



Educational specificity of Salesian institutions in the Polish catholic school system

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Abstract

Catholic education occupies a special place in the country of religious education. Education at the Catholic School is based on Christian personalism, which recognizes the existential specificity of the human being, and therefore a personal dimension of human being, a material and spiritual element of its nature, reason and freedom as significant attributes, sensitivity to higher values. This personalistic concept of a man recognizing his spiritual dimension, significantly shed on the entire course of education. Among the Catholic schools operating in Poland, special position occupies schools conducted by the Salesian Assembly, founded by Saint. John Bosco, who devoted his entire life to the creation of an educational community for the most needy and lost youth. He also became famous as the creator of an extraordinary preventive system leading to an integral human development. The paper presents the basic principles of teaching and upbringing in Salesian schools, conducted in accordance with the ideals appointed by their spiritual guide. Participants in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship were particularly exposed, subject to the Pilska Province.

Key Words: catholic schools, Salesian Society, Salesian schools, St. John Bosco, prevention system

1. Introduction of Catholic schools in Poland

A special place in the religious structure of the country is occupied by the Roman Catholic Church, which gathers the vast majority of believers. In addition to it, there are also other churches and religious associations with centuries-old traditions, which, however, concentrate a marginal part of the population. The same is true of education. Almost all religious education is Catholic education.

During the period of transformation there was a dynamic increase in the development of Catholic education both quantitatively and structurally. It should be remembered that only nine Catholic schools survived the times of the Communist People's Republic, including girls' high schools of gifts, immaculate, Nazareth, Ursuline, Resurrection, high school of priests of the Piarists or the Salesian basic vocational school (Leksykon Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce, 2003, p. 291). There are currently 491 Catholic schools in Poland (The Council of Catholic School, 2021). Catholic primary schools account for approximately 1.8% of all primary schools in Poland and Catholic secondary schools for 5.2% of all such

schools. Catholic technology accounts for only 0.8% of all technicians, and Catholic vocational schools of the first grade 0.3% of schools of this type (Ibid, 2020). More than 70 thousand pupils are enrolled in Catholic schools, including more than 44.1 thousand primary school pupils (1.5 per cent of the total number of pupils in primary schools in Poland) and more than 21.2 thousand secondary school pupils (4.5 per cent of the total number of pupils in such schools). Nearly 2 thousand students attend Catholic technicians and vocational schools of the first degree, more than 500 students study in art schools, and approx. 2.5 thousand in special schools and with special educational needs.

Preschool education is also developing dynamically. According to the October 2020 Conference of Superior Superiors of Women's Religious Orders, the sisters ran about 370 kindergartens in Poland (most of them are non-public kindergartens), attended by more than 27,000 children (Zakony Zenskie, 2021). The running of these establishments is no longer the domain of monks. Increasingly, these are various associations of lay Catholics. Many schools of different types run, including the Association of Friends of Catholic Schools (120 schools), founded in 1990, and the Association of Catholic Families. Schools are also run by men's religious orders (of which the Salesians are the first), but also by women's religious congregations. They are also created in dynamic parishes, and some are run by dioceses (Maj, 2002, p. 291). The intensive development of Catholic schools prompted the Polish Episcopal Conference to adopt the document "Guidelines of the Polish Episcopate concerning Catholic schools", regulating the legal and pastoral activity of Catholic schools in Poland. Over time, the need to establish a nationwide organisation of Catholic schools as a representative entity for state and church authorities emerged.

The Polish 269th Episcopal Conference therefore established the Council of Catholic Schools, which since 1994 has brought together all Catholic schools. The Council has ecclesiastical and civil legal personality. Its main tasks are to organize the formation and further training of teachers and educators, to coordinate cooperation between Catholic schools in the field of education and teaching, to improve curricula, to help Catholic schools preserve their identity, to help dioceses, parishes, religious orders and associations, and to organize a Youth Forum, conferences, training sessions and courses (The Council of Catholic School, 2021). The vast majority of Catholic education is non-public. Speaking about the educational specificity of Catholic schools, it should be emphasized that the contemporary teaching of the Church exposes the evangelizing role of the Catholic school integrally connected with the educational mission of the school. Father Adam Maj is of the opinion that such integration causes the Catholic school to *become a coherent institution, capable of achieving its overarching objective, i. e. supporting personal development of students towards their human and Christian maturity* (Maj, 2002, p. 21).

