

Salesian Schools as Inspiration for Modern Education. **Review of: *Funkcje społeczne szkół salezjańskich Okręgu Szkolnym Wileńskim okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* by Łukasz Kalisz**

**Szkoły salezjańskie inspiracją dla współczesnej edukacji.
Recenzja książki Łukasza Kalisza pt. „*Funkcje społeczne szkół salezjańskich Okręgu Szkolnym Wileńskim okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*”**

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Monograph by Łukasz Kalisz, *Funkcje społeczne szkół salezjańskich Okręgu Szkolnym Wileńskim okresie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Social function of Salesian schools in the Vilnius School District during the Second Polish Republic] published by the University of Białystok Publishing House (Białystok 2021, 257 pages), highlights the significant role of Salesian schools in the history of Polish education and points to timeless educational solutions implemented in them. The publication is the outcome of the author's extensive research conducted in numerous archives and libraries in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus such as the Salesian Archives of the Provinces of Krakow and Warsaw, Lithuanian Central State Archives and Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius, Central Salesian Archive in Rome, Private Archive of Artur Liashneusky in Minsk (Kalisz 2021, 227-231). The monograph combines historical, social, and educational perspectives.

Salesian education has occupied special place among the scholarly interests of Łukasz Kalisz, PhD, assistant professor at the Department of History and Theory of Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Białystok from the very beginning of his scientific career (Kalisz 2021, 235). This is clearly illustrated by the scientific publications which comprise the following positions: *Okoliczności powstania Niższego Seminarium Towarzystwa Salezjańskiego Reginowie okresie II Rzeczypospolitej* [The circumstances of establishing the Minor Seminary of the Salesian Society in Reginów during the Second Polish Republic] (2017), *Kościół św. Jana Bosko Kurhanie 1934-1945. Historia pierwszego Polsce kościoła ku czci założyciela księży salezjanów* [Church of St. John Bosco in Kurgan 1934-1945. The history of the first church in Poland in honour of the founder of the Salesian priests] (2018), *Biskupi wileńscy*



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wobec zgromadzenia salezjańskiego okresie II Rzeczypospolitej [Vilnius bishops towards the Salesian congregation during the Second Polish Republic] (2019), Dzieła dobroczynne dla chłopców Różanymstoku [Charitable works for boys in Różanystok] (2020).

The researcher's early scientific work in the field of Salesian education was focused on the preventive system and modern social rehabilitation facilities run by the Society of Saint Francis de Sales. With scientific development and obtaining funding from the National Science Centre, Kalisz expanded his research into new, previously undiscovered areas, focusing on the search for sources and on conducting queries in Polish and foreign archives. The reviewed monograph is the outcome of several years' research supported by thorough analysis of source materials on this topic. The author divided them into three main categories: monastic documents, documents of the Curia of the Vilnius Archdiocese and documents of the Vilnius School District Board of Education (Kalisz 2021, 17). The researcher collected very extensive and exhaustive range of both qualitative and quantitative data (the work's bibliography includes: 107 archival units, 33 official documents, 187 scientific studies and articles).

It should be noted that Łukasz Kalisz reached numerous unpublished and unused historical documents that had not yet been subjected to scientific analysis. As he points out in the introduction to the monograph, hitherto studies on this topic, although prepared on the basis of rich source materials, for obvious reasons failed to include documents deposited in foreign archives, such as those of Lithuania and Belarus, whose collections have until recently been unavailable to the public (Kalisz 2021, 14). The data carefully collected by the scientist provide significant input into the history of the development of Salesian schools in the Second Polish Republic, underline their role and importance for the society, as well as shed new light on many facts related to the dynamics of the development and operation of Salesian educational institutions in the Vilnius School District.

A definite advantage of the publication is its focus on the Vilnius School District, as this specific area called for more extensive elaboration in pertinent literature. Another advantage is the fact that the researcher simultaneously compared schools run by the Society of Saint Francis de Sales with those founded and run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Such retrospection and an in-depth depiction of the activities of Salesian schools bring to the light their value against the demands of the reviving post-war education in Poland.

Salesian schools, i.e., Catholic private schools run by the Society of Saint Francis de Sales and the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have made permanent mark on the history of education in Poland. Their history, presented in the first and fourth parts of the first chapter, is further vividly expanded upon in other parts of the reviewed work (Kalisz 2021, 108-111, 136, 200, 211-215). At the end of the 19th century, when Salesian schools were first established on the territory of the independent Second Polish Republic, they provided an important addition to state schools, educating children and young people in accordance with

the idea of shaping them into good citizens and honest Christians in line with the thought and works of the Italian priest John Bosco (1815-1888). The said priest was the creator of an ingenious pedagogical system based on three pillars, i.e., reason, religion, and love. It was preventive system which involved educational assistance, excluded physical punishment, and provided pupils with the atmosphere of family home. The presented publication offers thorough and reliable account on both the creator of the new educational methods as well as the teaching and educational practice of Salesian institutions.

