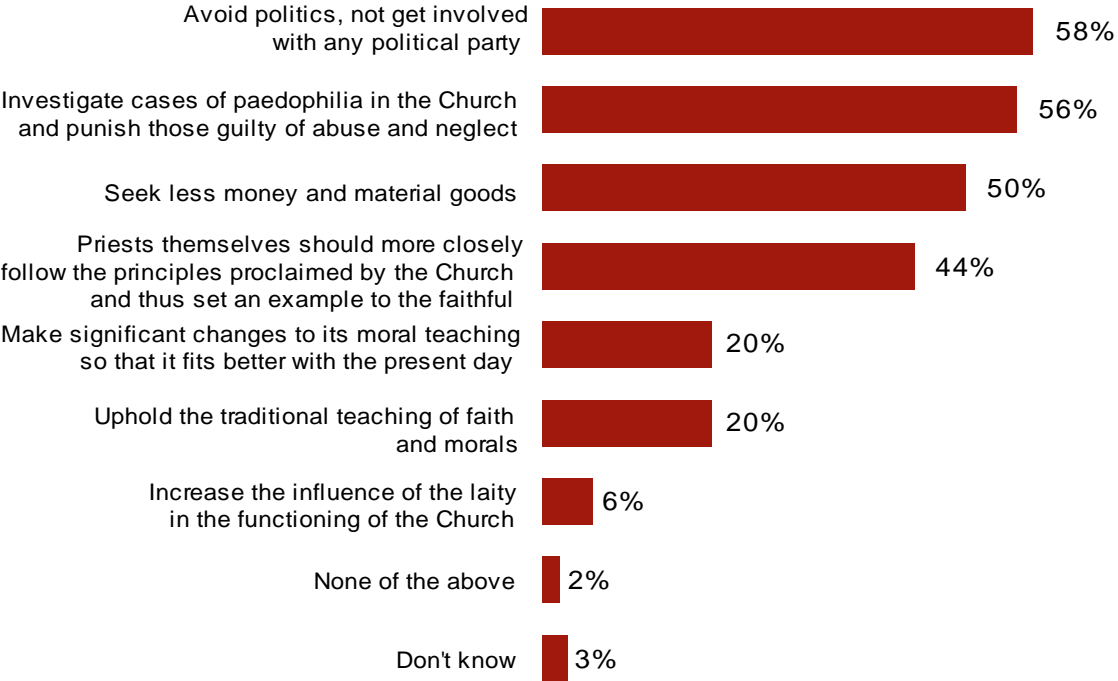
Regardless of the answer to the question about the assessment of popes, more than one-third of respondents (36%) say that among the people of the Church there is a person who is an authority on matters of faith and morals. They mentioned primarily clergy. In this context, the most common names were John Paul II (21%), primate Stefan Wyszyński (15%), and Jerzy Popiełuszko (3%). More than one-fourth (30%) indicated the authority of a locally known priest, e.g. a parish priest or curate in the parish, sometimes specific monks or nuns were also referred to in this context.

Is there anyone in the Church (clergy or lay people, living or deceased, widely known or known only locally) who is an authority for you in matters of faith and morality?



The most frequently expressed expectations of the Church, which would strengthen its social authority, are: avoidance of politics and non-involvement on the side of any political party (58%) and the investigation of cases of paedophilia in the Church and punishment of the perpetrators of abuse and neglect (56%). A large proportion of the respondents expressed the opinion that the Church should strive for money and material goods less (50%), and that priests should set an example to the faithful by following the proclaimed rules (44%). The other expectations were indicated far less frequently. Interestingly, the same proportions of people advocate two adverse perspectives: the need to change the moral teaching of the Church so that it would better fit the present times, and the emphasis on upholding traditional teaching in matters of faith and morals (20% each). Relatively few (6%) mention increasing the influence of the laity in the Church.

What should the Church do to strengthen its authority in society?



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: “Social authority of the Church”, July 2022. Fieldwork for national sample: May 2022, N=1087. The random sample is representative for adult population of Poland.