Trombay was once an island situated to the northeast of the Bombay group of islands. But by Portuguese times it had long since merged with the neighbouring island of Salsette. During the Portuguese occupation of the island, Trombay formed part of Salsette for administrative purposes. We do not know when the Franciscans came to Trombay, but when they did they built three churches there: one in the village of Mani (today called Mankhurd) dedicated to St. Anthony of Lisbon; the second in the village of Marouli dedicated to St. Sebastian; and the third in honour of OL of Health on top of the hill that rose at the eastern end of the land (the ruins of this church are still standing).

The origins of the parish of St. Anthony at Mani cannot be precisely dated. We find it mentioned for the first time in the Franciscan Custodial Chapter lists of 1585 when a Rector was appointed for it. This means that the parish church of St. Anthony was already in existence before 1585. In 1630, the villages of Torombe (Trombay), Deunare (Deonar), Mani, Nanale, Magdalem all formed part of the parish. The Catholics numbered 856 adults and 120 children.

With the departure of the Franciscans from Trombay, the
care of the Mani parish as well as that of Marouli fell to the secular clergy. Till well into the last century, the parishes of Mani and Marouli were served by the Vicar of Marouli. This arrangement seemed to suit the small congregation of both parishes—then in 1840 some fishermen of Mani and Bandra sought to pass over from the jurisdiction of Padroado to that of Propaganda. Their petition was turned down by Government. They renewed it in 1848, which met with the same fate. A third attempt was made by a large number of the Mani parishioners in 1853. The case lingered on for a rather long time until the Court decided in favour of Padroado in 1858. To satisfy the desire of the pro-Propaganda portion of Mani's parishioners, Bishop Canoz of Bombay thereupon bought a plot of land in the same village and built on it a new church dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua in 1860. The Propaganda congregation numbered 200 Catholics, while the Padroado Catholics were only 25 in number.

In 1886 when Bombay became an Archdiocese and Salsette came under the Archbishop-Bishop of Damaun, the two churches in Mani were confirmed to their respective jurisdictions. But in 1904 the Propaganda church (St. Anthony of Padua) became "vacant." In 1907 with the consent of the Bishop of Damaun, the whole village of Mani (with its two churches) began to be looked after by the Vicar of Marouli.

When the Double Jurisdiction ended in 1928, the two parishes in Mani were united, Mani was separated from Marouli, its Vicar took up his residence in the old Padroado house, and St. Anthony of Lisbon became the church of the united parish. The parish school today stands on the site of the Propaganda church of St. Anthony of Padua—hence its name, Padua School. The church was extended during the Vicarship of Fr. Vincent Gonsalves (1964-1967); it now measures some 50 feet in length.

The parish of St. Anthony today falls in one of the areas of Greater Bombay that is undergoing rapid industrialization. As a result its parish population has grown enormously over the past two decades.

As a footnote it may be added that the statue of OL of Health which once belonged to the Franciscan church on top of the hill, about an hour's walk from Mani, is now kept on the main altar
of the church of St. Anthony. The hill now belongs to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC); but permission is given once a year for the statue to be taken in procession to the ruined church on the hill where Mass is celebrated.

**ST. BLASE, Amboli (Between 1585-1589)**

Amboli first appears in Portuguese documents as early as 1554, two years after the death of St. Francis Xavier. It was the custom of the Portuguese Government to give the rents accruing from the villages of the Province of the North (i.e. north of Goa) as a reward to those “fidalgos” who helped Portugal in some enterprise or conquest. Thus we find that in 1554 Tristao Dias Ribeiro was given the villages of Versova and Amboli for services rendered to the Crown of Portugal. It is very likely that it was this Tristao Dias Ribeiro who invited the Franciscans to Amboli and had the church of St. Blase built around the year 1560. At least a chapel affiliated to Mount Poinsur might have been erected as soon as Ribeiro took possession of the villages.

The Rectorate (Parish) of St. Blase is not mentioned in the Custodial Chapter lists of 1585, but it does appear in those of 1595. Fr. Meersman, however, on the basis of a letter written on December 23, 1589 which mentions the existence of the Rectorate of St. Blase, is able to narrow the foundation of this parish to the years 1585-1589 (1971:202). According to the evidence of Fr. Paulo da Trindade, the parish of St. Blase in 1630 comprised the following villages: Irlem (Irlem), Parlem (Parle), Vessana (Versova), Mcgrem, (Mogra), Anderem (Andheri) and Irem. The number of Catholics was then 1637 adults and 400 children.

