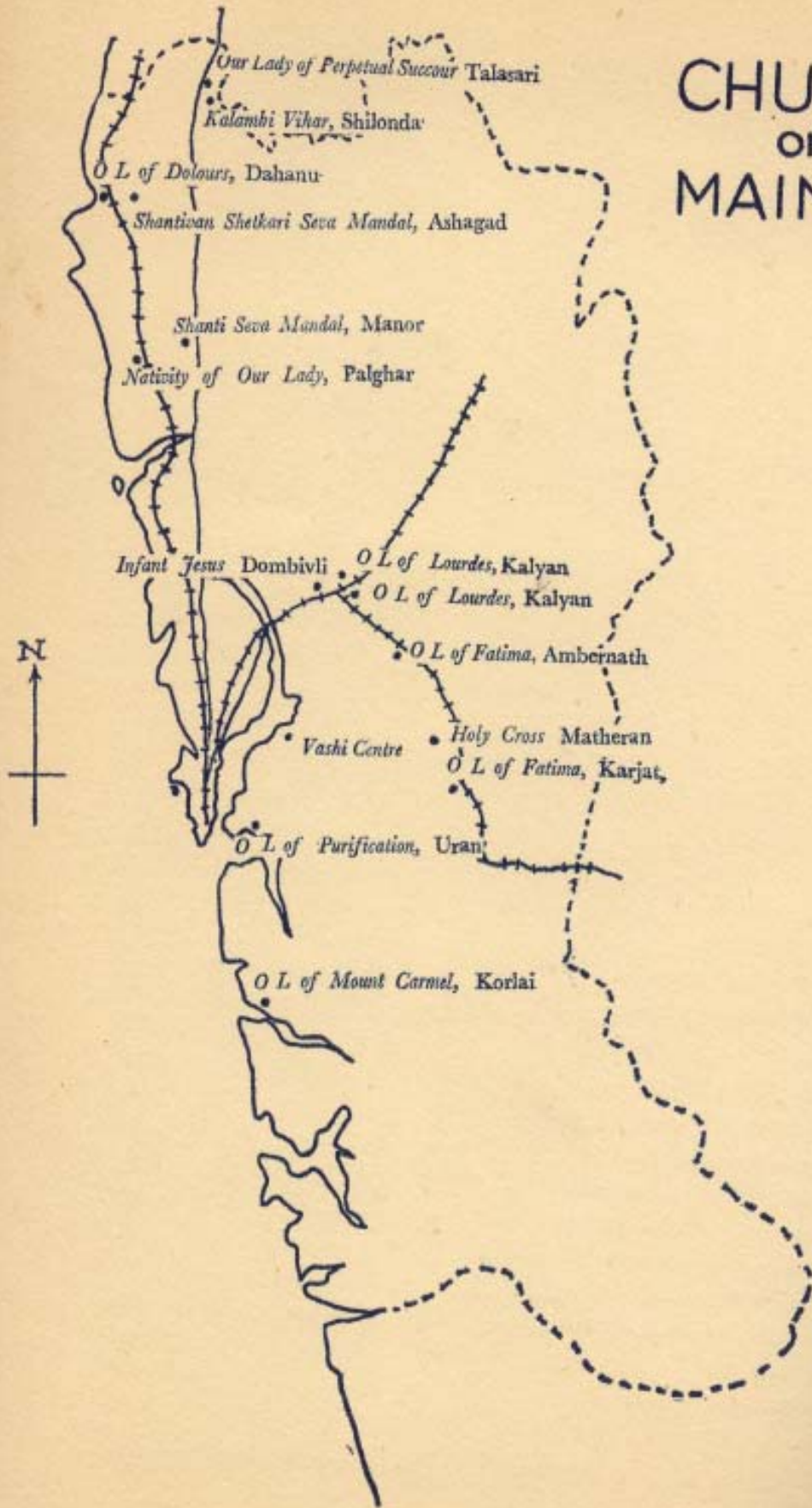


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CHURCHES ON THE MAINLAND



GROWTH OF PARISHES: ON THE REST OF THE MAINLAND

THE parishes and parish units of the Archdiocese of Bombay are largely concentrated in the three major units of Bassein Salsette and Bombay City. Of these, Bassein alone forms part of the mainland. Salsette and Bombay (once separate groups of islands) are linked to the mainland today by means of bridges at several points.

