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THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BOMBAY TODAY
MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY
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ARCHDIOCESE OF BOMBAY

Prologue: Before the Portuguese Arrived

It is not known who first brought the Christian faith to the portion of the western coast of India which today forms the archdiocese of Bombay. There are some who hold that this area was first evangelized by the Apostle St. Bartholomew; but this opinion has not been given serious support by others. The Konkan coast may well have been evangelized by missionaries from the Persian Gulf in the third or fourth century, as some others maintain. Or again its first Christians may have been casual merchants, or perhaps refugees, from the Persian Empire. All this is in the realm of conjecture. Two little bits of more certain information are available before we come to the 14th century: (a) in the 6th century, Kalyan, some 33 miles north-east of Bombay, had a Bishop appointed from Persia, (b) the port of Chaul, some 30 miles to the south of Bombay on the mainland, is also known to have had Christians and Christian churches around the 10th century.

Towards the end of 1320, four Franciscans (Blessed Thom as of Tolentino, James of Padua, Peter of Siena, and Brother Demetrius of Tiflis) and a Dominican (Jordan Catalani of Severac) left Tabriz for Quilon. After a laborious journey their ship called at Thana, which had replaced Kalyan as the principal port. Though populated predominantly by Hindus, Thana was in the hands of the Mohamedans under the Delhi Sultanate. The few European mer-
chants and the small “Nestorian” community of Thana joyfully and warmly welcomed the missionaries, who were unable to proceed to Quilon as the monsoon was about to break. Jordan left the Franciscans at Thana to visit Broach in Gujarat, 250 kilometres from Thana, where a number of catechumens were waiting to be instructed and baptized. On the way he stopped at Sopara in Bassein where he found a small Christian community with a church of their own. There he instructed the people and baptized about 90 people. Jordan never reached Broach. At Sopara he learned that the Franciscans at Thana had been put to death by the Muslim Qadi (judge) and Qotwal (inspector). Jordan returned to Thana and with the help of a young Genoese had the bodies of the martyrs removed for burial in the church of St. Thomas at Sopara. Later the relics were taken by the Franciscan Friar, Blessed Odoric de Pordenone, on his way to China, and finally to Italy in 1330 by way of Tibet.

Jordan found the local population, especially the Hindus, extremely well-disposed towards Christianity and so he ministered to them. In this work he was unhampered by the Muslim authorities, for when the news of the slaying of the Franciscans reached Delhi, the Sultan had the Qotwal executed; the Qadi fled for his life. Within six months, Jordan baptized 115 persons in Broach and 35 between Thana and Sopara. Sensing the field to be fertile, Jordan left India to visit the Pope at Avignon to convince him of the need of missionaries and a regular ecclesiastical government in the new mission area. Pope John XXII appointed Jordan himself as the first (Latin) bishop of Quilon with jurisdiction over all India. Nothing, however, is known for certain of what became of his plans for Broach and Sopara. In any case, a series of adverse factors later in the century made all contact between East and West practically impossible and the Christian communities of Konkan-Gujarat died out altogether.

I The Coming of the Portuguese (1534-1665)

1510 The Portuguese first reached the west coast of India when Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in 1498. For twelve years they tried to secure a foothold at Calicut, Cochin, Cannanore, etc. but with only partial success till they finally established themselves at Goa in 1510. From Goa they gradually acquired factories and built forts along the coast southwards and northwards.
1524. Chaul, formerly an important Mohamedan city and seaport lay along the coast some 25 miles south of Bombay. In 1516 the Portuguese had already built a small factory at Revdanda close by, and in 1521 obtained permission from the Nizam-ul-Mulk to build a fortress, which was completed in 1524. Thereupon, the Portuguese missionaries commenced building churches at Chaul.

1526. The Portuguese first visited the coast of Bassein in 1509. But it was only in 1526 that they were able to establish a factory there; but they could not hold it securely. This led them to the use of force. In 1530 and 1531 they raided, burnt and pillaged the town. Thereupon, the Mohamedans built a small fort, which was only just completed when the Portuguese invaded it, took it by storm and demolished it.