With the death of Donna Francisca Dias, the last relict of the Ribeiro family, the villages of Versova and Amboli passed into the hands of Donna Magdalena do Monte in 1639. Her family continued in possession of these
villages till 1739. During the time of her possession many Portuguese came and settled down around Amboli. It was then that Goregaon became well-known because of the Portuguese living near it (Gore-gaon—village of the white people).

We are not sure what was the fate of the church of St. Blase during the Maratha conquest. It seems that it was not destroyed, but remained without a priest for two years, during which time the building was badly neglected. We find secular priests as Vicars of St. Blase from 1741 (Humbert, I:140), and they have been there till today.

The territorially large parish of St. Blase has, over the centuries, been divided to give rise to five parishes: at Versova (between 1634-1642), at Juhu (in 1853), at Vile Parle (in 1930), at Jogeshwari East (in 1974), at Irla (in 1978); and two Parish units, at Four Bungalows and at Oshiwara.

OUR LADY OF REMEDY, Poinsur (Before 1591)

Fr. Hull (I:10) fixes 1555 as the year of the foundation of the church of OL of Remedy at Poinsur, which is situated about three kilometers to the south of Mt. Poinsur along the Swami Vivekanand Road (the old Ghodbunder Road). But it appears that the Jesuit Report of 1669 is slightly more cautious when speaking of this church. In that Report the Vicar of the time says:

“This parish has jurisdiction over two villages, one called Poinsur and the other Ancolualy...The church was built by the College (Jesuit) of Bassein and it continues to contribute well to its expenses when needed. I did not find among the old books any documents from which I could trace the beginnings of the church, because those before 1618 perished in the storm, which destroyed both residence and church on May 16 of that year.”
Fr. Conti, however, on the basis of documents not available to the then Vicar of Poinsur, arrives at a year of the church’s foundation which differs from that of Fr. Hull. It appears that a very rich widow named Donna Isabel d’Aguiar came to India from Ormuz before 1551, remarried in Bassein, but was childless. She became a great benefactress of the Society of Jesus to which she left “all the ornaments and the silver of the church of Poinsur which were many and of great value.” As the lady died on January 24, 1591, Fr. Conti concludes that the donation took effect either before her death or immediately after. “Hence the church of Poinsur was in existence sometime before 1591 and was not built by the College of Bassein but only donated to it. We cannot go further than that.”

It would appear that the church of Poinsur did not meet with the same fate at the hands of the Marathas as did the church of Mt. Poinsur. The first intimation we have of a Vicar (Secular priest) at Poinsur is in the year 1760 (Humbert, I:189). From 1800 onwards the Vicar of Poinsur had under his jurisdiction the chapels at Mt. Poinsur, Magatana, Olem (Orlem), Candolim (Kandivli) and elsewhere in the neighbourhood (Humbert II:13,38). Eventually Kandivli (and Orlem) separated from Poinsur in 1861 and Mt. Poinsur became independent in 1912.

Alterations and modifications of the old Portuguese church were made in 1919, 1928 and again in 1930. All the altars were reconditioned and polished with gold decorations in April 1964.

HOLY MAGI, Gorai (Between 1595-1602)

The brief history of the parish church of the Holy Magi at Gorai, a developing sea-side resort on the former island of Dharavi, is the story of two churches, one now in ruins, the other fully functioning.

The first church of Gorai, whose ruins lie concealed by trees by the side of the Vairala tank, is located about three-quarters of a mile north of the present church. It was built by
the Franciscans sometime between 1595 and 1602 (Meersman, 1971:204), was badly damaged during the Maratha invasion, and has since fallen into deeper decay. In 1630, however, Fr. Paulo do Trindade reports, the parish comprised the three villages of Gorai, Utan and Manori and counted a Catholic population of 720 adults and 120 children. The new parish church of Gorai was built in 1810. (Hull, I:10).

While the villages of Utan and Manori were separated from Gorai and became independent parishes in the course of the 17th century itself, the Sacred Heart chapel built in 1859 at Cul vem and situated less than half a kilometer from the present Gorai church, still functions as its sub-centre, (see Note on the Chapel below).