Besides the parishes of Bassein (considered in Chapter 3), other parishes have developed on the mainland. For the sake of descriptive convenience, the parishes (and mission stations) on the mainland are divided into three geographical areas:

- (1) Parishes and Mission Stations to the north of Bassein.
- (2) Parishes on the mainland to the east of Thane.
- (3) Parishes on the mainland to the south-east of Bombay.

I PARISHES AND MISSION STATIONS FOUNDED TO THE NORTH OF BASSEIN

The land extending from Bassein to Damaun in the north was, in Portuguese times, also the scene of missionary activity by missionaries, both Religious and Secular. In the documents that refer to this period, there are records of the following churches built along this stretch of land of about 40-50 miles.

Kelva-Mahim	OL of the Assumption	Before 1566
	OL of Remedies	After 1574
	Holy Name	After 1574
Asheri (near Manor)	OL of Remedy	Rebuilt 1663
Tarapur	OL of the Rosary	1574
	Mother of God	1640
	Holy Spirit	After 1574
Dahanu	OL of Dolours	1570

With the Maratha invasion and occupation in 1739, it appears that the Catholics of these parts abandoned their villages and retired to Bassein, Salsette or Bombay. As a result these churches fell into ruin.

Today the Catholics of this region to the north of Bassein may be broadly divided into two groups: (a) "Old Catholics", that is, those who embraced the Christian Faith as a result of the evangelical work of the Portuguese missionaries, and (b) "Tribal Catholics," that is, people of the Varli tribe who have embraced the faith as a result of the evangelical work of Indian missionaries.

OUR LADY OF DOLOURS, Dahanu (1935)

Dahanu is a village, lying to the west of the Western Railway line, at a distance of about 125 kilometers to the north of Bombay. In this village a chapel was built by the Portuguese dedicated to "Nossa Senhora das Angustias" (OL of Dolours). According to Fr. Hull (I:5) the chapel was built in 1570 and was filial to the church at Tarapur, which would have been the church of OL of the Rosary. According to Fr. Conti, the first document that makes a reference to a "church" at Dahanu dates from the year 1634:

"going along the shore from the river Nargol at a distance of six leagues (30 miles from Bassein) we find the river Danu with a Christian population famous because of the Church where 'NS das Angustias' is venerated. This image has done many miracles. The village has 50 Christian families, besides four married Portuguese." (Archivo Portuguese Oriental IV-II-I:158).

From Antonio Bocarro's List of ecclesiastical offices of 1635 (Humbert, I:30-31), we find that each of the three churches of OL of Dolours; Dahanu, OL of the Assumption, Kelva-Mahim, and OL of the Rosary, Tarapur, had its own Vicar. It would appear that this situation changed after the Maratha occupation of the land in 1739, for Fr. Humbert tells us (I:144) that from 1750 on the Vicar of Tarapur had also to attend to three other churches: namely, OL of Dolours at Dahanu, OL of Health at Mane and OL of Remedies at Kelva-Mahim. The Vicar of Tarapur functioned as the Vicar of Dahanu until 1931, which is Fr. Humbert's last entry (II:225).

When Archbishop Lima visited Dahanu in 1935 a small congregation of 85 Catholics welcomed him (old Catholics of Narpole); they were cared for by the Vicar of Tarapur, Fr. Monteiro. The old chapel built by the Portuguese was still standing then, though almost in ruins. The Archbishop decided to build a new and spacious chapel with a parochial house (The Examiner, 1935: 240). A house was rented in Dahanu and Fr. J. S. Miranda was appointed resident chaplain in the same year. "The Examiner" of the following year (1936:262) informs us that Fr. Miranda succeeded in getting a new church built on a piece of land (30 guntas) donated to the Archdiocese by a Parsi lady, Mrs. Soonabai Vakil of Malvan. The church was blessed by the Archbishop on May 20, 1936. Fr. Miranda continued to live in the rented house.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR, Talasari (1926)

The beginnings of the Talasari Mission are linked up with the earlier origin of the Zaroli Mission. Zaroli lies about a hundred miles to the north of Bombay, just outside the northern boundary of the State of Maharashtra. The bulk of the original local population in the Zaroli-Talasari belt are dispossessed, exploited and poor tribals (Varlis), and it was for them that the Mission was opened by the Franciscan Brothers, who had earlier established their House at Mt. Poinsur, Borivli, in 1908.