1534. The islands of Bassein, Salsette, Bombay and Karanja were ceded to the Portuguese by the Bahadur of Gujarat, on board the galleon “St. Mathew”, anchored in the harbour of Bassein, on December 23, 1534.

In this very year, the archdiocese of Goa was created and the whole of the Western Coast around Bombay formed part of that archdiocese. It was governed by a Vicar General of the North who represented the Archbishop of Goa. Till the Maratha invasion in 1739, his headquarters were in Bassein.

1535. The great Fort of Bassein (now in ruins) was founded in 1535 and it became the official residence of the General of the North. Between 1535 and 1739 (when the Fort was attacked and devastated by the Marathas) the city within the walls of the Fort contained many important edifices, both civil and religious.

Missionary activity in Bassein, Salsette and Bombay commenced from 1534 onwards. The Portuguese missionaries who accompanied or followed the conquerors were:

(a) The Franciscans, who first arrived in India in 1500 and were the first to establish churches in Bassein, Salsette, Bombay, Karanja and Chaul.

(b) The Jesuits, who first arrived in Goa in 1542 (St Francis
Xavier, on May 6, 1542), were the second great missionaries on the western coast from Chaul to Daman, covering more or less the same field (Bombay island excluded) as the Franciscans.

(c) The Dominicans are said to have arrived in India as early as 1503 but they followed the Franciscans and the Jesuits only after the middle of the 16th century in the area that interests us.

(d) The Augustinians, who came to India in 1572, and gradually settled side by side with the other Orders along the western coast.

1559 In order to provide a greater measure of security for Bassein the Portuguese seized Damaun in 1559. After its conquest not only did they strengthen the defences of the harbour itself, but they also erected a number of forts, at Mahim, Kelva, Mazagaon, Tarapur, Asheri and Dahanu along the coast and in the interior, between Damaun and Bassein.

1534 These years mark the great period of missionary work to which the above-mentioned Religious congregations laid the foundations of the future archdiocese of Bombay. During this period, of the present Churches of the archdiocese were established: 7 Churches (in Bassein), 20 Churches (in Salsette), 3 Churches (in Bombay) and 2 Churches (in Karanja and Chaul). Among the missionaries of this period, two names stand out: Fr. Antonio do Porto (Franciscan) who built churches in Bassein, Salsette, Karanja and Chaul, and Fr. Manoel Gomes (Jesuit) who was known as the “Apostle of Salsette.” (St. Francis Xavier visited Bassein thrice: once in 1544 and twice in 1548). Besides the churches flourishing today which hark back to these early Portuguese times, we should note that there were many other churches built by the Portuguese missionaries that have now disappeared or fallen into ruins (cf. Section on the historical development of the Parishes of the Archdiocese).

1618 A furious hurricane, devastating the coastal country, passed over Bassein and Salsette, and damaged some 35 churches and chapels between Bandra and Agashi.

1622 This date marks the establishment of the Sacred Congrega-
tion for the Propagation of the Faith by Pope Gregory XV, under which the missionary energies of various Religious Congregations of nationalities other than Portugal and Spain could be harnessed for evangelization in those parts of the world where Portuguese (in the East) and Spanish (in the West) missionaries were, for one reason or another, unable to reach. From 1622, different Congregations were enlisted and sent to India, Malacca, Siam, China, etc. under the leadership of Vicars-Apostolic, i.e. Titular Bishops who received directly from the Holy See jurisdiction to work in certain regions assigned to them within the somewhat indeterminate boundaries of existing “Padroado” (for the meaning of this term, cf. below) dioceses.

1637 The Vicariate Apostolic of Bijapur was established by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (henceforth, “Propaganda”) in 1637. The Vicariate of Bijapur increased rapidly in size, absorbing Golconda, and extended from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, from Madras-Mylapore to Calcutta. It finally came to comprise the whole of the Moghul Empire at least on paper; hence it was also referred to as the Vicariate of the Great Moghul. From the end of the 17th century, this Vicariate was served by the Carmelite Fathers, whose headquarters were at Surat, north of Bombay.

