

□ Reading time: 5 min.

There is a perhaps unique place in Poland where Salesians care for young people from different social backgrounds. Children and young people from urban and rural areas, rich and poor, disabled, abandoned by their parents, marginalised come together in one work. Some study at school, others have found a home, a yard, a place to meet God there. For twenty-five years, the Salesian Institute in Tarnowskie Góry has been a second home not only for young people, but also a place where different circumstances mingle, supporting people, every individual.

A brief history

Tarnowskie Góry is a town of sixty thousand inhabitants located in Upper Silesia, a very special region on the map of Poland due to its original culture, dialect and numerous traditions. It is a city with a rich history, whose origins are linked to the silver mines that operated here from the end of the 15th century until the beginning of the 20th century. Dedication to work and loyalty to tradition still characterise the inhabitants of this area today.

The Salesians from Wroclaw Province (PLO) arrived in Tarnowskie Góry at the turn of 1998-1999 to take over the buildings of the former rehabilitation institute for the disabled, located in a beautiful natural park known as Repty Park. The park belonged to the wealthy Donnersmarck family, who built a palace and servants' quarters there. After the Second World War the palace was destroyed and in its place a hospital was set up for miners who were victims of accidents. The servants' quarters were enlarged and a facility was created to rehabilitate and adapt miners and other disabled people. In time, this institution was called the Rehabilitation Institute for the Disabled and was handed over to the Salesians. Once the most necessary work was completed, the Salesian presence in the town was solemnly inaugurated on 30 September 1999. It is a special presence, for it is not just a Salesian school with oratory, but the entire structure needed to welcome and integrate the disabled.

The structure of the Institute

Today the structure of the Salesian Institute includes:

- Primary and Secondary School with 633 students in the school year 2023-2024;
- Special Needs School with almost 50 students with a boarding school, mainly for the disabled, where 30 pupils live;

- Care Centre for Persons with Disabilities, with about 40 persons;
- the Rehabilitation Centre, which provides almost 870 rehabilitation services each year for almost 530 young minors;
- the Oratory, where about 70 young people receive training;
- the Hospitality Centre, which welcomes various groups for retreats or recreational activities.

More than 150 people work in the Institute, caring for young people on a daily basis.

The schools

The value of the schools lies in the students and teachers. The Institute's schools employ teachers who, in addition to their specialist training, have qualifications in special pedagogy and therapy. The skills of these teachers are a response to the special needs of students with physical disabilities and specific learning difficulties, which are not lacking in Salesian schools in Tarnowskie Góry. The teachers are creative, constantly improving their skills and have a lot of experience in their work.

The schools' educational programme is derived from the principles of the Salesian Educational System. At the same time, the programme defines the specific nature of the Catholic and Salesian school which bases its educational activities on Christian values. In particular, young people are educated in self-acceptance and self-formation according to their abilities and the limitations of disability; in kindness and tolerance of worldviews, religion and race; in living and acting in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church; in patriotism and concern for the common good; in sensitivity to the lot of others; in the ability to cope with preparation for professional, family and personal life; in truth, independence, responsibility; in communion with nature and the use of its goods; in the formation of personal culture.

School for Special Needs with a boarding hostel



The Special Needs School with a boarding hostel welcomes pupils with disabilities from all over Poland. The purpose of the school and boarding hostel is to enable pupils to receive an education appropriate to their abilities and to provide comprehensive educational care, as well as to enable participation in therapeutic and social rehabilitation and to prepare pupils for independent participation in social life. This part of the Salesian work in Tarnowskie Góry makes the home dimension present in a special way according to the criteria of Don Bosco's Preventive System and makes the entire community aware of the young people most in need.

Centre of assistance for people with disabilities

The care centre for people with disabilities is a public facility within the Salesian work that carries out the tasks of social and professional rehabilitation. It assists general development by improving the ability of adults to function as independently and actively as possible in their environment. The rehabilitation activities are adapted to the individual abilities and skills of the participants. They have access to

appropriately equipped therapeutic workshops conducted by qualified therapists and instructors.

Rehabilitation Centre

This is an institution established to provide ongoing and comprehensive therapeutic and rehabilitation activities for disabled pupils and pupils with special needs. This is an undoubted advantage of the Salesian Institute, as young people in need of rehabilitation can benefit from it in their place of study and residence and at times coordinated with school activities.

Oratory

The Oratory is the fulfilment of Don Bosco's fundamental idea: to create an environment for young people that is a home, school, playground and church. It offers pupils and those in charge of the Centre, as well as children and young people from outside, the opportunity to spend their free time well, develop their social, artistic and intellectual skills, educate them to be active and act for the good of others, and give them the chance to deepen their spiritual life. Young people, especially schoolchildren, are trained to be "good Christians and upright citizens" in adult life; they participate in formation in the local community, but also at the level of the Wroclaw Province. They provide a service for young people both in school and out of school, such as in the youth summer.



Hospitality

The Centre provides a place to welcome guests who wish to rest, renew themselves spiritually and enjoy the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Indeed, throughout the year the Institute welcomes various groups, especially those wishing to experience moments of formation or retreat.

The Hill of the Beatitudes, where Don Bosco's dream is realised

The heart of the Salesian Work in Tarnowskie Góry is a chapel dedicated to Don Bosco. On the altar there is a statue of the Turin educator pointing out the goal to St Dominic Savio: heaven. Indeed, the aim of Salesian activity in Tarnowskie Góry is education through evangelisation and evangelisation through education. It is interesting to note that the Institute is situated on a hill. It is in a sense the 'Hill of the Beatitudes': here God truly blesses young people, here he teaches them the way of life according to the Gospel Beatitudes through the hands of teachers and educators. On this hill, every day, Don Bosco's dream is realised, even if sometimes it has to be realised along a path strewn with thorns, as he himself dreamed: "Here

is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong and energetic (...). In good time you will understand everything.”

fr. Krystian SUKIENNIK, sdb