When the Franciscan Brothers first started missionary work in the region that today lies on either side of the boundary line that divides the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat, that part of the country came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Damaun. Towards the end of November 1921, the Brothers pitched a small

tent in a hamlet between Bhilad Station and the Portuguese border of Damaun and from that improvised base they began to explore the land and to establish contact with the Varlis. In February 1922 they came to Zaroli and on May 30 of that year the first Mass was celebrated there by a visiting priest from Bombay.

Armed with the permission of the Bishop of Damaun to baptise whomsoever they thought fit, the Brothers commenced from 1923 what came to be known as "Tent-tours"—they would pitch their tent and evangelize the area for a week or two, and then move on. By the end of 1924 there were two mission centres—at Zaroli and Dapara. By the close of 1929, the Zaroli Mission counted five full-fledged centres with Brothers residing in all of them: Zaroli, Dapara, Talasari, Damangaon and Uplat. The Brothers plunged into their mission work without any priest assigned to live with them or even to visit them at regular intervals; they had to be satisfied with an occasional visit of mission-minded priests from Bombay. Their only missionary companions were the Xaverian Sisters (Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier; whose name was changed in 1951 to Sisters of OL of Fatima), who came to the Mission in December 1926.

The Talasari Mission centre was officially opened on June 9, 1926 when Fr. Alphonso, a secular priest at that time working with the Brothers, blessed a makeshift house and offered the first Mass at Talasari. Talasari lies some 12 miles south of Zaroli and towards the northern boundary of Maharashtra. The Brothers manned the Centre: first Brother Cyril, and then successively Brothers Francis, Hyacinth, Romanus, and Remigius until the Jesuits took over in 1937.

Already in December 1928, when Archbishop Lima came to Bombay as the first Archbishop after the end of the Double Jurisdiction, he found the Zaroli-Talasari Mission spiritually rather neglected and financially in need of very urgent and very substantial help if it was not to collapse altogether. He therefore took over the whole Zaroli Mission from the Franciscan Brothers and made it the responsibility of the Archdiocese. Archbishop Lima provided the Zaroli Mission with resident Chaplains: Fr. J. S. Miranda was appointed in June 1930 Chaplain of the whole Mission with residence at Zaroli; two years later he was joined by Fr. Peter Soares who resided at Talasari. The Brothers, however,

continued to be the ones in charge of the Mission. This arrangement did not prove a success. By April 1936, the Archbishop had thrown feelers to Fr. Conget, the new Jesuit Superior in Bombay, and planned to visit the Mission for himself with Fr. Conget in June. But this visit was not to be, for within a little over a month, the Archbishop was dead. It was soon after the death of Archbishop Lima that the Jesuit Fathers of Bombay were entrusted with the work in the Zaroli-Talasari Mission; along with them were one or two secular priests. The years after 1937 are usually described as "The Jesuit Period" of the Mission.

Fr. Hyacinth Jimenez SJ was the first Missionary-in-charge of Talasari in 1937. Among the Missionaries who have laboured in Talasari special mention must be made of Brother Samuel Baptista SJ affectionately called "The Good Landlord" who came to Talasari in October 1939 and has been working there till today. The Canossian Sisters who had replaced the Xaverian Sisters at Zaroli in 1943 transferred themselves to Talasari in November 1950.

Between the Jesuits assisted by secular priests, and the Sisters, the Talasari Mission has a planned and graded catechumenate, an organized training programme for the Catechists, an educational network of a central Middle school with eleven primary schools spread out in the villages, a Hospital and mobile outreach service for leprosy patients, co-operative societies and projects for the socio-economic uplift of the Varlis, and mobilisation programmes for the tribals that they may fight against exploitation and for justice.