Catholic education is based on Christian personalism, which recognizes the essential characteristics of man, i. e. the personal dimension of human existence, the material and spiritual element of his nature, reasonableness and freedom as essential attributes, sensitivity to higher values. This personalistic concept of man, recognizing his spiritual dimension, has a significant impact on the whole course of education. It should also be stressed that the Catholic school, in accordance with the Council's Declaration, advocates pluralism of educational methods, recognizing the progress of contemporary psychological, pedagogical and didactic sciences. Openness to modern methods of upbringing, the school combines with traditional means of upbringing, especially Christian (Ibid, 2020).

So what kind of Catholic school is to be? The most recent Directory on Catechization states that it should be characterized by "conformity with the aims of public school education;

the originality of an educating community steeped in evangelical values; a focus on young people; concern for education aimed at a coherent union of faith, culture and life”.

(. . .) In a complex school life, a Catholic school operates just like other school, but differs from them in one point: its activity is

associated with the Gospel, from which he draws inspiration and strength (Congregation for Catholic Education Religious dimension of education in a Catholic school, 1996, p. 22).

The Catholic school is treated as a community made up of teachers, administrative staff, students and their parents. Naturally, the first ones responsible for the mission of a Catholic school are the teachers – educators. Their knowledge and skills, and above all the way of Christian life and personal contacts, play a decisive role in shaping the identity of the Catholic school and making it possible to realize its intentions and undertakings. Specific expectations of teachers are set by the Second Vatican Council, which sees the ministry of teachers of Catholic schools as a true apostolate:

(. . .) Bound by love between themselves and their disciples and bound by spirit apostolic, may they bear witness both by life and by teaching to the one Teacher Christ. Let them cooperate primarily with

parents throughout the upbringing process; (. . .) let them stir up

pupils themselves to personal action, and after the completion of the period

let them continue to help them with advice, friendship, as well as setting up

special associations imbued with the spirit of the Church (Second Vatican Council, 1968).

Among the Catholic schools operating in Poland, schools run by the Salesian Congregation occupy a special position, so it is worth considering their activity and educational specificity.

2. Father Jan Bosco and his educational system in the work of evangelization

The history of the Salesian mission can be traced back to three historically important periods. These are the times of its founder from 1815 to 1888, the development of the Salesian work in the world from 1888 to 1965, and the period from 1965 after the Second Vatican Council, which began a new phase of Salesian history until today (Wirth, 2009).

The year 1815, mentioned above, is the year of the birth of St. John Bosco in Turin, shortly after Italy was freed from the Napoleonic yoke. The time of its growth and formation falls during the period of the Catholic Restoration (1815-1848) understood as a return to the past and rejection of the revolution, which was a time of great turmoil in Italy. It was led by the dethroned rulers by the French Revolution and Napoleon. After this period, Italy found itself in the democratic-republican trend, which ushered in the Risorgimento period, the struggle of the Italian people for the unification and liberation of the state.

From 1848, the country felt an increased anti-clericalism and reluctance to teaching of the Church and religious orders. The ruling political group achieved its goal in 1870 uniting all the Italian states on the Apennine Peninsula. There was a separation of the state from the church, and Pope Pius IX was deprived of political power. In 1876, a government was established to remove the Christian religion from public life, and Catholics had to withdraw from political life.

Against the background of these political transformations and resolute anticlericalism falls the activity of St. John Bosco.

Don Bosco knew from an early age that his vocation was to work with young people. Since he was five years old, he had a plan to live among boys, gather them and teach catechism. It was his greatest desire, it seemed like the only occupation he should devote himself to on this earth (Buksa, 2009, p. 53).

From the first days of his priesthood, he took care of poor, lost young people, left without help, without prospects for the future. Young people flocked to Turin in search of work. According to L. Cian, the boys who were cared for by John Bosco came mostly from agricultural areas, from families who were unemployed or engaged in stonemasonry, masonry, paving, forced to work 15-16 hours. 50% of Turin's youth were illiterate (Cian, 1990, p. 181). They often found themselves in a tragic situation of lack of work, suffering hunger and poverty, which caused them to be demoralized, turning them into criminals and sometimes criminals (Krawiec, 2004, p. 19).

