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## **Victory through prayer**

### **30 years of the Prayer Crusade for the Protection of Unborn Children**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, we celebrate 30 years since the Prayer Crusade for the Protection of Unborn Children in Poland started. This Crusade led to the civilisation breakdown - the precedent move under the democratic conditions from legality of abortion to legal protection of unborn children. How did it happen? How did we work when living under the communist regime? What was the source of our success?

Many of you here, especially the organisers of this great Congress from the Austrian HLI, will not be surprised by the short and simple answer: it happened thanks to the prayer!

The Austrians should remember their Rosary Crusade ended with the unprecedented withdrawal of the soviet army from their occupied country in 1955 in the peak of the Cold War.

But here, in this country, we don't need to remind any other victories won by prayers - we have here famous stories of Lepanto (1571) or of the Turkish attack on the Venice Republic in 1716. These victories were judged unambiguously as won thanks to the Rosary Crusades.

When in 1980 in Poland, during the crisis and the dark night of the communism, we set up a goal for ourselves to abolish the abortion law, it seemed to be impossible from the human perspective. The regime in force at that time promoted abortion and made any public debate on this subject impossible - through media censorship and the ban on publishing not only magazines or materials but even leaflets about it. I remember that it was illegal to make more than 10 copies of printing without a prior authorization from a proper communistic institution. I was not allowed to make a simple stamp with a Gospel quotation without a proper permission! People who distributed underground printing used to disappear without a sign. Doctors and nurses who refused to perform abortion used to lose their jobs. People who propagated the teaching of Church on this subject were persecuted and intimidated in all possible ways. A woman visiting a doctor first time when pregnant would usually hear a question: are we aborting or giving birth?

## Poland under Communism



### The State of War 1981-1983

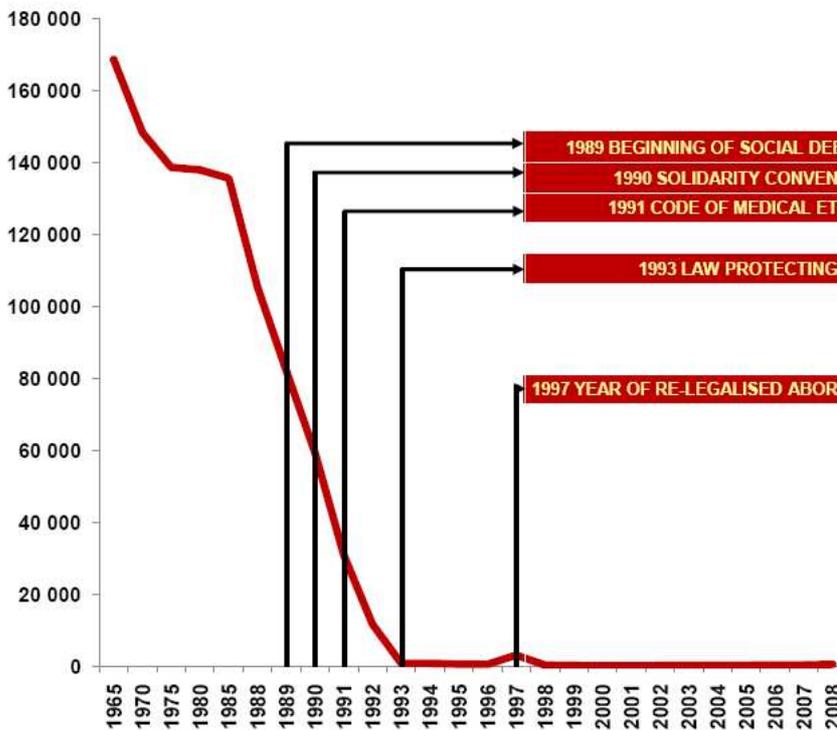
Under these conditions a handful of catholic laymen, few people only, cooperating with The Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow (and its Family Institute, headed by doctor Wanda Póttawska - a member of Pontifical Council for the Family, and a speaker in his Congress) and Metropolitan Curia in Krakow decided to begin the realisation of their goal with the prayer itself.

Because a year before we had received an injection of hope. In 1979, Poland was visited by John Paul II, who said in Warsaw: "Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. The face of this land!". Everyone in Poland understood clearly what he meant - it was kind of a papal blessing for bringing down the communism. During his pilgrimage he said the words, which for me personally were one of the most important words I have ever heard in my life. The Pope said: "You need to pray always, and never stop. Jesus said to pray and form your life through prayer (...) So from this place let this simple but essential appeal from the Pope reach all of you that listen to me, for this is the most important appeal. The most essential message!" (Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, 7 June 1979) and "I express the wish and I always pray for this, that the Polish family may beget life and may be faithful to the sacred right to life" (Nowy Targ 8 June 1979).