II From the Coming of the British to Double Jurisdiction (1665-1794)

1665 Bombay Island passed into the hands of the British. The British East India Company, founded in 1600, had secured a factory in Surat in 1611; it did not take its members very long before they began to cast avaricious eyes on Bombay island for the strategic trading possibilities it offered, and to desire to take it away from the Portuguese. This was achieved by the Marriage Treaty of 1661 between Charles II of England and the Infanta of Portugal, whereby Bombay island was ceded to the British as part of the marriage dowry. Great difficulties were raised by the Portuguese, however, when it came to the actual fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty, but the matter was finally settled in 1665, when Bombay island definitively passed into British hands.

At the time of the transfer, the situation of the Church on Bombay island was as follows:
(a) The Franciscans were the sole missionaries on the Island: they were in charge of St. Michael Church, Upper Mahim, Our Lady of Salvation Church (Salvacao), Lower Mahim, Our Lady of Glory (Gloria) Church, Mazagaon, and Our Lady of Hope (Esperanca) Church, Fort.

(b) The Jesuits of Bandra administered some property at Parel, with a chapel attached, which they had acquired in 1620 or thereabouts. There was but one Jesuit at Parel.

The Church on Bombay Island continued to be under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa.

1689 On February 14, 1689, Bombay was invaded by Sidi Yacut of Janjira, a small state about 26 miles to the south of Bombay. This attack was occasioned by the British who had seized and carried off to Bombay several ships of the Sidi which were laden with cloth and corn. Ever since 1665, the British had cast eyes on the Jesuit property at Parel and looked for reasons to grab it. The Sidi invasion provided an occasion: the Jesuits were accused of having aided the Sidi and the Jesuit property was summarily confiscated in 1691. The Jesuits made attempts to get the property back, but failed. In 1719 they were officially deprived of that property. When Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India, a tablet was set up in the Haffkine Institute which was built on the former Jesuit property, with an inscription which began: “This building was once a chapel in the possession of the Jesuit Fathers from whom it was acquired in 1719...” Note: the British say “acquired” and not “confiscated”—which is indeed a travesty of the truth!

It was probably in 1692 that the Jesuit caretaker of the Parel property was expelled from Bombay. That ended the Jesuit presence on the island—till 1848—a full one and a half centuries after.

1720 The Decree expelling the Portuguese Franciscans from Bombay island was issued on May 24, 1720. The British authorities suspected the Portuguese in Goa of secret designs to recover Bombay for the Crown of Portugal. On the other hand they did not want to openly break the solemn promise they had made when they took over Bombay from the Portuguese: namely, that they would not interfere with the religious beliefs or practices of the Catholic inhabitants of the island. So the British
approached the Vicar-Apostolic of the Great Mogul, the Italian Carmelite Bishop Fra Mauritius, to take charge of the Catholic Community in Bombay. Since the British were determined on getting rid of the Portuguese Franciscans, Rome approved the entry of the Carmelites into Bombay.

Thus the Franciscans left Bombay, and Bishop Mauritius with four or five Carmelites came to Bombay. The Churches taken over by the Carmelites were four in number: Our Lady of Hope (Esperanca), Our Lady of Salvation (Salvacao), Our Lady of Glory (Gloria), and St. Michael’s.

This was the opening chapter of the long tale of woe of the Catholic Church in Bombay. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities in Portugal and in Goa would not hear of even a temporary curtailment of the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa over Bombay. They openly declared that the Vicar-Apostolic was an usurper and an intruder who had no spiritual jurisdiction, and the clergy and the laity were told to have nothing to do with him.

At this point it may be helpful to introduce two ideas which played a significant role in the unfolding history of the Archdiocese. These two ideas were expressed by the following two concepts:

1. *Padrado*: “Padrado” is the Portuguese word for “Patronage” which essentially consisted in the privilege of nominating a candidate for some ecclesiastical office—in this case, the Bishop of a diocese. Given to a king, it is called a Royal Patronage. When the diocese of Goa was erected in 1534, the right of patronage that went with it extended to all the places discovered or yet to be discovered by the Portuguese! In the history of the Archdiocese, Portugal’s insistence on exercising the right of patronage clashed with the missionary efforts of the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith: hence the “Padrado-Propaganda” conflict.

