

Goodnight of the PLN Provincial
The “Art. 43” Movement: a Polish experience of engagement in the field
of social communication
1st April 2014

1. Premise

The Moderator of the GC 27 has invited me to give a Good Night to the Chapter members. As one of the four Polish Provincials I felt the need to speak about a phenomenon found in all four Provinces which may be significant for other places. In this way I have chosen to present the “Art. 43” Movement’ – something that involves Salesians, the Salesian Family and young people across Poland engaged in evangelisation through the media.

2. The origin of the movement

In autumn 2006 the Rector Major preached a retreat in Krakow for all the Rectors of Poland. His conferences were also attended by some young confreres. Struck by the talks, they discussed among themselves how best to spread the Salesian charism in Poland. The first practical result came some months later from the Salesian Missionary Volunteer Service in Krakow which invited the young Salesians to evangelise young people through the media. In responding, the clerics created the “Art 43” Group”. The name came from article 43 of the Salesian Constitution which deals with the Salesian work in the social communication sector. Soon the Statutes of the Group were approved, a small studio was opened and the first documentary films were produced..

3. Development: some groups in the movement

In 2008 after the reorganisation of the formation houses in Poland (with the creation of one Theologate and one Postnovitiate for the whole country) the idea of “Art 43” together with the confreres from the southern Provinces of Poland moved to the north of the country, involving the Postnovices of the four Polish Provinces and those from the East Circumscription. The Postnovices from the Lad nad Warta community using their practical skills in the media produced the Magazine “Lenda” and made some short films on life in their community. Then they set up the community website and put their *funpage* on Facebook. In 2009, in collaboration with the local Oratory, they opened a studio where the Postnovices and some young people made short films.

At the same time the “Art 43” in Krakow expanded rapidly. With the help of the young people in the Salesian Youth Voluntary Service who had seen working in Africa, the “Art 43 Group” was set up in Africa, in Ghana. As well, in Poland some young Salesians, with the involvement of some young people and some Salesians Cooperators set up local groups of “Art 43” in Lublin, Breslavia, Oświęcim, Świętochłowice, Pogrzebień.

In 2010 the Social Communication Delegate in Pila invited the youngsters in the Province SYM to take part in a series of meetings and workshops on photography, journalism, cinema, radio, internet. As a result the Salesian Social Communication Group was set up bringing together the young people involved in “Radio Deserto”, in the production of the SYM magazine “Czas Laski” e “Kontakt”, in the film productions which documented the pilgrimage of the relics of Don Bosco, in the life of various Salesian works and some SYM initiatives, and following the various web-sites and setting up its own channels on “YouTube”. The young people of the Salesian Social Communication Group

collaborate with the Province Youth Commission and operate in various places in the Pila Province: Aleksandrow, Bydgoszcz, Gdask, Pila, Rumia, Szczecin, Konin, Lad and since January 2014 also in Moscow.

Thanks to the Polish Salesian students of theology since 2008 “Art 43” is also functioning in the Ratisbonne Institute in Jerusalem.

4. The identity of the movement

“L’Art 43” is a movement to which different groups of Salesians, lay members of the SF, youngsters in the SYM in Poland and in some other countries engaged in the field of social communication belong. Each group retains its own identity and pursues its own particular objectives. What unites the various groups is the desire to share their faith with young people, using the media: in other words the task of evangelising the young through the means of social communication according to the spirit of article 43 of the Salesian Constitutions.

5. Some characteristics

a. Passion for formation

“Art. 43” arose from listening to the message of God present in the conferences of the Rector Major, in the texts of the Salesian Constitutions, in the desire of Salesians in initial formation and of a variety of young people in SYM to share with others their faith and their belief in the possibilities of the media engaged in evangelisation. Conscious of these origins, the groups of “Art. 43”, together with professional training in the field of the media, take care of the spiritual and theological formation of their members. An example would be the work-shops organised by the Pila Salesian Group for Social Communication in which, together with practical training in film, radio, journalism etc., on offer are celebrations, meditation, prayer as well as some lessons on the Salesian System of Social Communication and the study of some of the documents of the Church.

b. Enthusiasm in animation

“Art. 43” exists and operates efficiently thanks to an ongoing commitment to animation. To maintain its vitality and identity the movement needs above all internal animation. The Statutes of the “Art. 43” in the formation communities, the programmes of the Provincial Offices for Social Communication, the presence of the Province Delegates for Social Communication, times for the exchange of ideas among the Groups (meetings, exhibitions, festivals) serve to achieve this end. Enthusiasm for the evangelisation of the young is an integral part of the animation offered to other by “Art. 43”. Thanks to this enthusiastic animation the initiatives of the “Art 43” are able to involve in their evangelisation projects whole Schools, University centres, oratories, parishes, those browsing the internet, watching television, listening to the radio, reading magazines etc.

c. Simple and involving information

The information provided by “Art. 43” aims at being an expression of the evangelisation message. Because it is being done by young people it is quite simple and usually avoids forms that are too complicated. It is fresh and attractive using the language of young people, describing young peoples’ experiences, considering their needs. It operates in the places with which they are familiar, where they live and are at home. It

uses techniques they know and like. Genuine, serious, profound but intelligible the information provided by “Art 43” wins them over. Whoever comes across it finds it interesting, thought-provoking, and discovers a different side to the the Church, the unknown face of God, wants to get involved and sometimes is converted

d. Productions not only win prizes

Some of the many production of “Art 43” have been appreciated by the world of the media and awarded prizes such as the three films produced by the Social Communication Group of the Youth Missionary Voluntary Service in Krakow which received various awards at the 28th International Catholic Film and Multimedia Festival in 2013, or the series of documentaries made by the same Group which received awards from the Warsaw Province. To these should be added the high quality films they produced as a part of the project: “Help of Christians in need”.

Most of the work of the “Art. 43” Groups does not enjoy such high recognition. This includes: various printed bulletins, web-sites, pages on Facebook, films which record various events in Salesian life and deal with youth problems, audiobooks about the lives of Don Bosco Past Pupils, items on the faith for radio, and extracts on YouTube (126 films and 80 thousand viewers), “Radio Deserto”, programmes for TV Trwam and Radio Maria, social communication work-shops, posters, T-shirts with Salesian symbols, the promotion of Salesian schools through the “Salezjan” programme.

6. In conclusion “Art 43” introduces itself...

To end my Good Night I leave you face to face with “Art 43”...Let them introduce themselves to the GC 27 with one of their own films-shows.

Marek Chmielewski SDB
PLN Provincial