ST. JEROME, Kashmir (Parish first from 1595-1602 to 1739; again from 1975)

About two kilometers from the Checkpost between Greater Bombay and Thane District at the northern point of Salsette island stands the church of St. Jerome on a little hill by the side of the Bombay-Ahmedabad Highway. St. Jerome’s is really the story of three churches.

The first church was built by the Portuguese Franciscans on this same site, which is practically on the boundary between the two villages of Kashi and Mira, sometime between 1595 and 1602 (Meersman, 1971:206). It was a wooden structure. In 1618, the island of Salsette was struck by a ferocious hurricane which sucked up the church and deposited its debris on all sides. We are told that the Rector of the church was at that time at Mt. Poinsur, and when he returned he found that his church had vanished.

The second church, whose ruins are still visible today, appears to have been built soon afterwards by the Franciscans—before 1630, for it is spoken of by Fr. Paulo da Trindade. In 1630, he tells us, the parish consisted of the following villages: Cassi (Kashi), Mirem (Mira),
Sanbojapal, Chene, Bandouli, Baroli and Tautoli. It then counted 1056 adults and 400 children.

Then came the Maratha invasion of the island in 1739, and the church of St. Jerome was not only lost to the Franciscans, but was also badly destroyed and left to decay. We have no indication to the effect that any Vicar of the neighbouring parishes was appointed to attend to it.

The present and third church of St. Jerome was built in the early part of this century. It stands at right angles to the ruined 1630 Franciscan church, facing west. Whatever survived of the rear portion of the old church was remodelled in such wise that the rear arch of the old church became the sanctuary of the new, and the sanctuary of the old church became the sacristy of the new. The statue of St. Jerome was preserved and placed on the main altar of the new building. This church was blessed and opened for public worship on December 26, 1926. This may be the reason why the feast of St. Jerome, which falls in September, is kept each year on this day in December. Then, St. Jerome church was filial to the Church of OL of Nazareth, Bhayandar, and was served by the priests of that parish. There are two crosses in the compound: one 350 years old, in front of the ruined church; the other, erected in 1926, in front of the present church.

In June 1968, Fr. Martin de Souza was appointed Priest-in-charge of St. Jerome. He attended to this unit first from St. Thomas, Goregaon, and then from St. Pius College, Goregaon. He built the priest’s residence in 1972-73 while in the Seminary, and moved into it in May 1977. In the meanwhile, St Jerome’s was erected into an independent parish on June 10, 1975, with Fr. Martin de Souza as its first Parish Priest.

Each year, on December 26, the feast of St. Jerome (and the one day Fair) is attended by more than 15,000 people of all communities and creeds.

OUR LADY OF EGYPT, Kalina, (1606-1609)

To the north and south of the present Airports (National and International) of Bombay lie four old villages of the island of Salsette: Sar (Sahar), Bamanwada, Koli-Kalyan (Kalina) and
Vancoleim (Vakola). Today, there are parishes at Sahar, Kalina and Vakola, and of these parishes, the parish of OL of Egypt at Kalina is by far the oldest. The following villages are mentioned as belonging to the parish of Kalina in 1761, when the sacrament of Confirmation was administered there: Kole-Kalyan, Aldeia Sur, Sar, Naugar, Vancoleim and Cudday. (Humbert, I:223-238).

The church and parish of OL of Egypt were founded, according to Fr. Paulo da Trindade, when Fr. Antonio da Portiuncula was Custos. In Fr. Paulo's own words: "And in the North in the church of OL of Egypt, which was founded in his days (Antonio da Portiuncula), Manoel de S. Mathias, a great missionary, baptized more than a thousand souls." (quoted by Meersman, 1957:150). Now since Fr. Antonio was Custos in 1606 and held this post for the usual term of three years, the date of the foundation of the Kalina parish can be fixed to sometime between 1606 and 1609.

It would appear that this church escaped the fury of the Maratha occupation. We have a reference to this from a preacher who gave a Mission in Kalina in 1901, recorded in "The Examiner" (1901:150). He said: "This is one of the very few churches that escaped ruthless destruction and pillage at the hands of the Marathas." We do not know from where the preacher got his facts, but it seems to be true. Fr. Humbert finds Vicars (secular priests) functioning at the church of Kalina from 1760 on (I:181).

