



Częstochowa, Poland, South Bend's Sister City

Częstochowa has been South Bend's Sister City since 1992 when Governor Joe Kernan, then Mayor of South Bend, established the relationship after a visit to Eastern Europe. Częstochowa has also sent delegations to South Bend, in 1993, 1995, and in 2000, the Collegium Cantorum Choir performed here while on their American tour. South Bend has returned those visits, in 1997, 1998, and in 2002, sending a delegation to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Sister City relationship in Częstochowa. In addition, several musicians from both cities have traveled as part of the cultural exchange. In 1995, South Bend Symphony Maestro Tsung Yeh traveled to Częstochowa to conduct their Philharmonic orchestra. That same year, Częstochowa violinist Aleksandra Szwejkowska traveled to South Bend to perform with the South Bend symphony at St. Adalbert's Church. In 1998, Notre Dame Organist Karen Schneider-Kirner visited Częstochowa to perform at the Shrine of Jasna Góra, accompanied by the Częstochowa Choir, and this summer, Częstochowa pianist Maciej Zagórski will perform with Tsung Yeh and the South Bend Symphony Orchestra here in South Bend.



In 2004, the Halina Poetry Prize was developed to showcase the literary talent and artistic passion of our high school students, and to creatively honor our Sister City of Częstochowa, Poland. The contest is named in honor of Halina Poświatowska who was born in Częstochowa on May 9, 1935. She wrote poetry from a very young age, and published three volumes before her untimely death at the age of 32. Her poetry is still highly regarded in Poland.

Częstochowa lies at the heart of southern Poland, on the Warta River, among the picturesque Jurassic rocks of Krakow-Częstochowa Upland, national parks and ruins of medieval castles. With a population of nearly 250,000 people, it is renowned for its cultural and religious heritage. It is first mentioned as a village in historical documents dated from 1220. In 1382 the famous Paulist monastery of Jasna Góra was founded, and two years later the monastery received its famous Black Madonna icon of the Virgin Mary. In subsequent years Jasna Góra became a center of pilgrimage, contributing to the growth of Częstochowa. Holy Father John Paul II, the first Polish Pope of the Catholic Church, made several pilgrimages to Jasna Góra during his reign, and it was one of his first journeys after the conclave in 1979 that elected him Pope. At various times the Swedes, the Russians and the Germans have sought to annihilate Poland as a nation, laying siege to Jasna Góra, yet failing to destroy it. This history adds to the icon's reputation as a miracle-worker and the guarantor of Poland's very existence. In the mid-1900's, to tarnish the religious importance of Częstochowa, communists converted the city into an industrial center, which is still easily noticeable, although the city has changed since. Częstochowa was the first city in Central and Eastern Europe to be honored by the Council of Europe with the prestigious Honorary Flag of Europe, the Plaque of the Europe Council, and finally, the Europe prize in 1998. Today, it boasts nine universities and colleges, many museums, and is one of the main tourist attractions of the area, bringing hundreds of thousands of tourists and pilgrims every year.



For more information on Częstochowa, visit

www.Czestochowa.pl/languages/en?set_language=en