The book consists of six mutually complementary chapters, each of them containing several, i.e., from three to seven, logically interrelated paragraphs. Already on the outset, the monograph attracts the reader's attention with its clear language. The work is complemented by an introduction, conclusion, and summary in English, Russian and Lithuanian. At the beginning of the book there is table of contents and list of abbreviations, and at the end the book contains bibliography and lists of photographs, maps, charts and tables, as well as indexes of names and places. The entire study consists of 257 pages and in its structure, content, and aesthetics it is well-thought-out composition of harmoniously linked issues. The collected factual material, maps prepared by the author himself and the included photographs make the work valuable source of information about Salesian institutions in the interwar period. It is, moreover, the first such publication describing Salesian institutions in Vilnius, Dworzec, Reginów, Kurhan, Laurów and Polepie.

In the introduction, Łukasz Kalisz provides clear outline of issues selected for the analysis. The author lists the basic assumptions of his scientific investigations (justification for undertaking the research, its goal, time frame, geographical and administrative area), and discusses the scientific output of other scholars who conducted similar research and published works devoted to the history and activities of Salesian congregations. Referring to this rich literature, he provides an analysis of archival material that have not yet been used so far and justifies his choices.

The first chapter of the presented monograph outlines the history of establishing the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the female equivalent of the Society. Kalisz briefly reminds the readers about Saint John Bosco (the founder of the Society) as well as about the pillars of the preventive system he created and introduced into pedagogy. The author likewise provides information about Maria Dominika Mozzarello (1837-1881), the initiator of Salesian homes for girls. The rest of the chapter depicts the beginnings of the Salesians' activity on Polish territories before the country's independence in 1918, against the background of the contemporary historical and social conditionings. It also presents the rich legacy of Saint John Bosco's successors whose thoughts and achievements found so fertile ground in Poland.

The most extensive, 68-page second chapter outlines the administrative division of the Society of St. Francis de Sales during the Second Polish Republic and the development of the institutions of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Poland. Next, the chapter presents the structures of

the Church and discusses the consequences of adopting the provisions of the 1925 Concordat which specifically defined the procedures for developing the activities of religious congregations in Poland, with particular emphasis on the Vilnius School District, which also concerned the Salesian Society. The remaining part of this chapter, focused on determining the research area resulting from the administrative division of the country into school districts. The author put particular emphasis on detailing material property of both male and female Salesian congregations including information on the size of facilities used for educational, upbringing and pastoral work. Kalisz refers the reader to his earlier works, in which he discussed Salesian institutions in Różanystok and Supraśl located in the Vilnius Archdiocese, but outside the Vilnius School District, around which the reviewed work is focused. The second chapter was also enriched with valuable original maps with precise point symbols of Salesian establishments. It is worth noting that these graphics may provide material for future scientific works on similar topics.

The third chapter is quite concisely developed part of the publication, focusing mainly on the position of Salesian schools in the structure of state education and on presenting brief characteristic of these schools. The readers may learn that most of them were primary and vocational schools as well as minor theological seminaries. The author further depicts the Society's efforts to establish more institutions adapted to the current educational system. The chapter also points to legal acts related to the organization of state education in the Second Polish Republic.

The fourth chapter of the work concentrates on the general and vocational education in Salesian schools. The detailed presentation of topics from the Salesian schools' curricula together with the timetables of classes, including extracurricular ones, takes the reader to the times of pre-war Salesian education. The author provides detailed outline of the teaching process, emphasizing the role of workshops in the vocational education of pupils that played crucial role in their preparation for specific professions. The conclusions and tips included there would be worth using even today in contemporary educational systems. This chapter also highlights the Salesians' great concern for the school library resources, especially textbooks.

The fifth chapter of the monograph is devoted to the school community, i.e. teachers and pupils of Salesian schools. First, the author tries to specify the number of pupils and describes in detail their social situation (most of them were orphans or came from poor families) as well as health condition. He also includes description of medical care and hygiene in schools and in the adjacent dormitories, and touches on the achievements of young people and the future fate of graduates. The provided facsimile certificates of completing vocational school and of passing the apprenticeship exam, allow readers to get acquainted with authentic documents from 1932. The rest of the chapter contains (in descriptive and tabular form) valuable information regarding the state of the teaching staff, teachers' education and qualifications, and the conducted teaching and craft activities. The readers can gain an insight into initiatives and actions taken by teachers to support the achievement of educational goals, but also showing their concern for the moral and religious development of their pupils.