2. *Regium Placitum*: This referred to the claim of the Portuguese Government to exercise censorship on Papal Bulls, Briefs, Decrees or Instructions communicated to bishops or clergy, in such a way that unless they bore the signature or sanction of the King, they could not legally be intro-
duced, accepted, published or put into execution within the kingdom.

1720 Under Carmelite Jurisdiction: Following Gense’s (1960) to lead we may divide these sixty-nine years into 1789 three periods:

(a) The pre-exile period (1720-1745): during which Fra Mauritius (1720-1726) and Fra Peter of Alcantara (1732-1745) were the Vicars-Apostolic. The Portuguese Franciscans left Bombay, but the non-Portuguese members of the Secular clergy, who chose to stay in Bombay, refused to give them their full and undivided obedience; rather, they continued to look to Goa for guidance. Worse still, Fra Peter did not have the full allegiance of his own Carmelite Friars who were in charge of the parishes in Bombay.

(b) The period of exile (1746-1772): Because of the turbulent situation in Bombay, the British authorities prevented the following Vicars-Apostolic from residing in Bombay: Fra Innocent of the Presentation (1746-1753), Fra Sebastian of St. Margaret (1755) and Fra Dominic of St. Clare (1755-1772). The ban was lifted in 1772.

(c) The post-exile period (1772-1789): Fra Charles of St. Conrad (1772-1785) assumed the spiritual direction of the 4 Churches of Bombay and lived in a house attached to the Fort chapel in Medows Street (close to the site of the present-day “Examiner Press”). Trouble continued brewing in Bombay: a body of lay people complained to Government about the administration of the churches, the Carmelites, divided among themselves, were at loggerheads with their parishioners, and gave dissatisfaction to the secular clergy. Fra Angelino of St. Joseph (1785-1786) died on his way to India. Bishop Victorinus of St. Mary appointed Vicar-Apostolic in 1789, was not allowed to take up his office in Bombay. Instead, he was ordered by the British authorities that the claim of the Archbishop of Goa had been admitted and that the Carmelites had to evacuate their premises in Bombay. February 18, 1789 marks the temporary end of the Carmelite regime in Bombay.

1789 Under Goan Jurisdiction: This change in British policy was to dictated by political events. When the British invited the 1791 Carmelites to Bombay, they looked upon the Portuguese as undesirable neighbours and political enemies. However,
in the next 60 years, Portuguese power in India rapidly declined. Further, Bassein was wrested from them by the Marathas and Salsette (1739-1740) passed into British hands in 1774. From that time onwards there was no longer any danger of Portuguese aggressive designs on Bombay. Hence the British were in a position to restore the spiritual jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa in Bombay.

1791 Under Carmelite Jurisdiction: Two years later, the situation was reversed and on September 1, 1791 Fra Victorinus took possession of Esperança Church. During the concluding years of Bishop Victorinus’ administration (1791-1793) there were no public disturbances between the followers of the Carmelites and those of the Archbishop of Goa. But the latter were still unreconciled with the current state of affairs. A counter-petition was made for the restoration of the Goa jurisdiction. This sounded the death-knell of the one-jurisdiction period in Bombay and was instrumental in bringing about the Double Jurisdiction in 1794.

1793 On June 25, 1793 the Court of Directors in England wrote to Bombay: “To us it is immaterial who may officiate in the Roman Catholic churches of your Presidency, provided the inhabitants of that persuasion are satisfied and that the Pastor and his flock conform to the orders and regulations of Government, and conduct themselves as good and faithful subjects. In order, therefore, to reconcile all parties...we direct that two of the four Roman Catholic churches of Bombay be served from among the Carmelite mission and the other two by the Portuguese priests. They (the Catholic inhabitants) will be thus at full liberty to exercise their religious worship under the direction of such pastors as they may think proper.”