At that time, the situation was different. It was extremely difficult. We need to realize how tragic those times were. On the screen you can see a comparison of the official statistics - officially in the year 1980 we had 138,000 abortions per year, but in reality it was 3 or 4 times more. We possess some scientific estimations speaking about 600,000 abortions in Poland a year.

Today Great Britain with twice as many citizens as Poland have 200,000 abortions a year and it is called the abortion capital of Europe.

### Number of abortions over the years in Poland



Year	Number of abortions
1965	168 587
1970	148 219
1975	138 634
1980	137 950
1985	135 564
1988	105 333
1989	82 137
1990	59 417
1991	30 878
1992	11 640
1993	777
1994	782
1995	559
1996	495
1997	3 047
1998	310
1999	151
2000	138
2001	124
2002	159
2003	174
2004	193
2005	225
2006	340
2007	322
2008	499

These tragic numbers shocked us, forced us to act. But it was the communists propaganda which worried us the most, because of it the social consciousness concerning the evil of abortion was alarmingly low. This is why we decided to set up our first goal as “to waken up the social consciousness concerning the killing of unborn children and sensitize our society to the value of life and responsibility for each conceived human being.”

Only the second goal that we set up for ourselves was: „to pray in the intention of abolishing the Abortion Law of 27 April 1956 and of recognizing the right to life for all conceived children.” This law, let me remind you the overall number, resulted in the death of over 20 million Polish children.

In the first period of the most intensive 3-month-long prayer in the intention of this goal, there was about a thousand people praying all over the country. Those people every day in 3 months fully participated in a holy mass (including receiving the Holy Communion) in the intention of the Crusade. They were supported by another two thousand people who due to their illness or age couldn't participate in everyday mass, so they offered their suffering in the intention of the protection of life.

After these three months of intensive praying effort we worked out a praying plan for the Crusade, according to which a participant agreed to commit herself or himself to everyday prayer in the intention of the protection of life, once-a-month attendance in a mass with Holy Communion in this intention (the sick who cannot attend mass should offer a day of their suffering in this intention).

We received about 100 000 applications from all over the country.

At the same time many members of the Crusade carried out prolife work using all available at that time methods. We had a complete blockade on publications or demonstrations. What could we do? Mainly, we could work within the Catholic Church structure. The territory of churches or catechetical rooms was kind of an exterritorial area in the Poland of that time. We gave lectures from the church pulpits during mass. In churches we used to set up expositions with pictures, often smuggled from the West, of unborn children. In catechetical rooms we organized lectures and screenings - mainly of the film "The Silent Scream".

What were the effects of this prayer?

In one word we can say: great. Let me briefly go through some numbers that you can see on the screen. The main Polish success was not the law protecting life, which of course is crucial, but the change made in Polish social consciousness. This truth is nowadays uncomfortable for many people who want to see the law protecting life as the restriction imposed on society by Catholic Church or some other medieval institutions (you surely know this rhetoric quite well, it is the same everywhere, because the adversaries do not have any other arguments). And we can see this truth in the falling number of abortions even BEFORE introducing the statutory ban on them. The order of this process was as follows - first step was the change in the consciousness of society and politicians, then the second step - the law. The fall of the Communism and the beginning of the debate resembling the democratic forms known to you, brought the falling number of abortions up to 80,000 - from 138,000 abortions only 9 years earlier. The following years saw such events as the prolife resolution of the Solidarity Convention, the Doctors' Code of Ethics with the entry on protecting human life from conception and further debate based on more and more democratic rules. All of this resulted in having only 11,640 abortions, which was twelve times less than in the year 1980!

Only after this commentary, I can talk about the Polish Law protecting life, the law that was passed in the upper house of the Polish Senate by one vote! The Law of 7 January 1993 delegalyzes abortion with 3 exceptions (when the life or health of mother is endangered, when the foetus is seriously malformed and when there is suspicion that the pregnancy is a result of a

criminal act). The Law does not foresee any punishment for the aborting women, only for the doctor.

In the second part of my speech, I would like to briefly familiarize you with the consequences of this Law and growing support for it in the Polish society. Before I move on to this, I need to point out that the situation in Poland at the moment is not stable. The Law is endangered, as we can judge not only from the subsequent threats of the post communistic politicians. In 1996 the Law was cancelled for one year, but luckily it was brought back thanks to the Constitutional Tribunal judging that that amendment is contrary to the Polish Constitution. But thanks to this painful year 1997 we have another proof for the change of social consciousness - during this year of legal abortion there were 3,047 abortions on demand performed in our country. This is crowning evidence that contemporary Polish women do not want to perform mass abortion any more, because the respect for the life of every human being from conception has increased in our country radically.