In more recent years the vast Talasari Mission has given birth to a full-fledged Mission Station at Ashagad (1966) run by Jesuits, and to a Mission unit at Shilonda (1976) run by Secular priests.

OUR LADY OF THE FORSAKEN, Ashagad (1966)

The sprawling Talasari Mission was divided on December 30, 1966 to give rise to an independent Mission Station at Ashagad. Fr. Stanislaus Miranda SJ, the energetic and resourceful missionary who had worked at Talasari, first as an Assistant from 1956 and then as the Missionary-in-charge from 1958, was appointed to head this new Station. The Ashagad Mission, also referred to as the "Shantivan Shetkari Seva Mandal" extends over the former

south-western section of the Talasari Mission from Nazgeri to Aswali, and embraces the villages of Aswali (20 Catholic families), Bordi-Murapada (4 Catholic families), Ambessari-Khadkipada (1 Catholic family), Dulsadpada (4 Catholic families), Baripada (1 Catholic family), Khapripada (1 Catholic family), Raitali (2 Catholic families) and Dongripada (20 Catholic families). As with the Talasari Mission, this Mission directs its activity for the welfare of the Varlis, Christian and non-Christian, in the above-mentioned villages. Assisting Fr. Miranda are two Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who have chosen to live among the Varlis in the village of Dongripada in order to be more closely involved in the tribals' life situation of poverty, hunger and oppression.

SHANTI SEVA MANDAL, Manor (1968)

The Mission at Manor was opened on April 15, 1968 in a rented house in the town of Manor, which lies some 80 kilometers from Bombay along the Bombay-Ahmedabad Highway and about 18 kilometers east of the Palghar Railway Station. Fr. Santiago Saldhana SJ, with a few lay workers from the Talasari Mission, began living in this Manor house which was rented through Fr. Stanny Miranda SJ of the Ashagad Mission and the Daughters of the Cross of Palghar. Two Sisters of the Daughters of the Cross came to Manor on May 19, 1969.

Operating from the town, the missionaries next acquired a 15 acre plot between the town and the Highway—of which 10 acres belonged to the Archdiocese of Bombay and 5 acres to the Sisters. On the 10-acre plot, the following buildings were erected: the mission residence, a Boarding for boys and a Godown for grain. The foundation stone of the Mission house was laid by His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias on May 18, 1971. The missionaries moved to the new site on May 31, 1972. The Boarding for boys was opened in August of the same year. The Sisters first lived in the Boys' Boarding House as their own building was not yet ready. The formal inauguration of the Manor Mission by Auxiliary Bishop Simon Pimenta took place on November 10, 1972. On October 25, 1973, the Sisters shifted to their new residence nearby and opened a Boarding for girls.

While the missionaries (priests, brothers and sisters) work principally for the development of the Varli tribals of the area, the

priests of the Mission also have under their charge the "old Catholics" of Palghar and Mane.

Nativity of Our Lady, Palghar (Before 1949)

Very little is known of the origins of the first church (chapel?) at Palghar, which is some 90 kilometers from Bombay. It seems that in olden times, the Jesuits had a residence there, but not for long. The church was known for a time by the name of "Nossa Senhora do Porto" (OL of the Harbour). The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency (p. 305) speaks of an old chapel to be found "to the south of the main road." The author had seen the ruins of the chapel in the eighties of the last century, but no trace of them can be found today.

For a time Palghar was the headquarters of the Catholic population living along the Western Railway line from Bassein to Damaun. In 1949, when Auxiliary Bishop Valerian Gracias visited the Mission Stations, Fr. H. Jimenez SJ was the resident priest at Palghar, from where he used to visit the church of OL of Dolours, Dahanu (The Examiner, 1949:181). In 1951, Fr. Jimenez transferred his residence to Dahanu where he had built a parochial house attached to the church there.

In mid-1956 Palghar had a resident priest once again in the person of Fr. Joseph Sadanand a secular priest. The Catholic Directory of the Archdiocese of Bombay published in 1960 tells us that Fr. Sadanand was the Priest-in-charge at Palghar, while Dahanu had its own resident priest. About Palghar it says that this was "a recently opened Mission Station where work has to be started from scratch." The number of permanent resident Catholics is given as 55, while the non-permanent or floating Catholic population total 20.