Thus it was that the members of the British Court of Directors devised the Double Jurisdiction as a matter of expediency. One wonders whether they would have resorted to such a calamitous solution had there been unity and peace within the Catholic community in Bombay.

The Churches in Bombay were distributed in the following manner: To Padroado and the Archbishop of Goa went:

1. Gloria Church, Mazagaon
(2) Salvacao Church, Lower Mahim
(3) O.L. of Health chapel, Cavel
(4) The private chapel in Mazagaon at the home of Miguel de Lima e Souza

To Propaganda and the Vicar-Apostolic went:
(1) Esperanca Church, Fort
(2) St. Michael, Upper Mahim
(3) St. Teresa chapel, Girgaum
(4) St. Anne chapel, Mazagaon
(5) Fort chapel (attached to the residence of the Vicar-Apostolic)

III The Period of the Double Jurisdiction (1794-1928)

(A) From Peter of Alcantara to Bishop Hartmann (1794-1850)

1796 The administration of Bishop Peter of Alcantara was a long period of stormy skies with only an occasional ray of sunshine breaking through. The double jurisdiction far from healing the breach between the Archbishop of Goa and the Vicar-Apostolic of Bombay was the source of increasing evils.

On the one hand, the establishment of the Double Jurisdiction in Bombay threw the door open to interference on the part of the British Government in Bombay in the religious life of the Catholic community. Thus, the Government claimed the right of sanction in the appointment of parish priests in Bombay and the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Goa. Further, it claimed not only the right to appoint the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Goa, but also to tell him where to reside.

On the other hand, the Catholic laity were quick to learn of the new status that Government had given them, according to which they were to be consulted on religious matters. It was not necessary to tell them twice that they were the real masters of their parish churches that they could lord it over their parish priests, safe from episcopal censure. The result was in many respects disastrous: they determined not only whether they would be under Padroado or Propaganda but also the parish priests they wanted.

1838 In 1828, civil war broke out in Portugal between King Dom
MIGUEL and the party of Queen Maria da Gloria. Dom Miguel, to whom the Religious Orders lent moral and financial support, was defeated, and the new Government not only suppressed all Religious Orders in Portugal but also broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1833. Pope Gregory XVI issued the Brief "Multa praecclare," on April 24, 1838, in which he confirmed the Vicars-Apostolic in their office, extended their field of work and deprived the Padroado clergy of all jurisdiction within the established Vicariates. The authorities in Goa rejected the Papal Brief: though Portugal had broken off diplomatic relations with Rome, they claimed that since the Brief had not received the "regium placet," it was null and void!

1839 At this critical moment, Bishop Peter of Alcantara, then in his 78th year, petitioned the Holy See to extend his jurisdiction over the island of Salsette. Rome's answer, commonly known as the Salsette Decree, came on February 4, 1839 and was a favourable one. On October 22, 1839, Bishop Peter issued the following instructions: "Unless Catholics, whether in Bombay or Salsette, renounced Goa and gave their adherence to the Vicar-Apostolic, they could not marry, they could not act as god-parents, they could not be absolved of their sins."

However, in Bombay, opposition to the Vicar-Apostolic gathered in volume and ultimately led to the foundation of the "Padroado Defence Association" in 1839, an association with "the special object of supporting the archiepiscopal and primatial rights against the encroachments of the Propagandists."

1844 Archbishop Dom Jose Maria da Silva Torres landed in Bombay on his way to Goa in January 1844. The Padroado party, clergy and laity, escorted him to Gloria Church in a triumphant procession. In Gloria Church and in other parishes Archbishop Torres administered the sacraments, began a series of visitations, and generally acted as if "Multa praecclare" and "The Salsette Decree" had never been written. The Archbishop's behaviour threw the whole of Bombay in a ferment.

1840 These were ten years of ecclesiastical chaos and misery. They followed in the wake of a long period of unrest and dissensions in which all parties in the conflict appear to have shared responsibility—the Portuguese Government