Similar conclusions come from the analysis of the opinion poll centres. The consecutive reports from CBOS (the main opinion poll centre in Poland) show that the social objection towards abortion increased in the last 20 years: from about 35% in 1991 to 50% in 2010. Before the Law was passed in 1991, 1,710,976 written statements had been submitted to the lower house of the Polish Parliament by our citizens - 89% of which were for the legal protection of the unborn. In 2007 the 38th paragraph of the Polish Constitution failed to be supplemented by the extra words: "from conception to natural death". According to the Polish opinion poll conducted this year, about 53% of Poles stood for the constitutional strengthening of the protection of human life, and around 33% of them were against. The Chancellery of the lower house of the Polish Parliament received over 506 thousand collected signatures expressing the approval for the changes in the Constitution and not even 2 thousand signatures against it.

In the last report of the Polish opinion poll centre CBOS, we read: "In the last years the support for the right to abort also has decreased if a woman is in a difficult personal situation (15 points less than in 2002) or simply does not want to have a child (9 points less than in 1999)." The support for abortion without restrictions is declared by only 5% of respondents - according to the research made by the opinion poll centre GfK Polonia. The information gathered by the OBOP opinion poll centre in 2003 say about 81% of supporters (50% yes, 31% rather yes) of the legal protection of unborn children.

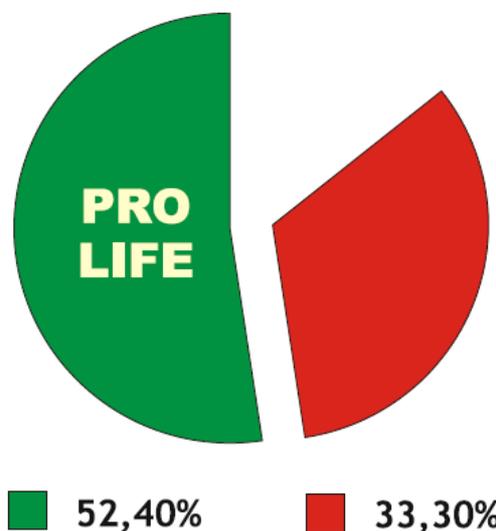
## Polish society is pro-life

- *Objection against abortion in 1991 – around 35%; in 2010 – 50% (CBOS)*
- *For abortion without restrictions – 5% (GfK Polonia, 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2010)*
- *Supporters of the legal protection of unborn children – 81% (OBOP 2003)*

On account of the debate over the strengthening of human life protection in the Polish constitution, by amending article 38 thereof through an insertion of the words:

**“from the moment of conception to natural death”**  
a reliable Polish centre for public opinion research, PGB (Warsaw) carried out a nationwide, representative poll on February 24-28, 2007:

**52% of the Polish people were  
for this kind of amendment**  
**33% were against.**



We are not surprised by these numbers at all. The Law speaks for itself. It resulted not only in the radical fall in killing of unborn children, but it also has had some other positive social consequences.

### Number of abortions in Poland by reasons

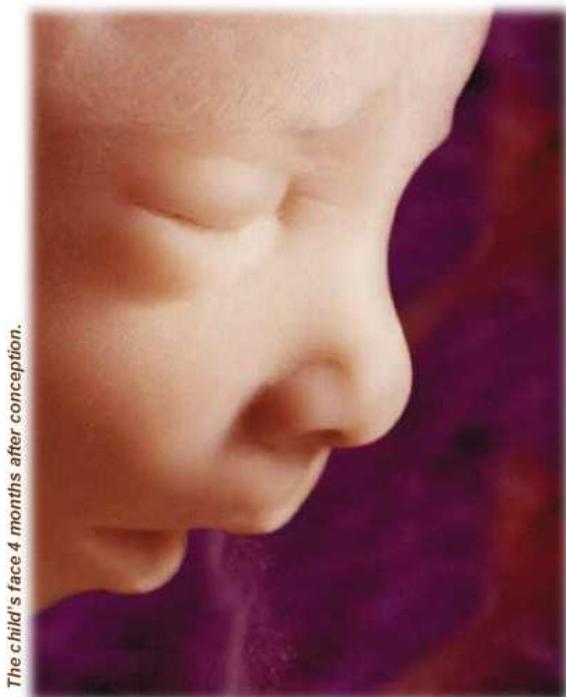
year	when the life or health of mother is endangered	as a result of prenatal examinations	as a result of a criminal act
1993	736	32	9
1994	689	74	19
1995	519	33	7
1996	457	40	8
1997	409	107	7
1998	211	46	53
1999	94	50	1
2000	81	55	2
2001	63	56	5
2002	71	82	6
2003	59	112	3
2004	62	128	3
2005	54	168	3
2006	82	246	12
2007	37	282	3
2008	32	467	0

Abortions performed in accordance with the Law of 1993.