In 1964 a group of Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross came to Palghar and took over the management of the school (English medium) that Fr. Sadanand had started upon the insistence of the local people. By 1965 the Sisters had built a Convent School on a plot of land donated to them by the Archdiocese. Also in 1964 Fr. Sadanand was allotted a 10-acre plot of land by the Panchayat Samiti of Palghar on a lease in order that he might start a Technical School for the local youth, especially for the

tribals. The plan never materialised and the land still awaits development.

In 1967 Fr. Sadanand was transferred to Bombay and Palghar was handed over to the Jesuits once again. The Jesuits who served Palghar, first from Dahanu and then from the newly-opened Mission Station of Manor, used a rented room opposite the Palghar Railway Station as a chapel for the parishioners ("old Catholics."), who in 1972 were only 183 in number. In 1975 a secular priest, Fr. Caius Carvalho, attached to the Manor Mission, looked after Palghar (and Mane), until 1981 when he was transferred to Bassein. Today Palghar has a Catholic population between 250 and 300 people. In 1980 the Archdiocese purchased a small plot of land next to the Sisters' Convent which is intended for a church.

Our Lady of Health, Mane (1907)

This, like the Palghar chapel, is not a parish church nor is it a Mission Station as it caters to the spiritual needs of "old Catholics" (Catholics who trace their faith to the time of the Portuguese) of the village of Mane which is situated 18 kilometers northwest of Palghar and 7 kilometers southwest of Boisar Railway Station along the new MIDC Highway. There was an old Portuguese(?) church dedicated to OL of Health at Mane (Humbert I:144), but this has disappeared. The foundation stone of the present chapel was laid on November 14, 1907 and the blessing of the completed chapel took place the following year. The notice in "The Examiner" announced the event in these words:

"The Rev. Fr. Azaria de Souza-Menezes of Tarapur announces.....that through the goodwill and help of His Grace the Archbishop-Bishop of Damaun the new chapel edifice at Mane has been completed.....The blessing of the new chapel will take place on Thursday the 26th instant at 9 a.m. preceded by a Triduum of devotions."

At present there are some 100 "old Catholics" at Mane and Mass is provided for them every week or fortnight by the priest of the Manor Mission.

II PARISHES ON THE MAINLAND TO THE EAST OF THANE

Thane town lies at the eastern extremity of the island of Salsette. To the east of Thane across the Creek there have developed only three full-fledged parishes and one parish unit. In this subsection will also be mentioned two churches which are served by other parishes of the Archdiocese.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, Katemanavli (1969)

In Kalyan town and its environs today there exist two parishes that bear the name of "Our Lady of Lourdes" whose parish churches lie at a distance of a little more than a mile from each other—one is situated in Kalyan town proper on the west side of the Railway lines, the other is situated in Katemanavli which falls just outside Kalyan town, on the east side of the Railway lines. The common name of the two parishes leads one to rightly suspect an historical link between them. Though the existence of a church (chapel) in Katemanavli is older than the church in Kalyan, yet, because of historical circumstances, the Katemanavli parish is of a more recent date than the Kalyan parish.

During Portuguese times there is no mention of any church in Kalyan, as the town was always in the hands either of the Mohammedans or of the Marathas. In very ancient times, there seems to have been a community of Syrian Christians in Kalyan.

From "The Examiner" of 1887 and 1888, we learn that shortly before 1886 a chapel was built at Kalyan structurally attached to the home of Mr. Jose Correa D'Aguiar. It was blessed on January 23, 1887 by the Pro-Vicar Apostolic, Fr. J. Willy. The Jesuits were invited to be the ordinary Chaplains of this Chapel at Katemanavli, something which caused some friction between Padroado and Propaganda.

Mr. D'Aguiar wanted the Chapel to be assigned to Propaganda. But since it was in the territory of the diocese of Damaun, and not exempt by the Concordat of 1886, the Delegate Apostolic instructed Mr. D'Aguiar to apply to the Vicar General of the North for faculties for a Propaganda priest. This was not granted. Mr. D'Aguiar was also advised to apply to Rome for a "ius patronatus" or the right of presentation since the Chapel was his private