A turning point in Don Bosco's educational journey was the meeting of a 16-year-old illiterate Bartholomew Garellim, orphaned by his mother and father, who, despite being a teenager, had not yet received the Sacrament of Communion. This meeting was a powerful impulse for Bosco to organize permanent care for the boys. He wanted to lead him out of deep life crises and give him the prospect of a better future. Bartholomew was joined by other boys, who were the first pupils of the priest in the itinerant oratory, because they could not find a permanent place for their meetings.

Only after 10 years of wandering oratory, in 1846 in Turin, on Valdocco a permanent oratory began to function, which became a family home for the boys from the street.

Due to the urgency of the situation, Don Bosco expanded his oratory:

ran Sunday and evening school, middle school courses and classes, workshops, craftsmen and workshops, he also founded a modest printing house, which quickly and perfectly developed in the service of truth, even the first public music school (Buksa, 2009, p. 57).

He extended his educational reach to young people throughout their developmental phase, and the pursuit of their salvation became his life's mission and vocation.

Already then he had visions of founding a religious congregation that would deal with the upbringing and education of homeless, abandoned youth. He chose St. John as his patron. Francis Sales, a representative of Christian humanism, whose guiding principle was to bring religion closer to life, so that it might not be suffering and penance, but joy. Due to the prevailing anticlericalism, Bosco encountered numerous obstacles in obtaining the legal personality of the Salesian Society. It was not until 1874 that the Holy See approved the activity of the Congregation, granting it the Acts-Constitutions defining its constitution, purpose and administration. However, full legal personality and all privileges, the congregation received only in 1884 (Krawiec, 2004, p. 29).

St. John Bosco occupies a prominent place in the history of education also as the creator of an extraordinary preventive system. According to the Author, it involves

Familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations of the institutions, and then make sure that

students always watched the watchful eye of the principal or assistants, so that as a loving fathers they talked, served as guidance in every circumstance, gave

advice and cordially admonished, i. e. to make sure that the students did not have the commit misdemeanours (Cian, 1990, p. 269-270).

This system is based on three main pillars: understanding, religion and love, which lead to the integral upbringing of man.

Reason, according to Don Bosco, refers to a dual subjectivity in education, embracing on the one hand the educator and on the other the pupil. Relations of both subjects towards each other should be characterized by trust, self-control, understanding, optimism, and on the part of the educator individualization of educational activities, creating an atmosphere of freedom, albeit without too leniency, prevention and supervision, as well as prudence in punishment. In the preventive system, the use of penalties is excluded. Bosco wrote:

Why, instead of preventing disorder by supervision and in the spirit of love, an easier and simpler issuing system is being used more and more often rights upheld by punishments, inflaming hatred and bringing trouble? (Ibid, 2020, p. 201).

Therefore, according to the Author, it is the proper care applied by educators who surround the pupils with love, care, understanding and participate in all the moments of their lives, supporting them in difficult moments, that is the most appropriate way of educating them. With positive relations with the pupil, discovering the good in him and guiding towards the good, there will be no need for punishment.

The element that integrates life and shapes the personality of both educators and educators is, according to Don Bosco, religion.

Only Religion Can Begin and Finish a Great Work true upbringing (Ibid, 2020, p. 278).

Thus, in the preventive system, it is treated as an internal pedagogical principle, which translates into the content of upbringing, as well as into its forms and means. It is about educating in the spirit of authentic religious values, deeply experiencing God and imitating him in one's life. This is done through religious practices, the reception of the sacraments, as well as the worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Such an approach allows the process of forming a mature personality and internal enrichment.

Don Bosco devoted much space to the third pillar of the preventive system, which is love. He wrote: In practice, this system is based entirely on the words of St. Paul: Love She's patient, she's kind. He endures everything, he puts his hope in everything, will endure everything (Bosko, 2002, p. 437).

These words point to the fact that it is impossible to raise a man without the participation of love. Educational love, on the other hand, is a visible manifestation of God's love. This love does not refer to unnecessary sentimentalism, but is manifested in being close to the pupil, offering him advice, consolation, making him understand how important he is for the educator.

And here we come to another essential element of Don Bosco's method: assistance, which means being close to the pupils in an attitude of interior participation in their lives (Buksa, 2009).