The last, sixth chapter is the culmination of the previously discussed issues. It relates to the methods and forms of work with young people, passing on the system of values in school and out-of-school practice, and refers to the theoretical foundations of preventive education contained in the first chapter. The author presents the assumptions of the theory of education implemented in Salesian schools against the background of the educational ideals of the Second Polish Republic. A significant part of the chapter is devoted to extracurricular educational activities and their role in developing in pupils the sense of belonging to the school community, which may still prove valid today. Łukasz Kalisz points to the lasting bond between tutors and school graduates as a natural outcome of the implemented system of Salesian education. An important aspect of this part of the work, which can provide inspiration for modern educators, are the author's reflections on dealing with negative behaviour of pupils in Salesian schools as well as the parts devoted to former Salesian pupils. The chapter ends with presentation of the Salesian Past Pupils' Association in Vilnius.

At the end of the work, the author summarizes the previously presented research results, multidimensional scientific considerations and tries to assess the functioning of Salesian education in the Vilnius School District of the Second Polish Republic. His scientific reflection leads to the conclusion that Salesian schools in the researched area fully performed their social and religious functions, playing, as they still do today, an important role in the system of youth education. Salesian schools were characterized by an integral approach to the upbringing and education of young people, by which they have earned themselves an excellent reputation in the eyes of the state authorities and local community. It was emphasized that the development of Salesian congregations was possible thanks to people of good will who, fascinated by Fr. John Bosco decided to donate their property for educational purposes or devote themselves to the work aimed at promoting Salesian ideas in their environment.

An extremely important part of every scientific work is the bibliography. In the reviewed publication, Łukasz Kalisz distinguished archival sources, published documents, studies and articles, as well as netography. It should be emphasized again that the author reached out for primary sources that had not yet been studied by Salesian historians. He carefully listed individual archival units on pages 227-231. Similarly, in the second part of the bibliography he provided detailed list of the years, numbers and positions of the used Journals of Laws and Official Journals: the Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, the Official Journal of the Vilnius School District Board and the Official Journal of the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education. In view of the above, it seems rather incomprehensible why he failed to include similar specification of magazines. In the case of such study, it would be advisable to show adequate collections of interwar press or, more generally, press from that period. In the introduction, Łukasz Kalisz writes: "The source base is also expanded by pedagogical, historical, and religious magazines published in the Vilnius School District, as well as national periodicals, particularly

analyzed “Il Bolletino Salesiano”, bulletin published continuously since the times of Fr. John Bosco. The first Polish version of the “Biuletyn” was published in 1897 under the name “Wiadomości Salezjańskie”, and later: “Pokłosie Salezjańskie”, “Nostra”, “Biuletyn Salezjański” and the currently published “Magazyn Salezjański Don Bosco” (Kalisz 2021, 20). Ten yearbooks of “Pokłosie Salezjańskie” were used in the publication: 1925 (No. 12), 1928 (No. 1, 2, 10), 1929 (No. 11), 1930 (No. 6, 7-8), 1932 (No. 7-8, 10), 1933 (No. 6), 1935 (No. 6), 1936 (No. 1, 6, 11), 1937 (No. 10, 12), 1938 (No. 1, 11). In addition to this periodical, the author also used other magazines published in the researched period, such as: “Kresy” 1923 (No. 17), “Kurjer Warszawski” 1928 (No. 136), “Oświata Wychowanie” 1929 (Issue 4), 1933 (No. 2-3) and “Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne Wileńskie” 1933 (No. 13-14).

It was in Vilnius that the Catholic press was born, providing an important source of information on the rich history of this region. Jerzy Zajęc conducted extensive research on Vilnius press studies of the interwar period (Zajęc 2019, 379). His work broadly presents the literature that shaped the socio-religious awareness of the faithful in one of the five church provinces in Poland during the interwar period. Therefore, it would be worth expanding the studies and bibliography of the discussed publication in this respect, showing separately the used scientific studies and broad collections of periodicals from the discussed period.

It must be emphasized that the above comments in no way undermine the importance of the reviewed work. The publication by Łukasz Kalisz has high scientific and educational value. It constitutes detailed guide to the social and educational activities of both male and female Salesian institutions in the Vilnius School District in the interwar period. In-depth analyses of materials, reflections and scientific conclusions of the author provide the reader with realistic description of the achievements of Salesian congregations.

The publication is the first document in the literature of Polish pedagogical thought that shows in comprehensive way the application of the preventive system of Fr. John Bosco in the Vilnius region. It is the author’s tribute to Salesian teachers and donors who made it possible to provide young people with proper care and education and improve the level of their education in the difficult post-war reality. It can also provide point of departure for reflection on contemporary education and offer new perspective on the educational system of the Polish school in the 21st century.

Careful reading of the study may become the *spiritus movens* for further in-depth scientific research on the history of monastic education in Poland, especially so as it is easily accessible. In addition to the aesthetically published (sewn-bound) printed version, the reviewed work has been published open access (<https://doi.org/10.15290/fssoswodr.2021>). It also has DOI identifier (10.15290/fssoswodr.2021), which may facilitate its quick access and dissemination, particularly that the issues selected by the author seem to be still relevant today and, being adequate for the upbringing of modern person, constitute an important source for contemporary pedagogy.

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