When it comes to these numbers, firstly I must emphasize the fact that the biggest number of these abortions are performed due to the illness of the child. It is a challenge for us to work on the improving the social acceptance for disability. The second issue is that obviously we must be aware that these data do not show the whole truth about the number of abortions in Poland. No doubt, there is an abortion underground, but it is not as big as it is shown by the pro-abortion opponents in the media. They are talking about 100-200,000 illegal abortions a year - compared to what you know already about Poland, you must realise that this number is simply absurd. The reliable expertise estimates the underground on 7-14 thousand abortions a year - if you are interested in this subject, you can familiarize yourself with our detailed report on how these estimations were made on [www.pro-life.pl/resources](http://www.pro-life.pl/resources).

Apart from the lower number of abortions since 1993, the reproductive health of women is getting better as well (the number of maternal deaths is decreasing), the reproductive awareness of women is improving (falling numbers of underage mothers), the newborn mortality and the number of miscarriages is going down. The positive results of the Law include also the improved ratio of perinatal mortality.

## Decline of Perinatal Mortality in Poland



In 1999 perinatal mortality ratio  
was **10.8** per mil  
in 2001 – **9.4** per mil  
in 2008 – **7.6** per mil

Can I ask you to focus on some numbers for the last time? This table can be a good counter-argument for the pro-abortionists “threatening” the society with supposedly catastrophic results of delegating abortion.

Objections towards the Law raised when it was being enacted	The reality
1. The number of infanticide will grow dramatically.	The number of infanticide decreased (in 1992: 59, in 2002: 28, in 2003: 25, 2009: 28).
2. Child abandonment will grow dramatically.	The number of child abandonment resulting in death in 1991 was 1, in 1992 - 0, in 2003 - 0, 2009 - 5. There is a drop in the number of newborns left in hospitals for non-health related reasons - in 2002 - 1018, 2006 - 826, 2008 - 775.
3. Prisons will be full of women sentenced for abortion.	The Law of 1993 does not foresee any punishment for aborting women, only for medical staff.
4. Hospitals will be full of women who illegally tried to perform abortion in primitive conditions.	The number of maternal deaths in 1991 was 70, in 2002 - 26, 2004 - 23, 2006 - 21, 2007 - 11. During 17 years of the Law taking effect, there was only one case of a women who died because of illegal abortion.
5. Women “forced” to be mothers will be left with no support (financial and other).	There are permanent vacancies in single mother homes. There are more and more new homes and “life windows”
6. Underage girls will become mothers on a mass scale.	The number of mothers under 19 is decreasing (1990 it was 8%, in 2002 - 6,8%, in 2003 - 6,4%, in 2004 - 5,75, in 2008 - 5,1%).
7. The number of abortions qualified as miscarriages, but in reality provoked by women, will go up.	The number of miscarriages is decreasing (in 1991: 55,992, in 2002: 41,707; in 2004: 42 183, in 2009: 47 323).

*Based on: Council of Ministers Report on the realisation of the Law of 7 January 1993 for years 2001-2008, Polish Police Headquarters, Ministry of Health*

This is what the situation is like in Poland.

In 2006, having considered the above-mentioned changes in the society, we worked out a new program for the Crusade, which was more suitable for the existing situation.

First of all, we carry out the thanksgiving prayer for all the good that has happened so far. We also have two precatory goals: for further increase in respecting the life of the unborn, sick and aged and for introducing in the Polish Constitution the legal protection of every human being from conception to natural death

I need to emphasize the fact that this experience, among other things, build a base for the World Prayer for Life - to participation in which you are all invited:

[www.world-prayer-for-life.org](http://www.world-prayer-for-life.org)

Finally, I encourage you to read a few words of John Paul II.



**“Fight for every human being to have the right to be born (...).  
In the Dead and Risen Christ the human question received  
its final judgment: The life will conquer the death!”.  
(John Paul II, 26 February 1979)**

Thank you for your attention. God bless!