The saint intuitively felt that although the pupil has all the predispositions to become full man, however, left to himself, can easily stop at immature level. Realizing this need for external stimulus, Father Bosco treated education as the work of man with man to create a human being (Ibid, 2020, p. 75).

Thus, to shape him, to lead him to perfection, we need an educator treated as a friend whom we can trust, who will discover in him the seeds of goodness and develop them accordingly through constant discreet accompaniment and support.

The preventive (preventive) system assumes a vigilant, paternal presence of assistants among the pupils. Assistants, under the care of the director, serve children and youth as mentors, leading them to maturity. The aim of the system is to create an environment in which existing standards would maximise the mobilisation of good, thus limiting the scope for the spread of evil.

As a result of this system, the educational community created by Don Bosco became a family-like environment, freeing itself from pedagogical rigour. He called the house "oratorium", which was supposed to be a substitute for a family for young people deprived of care and education. To create the atmosphere of a family home he invited his mother to cooperate. He instructed the Salesians *to create families in homes where the director would be the father* (Buksa, 2009, p. 84).

The system created by St. To this day, John Bosco continues to serve the work of evangelization, a task for the family, the school, the Church and the entire social environment. The Salesian Society he founded began to live the missionary ideal of its founder, spreading the principles he proclaimed throughout the world. As Fr. Jan Krawiec:

When Bosco died on 31 January 1888 in Turin, he was calm about his developing work which he left organized and formed, numbering 6 Provinces, 56 religious houses, 768 confreres and 267 novices (Krawiec, 2004, p. 29).

3. Salesian Education in the Pils Province and the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship

Today there are 14298 Salesians in 132 countries around the world. The Salesian Society arrived in Poland at the end of the 19th century and currently has 860 Salesians working in 4 provinces: Pils, Warsaw, Wroclaw and Krakow. Today it is one of the largest male religious congregations of the Church. The Salesians carry out 300 works (Salesians, 2021) related to their mission, continuing the ideas of their charismatic founder. These include: oratories, youth movements and communities, parishes, educational centers, boarding schools, bursa, youth and academic pastoral care, counseling centers, recreation centers.

Schools of different types and levels of education occupy a special place among these works. The first Salesian school was founded in 1898 in Oświęcim. It was a vocational school with an educational institution and was the only Salesian school to survive the period of real socialism. Today the Salesians run nearly 100 schools and educational centres (Szkoly salezjańskie w Toruniu, 2021).

Fr. Bosco saw the school as a place to educate "good Christians and honest citizens". Continuing this idea, the Salesians run primary schools, vocational schools, technical schools (private and public), junior high schools and general secondary schools. They propose a model of integral education, which pays attention to education, human development, the ability to establish dialogue with culture and maturing in the faith of their students (Pilska Province, 2021).

In recent years, the Salesians of the Pilska Province have expanded their pastoral and educational activities in schools. There are schools in Aleksandrow Kujawski, Bydgoszcz, Debno, Konin, Kniew, Pila, Poznan, Rumia, Rzepczyn, Szczecin, Torun and Trzciniec. There

is also an educational and youth center in Moscow named after st. John Bosco "Our Home". The Salesians write about the organization of the school day as follows:

Our schools place great emphasis on safety and education.

We have our own hierarchy of values resulting from the Decalogue and the teaching of the Church, which we implement as soon as students cross the walls of the school. We start the day in the main hallway with a prayer and a so-called morning word. This is a certain formation of these young people. Every day we have the opportunity to refer to students a few words to think about. We took it from Margaret, or the mother of St. John Bosco, who used to direct the word 'good night'. In the morning, the successes of the students are announced and distinguished in front of the whole school forum (Ibid, 2020).

In the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship there are three schools run by the Salesian Society. The oldest of them is the school in Aleksandrow Kujawski, which started its activity in 1919. Liquidated in 1955, it reopened its doors after 36 years. In 2004 the Secondary School of the Salesian Society Cardinal August Hlond, adopted the status of a public school. The Public Primary School of the Salesian Society was opened as part of the educational reform initiated in 2017. At present, 664 students are enrolled in Salesian schools: 349 in primary school and 315 in high school. On the school website you can read: The Salesian School is an extraordinary school, because who can boast 90-year-old roots? The measure of its uniqueness is every year in September quite a large group of graduates - already students, wandering around the lobby in hope that they will be able to talk to teachers and younger colleagues. Or maybe this is how genius loci works? "Alma Mater" schools of the Pilska Province is an extraordinary school. As someone said: "This is a school that has a soul" (Cuiavian College, 2021).

The largest Salesian school in the province is the School Complex of the Salesian Society "Collegium Salesianum" in Bydgoszcz, established in 1996. It consists of the Blessed Laura Vicuna Primary School and the St. Mary's High School of John Bosco. Currently, 773 students are enrolled here.

The activities of Bydgoszcz institutions are accompanied by the pedagogy of St. It is based on the three pillars of this system: goodness, reason and religion, which are realized in schools around the words of Don Bosco: "Do not waste time, do good, do much, and you will never regret it. " "Reason and religion are the two springs of my whole educational system. "

"Religion itself is capable of beginning and finishing the great work of true education" (Collegium Salezjanum, 2021).

In addition to several extra-curricular classes, the schools also run the Association of Salesian Past Pupils, which is a good way to keep in touch with their graduates. Thus, the care and support for them does not end at the end of their studies, but extends longer, as it were, entering the further life of each of them.

It is also worth mentioning the Catholic Primary School of the Salesian Society named after Dominica Savio in Torun, which was founded in 1997 after the Salesians took over the failing Social Primary School (with Catholic rights) from the Parents' Educational Association. In 2004, the school moved to newly built buildings in the 'Wrzosy' housing estate. Currently, the school's infrastructure is constantly being expanded in the form of sports facilities, fields, and a general secondary school is also planned. The school has a community of Liturgical Service of the Altar, a group of missionary animation, media animation,

Margaretka, school circle Caritas, scouts, ZHP and SALOS RP. There is also a Religious Community under the name of St. Joseph (Salesian Schools of Torun, 2021).

In addition to the preventive system, carried out in accordance with the ideals set by their spiritual guide, the Salesian schools studied work on the following forms of religious life: prayer, Mass, retreats, activities of religious groups (e. g. liturgical, charitable, altar boys), pilgrimages, the organization of formation camps during the holidays (the so-called "Vacation with Don Bosco"), formation training for teachers and workers, days of concentration for young men in seminary. .

Also worthy of note is the close, systematic cooperation with parents aimed at the joint formation of the child's personality, in accordance with moral and religious principles. That is why schools organise courses for parents, for example, to support them in their difficult upbringing process (Ibid, 2020). This is an extremely valuable initiative at a time when the family is facing an increasingly serious crisis caused by a change in its way of functioning within the framework of centuries-old norms and values. The constant lack of time, the pursuit of work, professional development, causes the child to be left alone.

An anonymous society is being formed, which is characterized by a lack of parent-child contacts and the disappearance of social ties. As Henryka Kwiatkowska mentions: (. . .) this axiological area of upbringing does not tolerate emptiness, it is quickly managed with competitive values, often anti-values.

They are attractively offered even by the media, not to mention already about vibrant youth subcultures. They make the world youth fashion, with which the rules are not discussed, but thoughtlessly absorbs them to gain importance in the chosen reference group (Kwiatkowska, 2005, p. 123).

Here, then, it is worth emphasizing that the Salesian institutions were able to translate the ideas and pedagogical principles of their Creator into modern reality, helping the family to fulfil its educational duty. Because to educate means to surround oneself with care and care, which should take place in the integrated activities of family and school. Only then can you count on pedagogical success.

Conclusion

It is 133 years since the death of the charismatic founder of the Salesian Society. His work, despite the passage of time, and especially the revolution in civilization that took place during this period, proved timeless and has not lost its relevance. In addition, the educational system created by St. St. John Bosco has proven to be an extremely effective art of education, and its role continues to be inspiring. According to Fr. Jozef Marszalek, elements of this system such as:

the main role of the apprentice, the auxiliary role of the educator, the structure of the process, model of pedagogical interpersonal relations, integral teleology of education as well as the means used – allow to extract the constitutive properties of its Preventive System and formulate them in the form of specific pedagogical principles (Marszałek, 2010, p. 707).

It seems that these are universal principles which can be successfully applied not only in Catholic schools, but also in secular institutions. In the case of a crisis of education, the system of Don Bosco and its clearly formulated principles can become a preventive method, leading the pupil to an internal transformation towards a mature society.



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