It was only in this century that the parishes of OL of Health, Sahar (in 1904) and St. Anthony, Vakola (in 1945) were separated from the mother-parish of Kalina. Yet the parish counts nearly 10,500 Catholics: the two large Housing Colonies of "Air India" and "Indian Airlines" are located within it.
OUR LADY OF BETHLEHEM, Dongri (About 1613)

As one travels from Bhayandar to Utan today, one notices to the left soon after crossing a little creek, the hill of Imitri or Ermitri—the hill of the Hermitage. For on it stands the 80-foot ruin of the Jesuit Hermitage of Our Lady of Nazareth. Below in the valley, towards the Daugi hill, lies the parish church of OL of Bethlehem, once reputedly the largest on the island of Dharavi.

Fr. Conti asks the question: What led the Jesuits to buy the village of Dongri about the year 1613 and what led them to erect a Hermitage there? He then proceeds to offer a number of conjectures. It could be that Fr. Francisco Azavedo, the founder of Dongri church, was implementing Jesuit policy, for a dozen years before that, Fr. Acquaviva, the General of the Jesuits, had ordered all Jesuit houses to provide a couple of rooms, isolated from the community, for the use of Retreatants. Was the Hermitage a Retreat House? Or was it St. Francis Xavier’s own personal tradition of withdrawing from time to time into solitude, still living after sixty years? Or did the lush valleys and hillsides of northern Dharavi promise the Jesuit Mission Bursar a variety of crops other than those to be found in the flatlands of Bassein? Or were the twin establishments in the valley and on the hilltop, a refuge and a watch-tower against pirates and other marauders?

Above the village of Tarouri was built the great church of OL of Bethlehem that was able to hold a congregation of 900 persons. The three “pakharias” of Dongri, Tarouri and Palli, then had a population of 605 Christians and 3 non-Christians (a shop-keeper and his family).

After the Maratha conquest of Salsette, the parish was looked after by the secular clergy. The church appears to have been spared the ravages of the war, for Dongri had a Vicar of its own from 1760 on (Humbert I:196).

Around 1950 a statue of OL of
Fatima was donated by one of the parishioners and placed in the ruined Hermitage on the hill. This initiated a devotion towards the image among the people of the area, and led to a partial renovation of the Hermitage so that today on October 18, the feast of OL of Fatima, Mass is celebrated on the hill, attended largely by the people of Dharavi. Leading up to the old Hermitage are crosses marking the 12 Stations of the Cross that once stood on Pali Hill, Bandra together with the chapel of OL of Mt. Calvary. Donated by the Fonseca family of Bandra, these crosses were transplanted here by Fr. Rudolph D'Souza, Vicar of Dongri around 1965.

ST. ANDREW, Bandra (1616)

The village of Bandra was given to the Society of Jesus in 1571 (cf. Note on Holy Cross Church, Kurla). Shortly afterwards, the Jesuits came to Bandra and made their first attempts at evangelization. They met with strong opposition, however, and seem to have been half-inclined to give up when Brother Manuel Gomes arrived on the scene in 1575 (He had joined the Society in Bassein in 1555 as a Brother, was persuaded to receive priestly ordination in 1583, died in 1590, and was regarded as “The Apostle of Salsette”). A Portuguese born in India, Brother Gomes infused new life into the evangelical enterprise, which soon bore fruit. By 1588, there were 4,000 converts; this number rose to 6,000 by 1591; and by 1603 the whole of Bandra to a man had become Catholic!

With the growing number of Catholics in Bandra, the Hermitage of the Jesuits on the Mount (OL of the Mount), built around 1573, was found inadequate to cater to the spiritual needs of the faithful. A parish was therefore created and the church of St. Anne was built in 1583 on the site that till recently was occupied by the Bandra Slaughter House and is now occupied by the B.E.S.T. Bus Depot. This parish of St. Anne (not to be confused with that of Pali, Bandra) was the only one
in Bandra till 1616.

There is evidence to show that in 1601 there already existed the hermitage of St. Andrew built on the west coast of Bandra near Chimbai for the fisherfolk living there. With the whole of Bandra become Catholic by 1603, it became necessary to divide the parish of St. Anne and thus the parish of St. Andrew was created, when a church was built in 1616 on a large piece of land bequeathed by a wealthy Catholic. Two years later, the furious hurricane of 1618, which damaged some 35 churches from Bombay to Agashi, only unroofed the church of St. Andrew.

When the Marathas threatened to invade Salsette in 1739, the church and college (read School) of St. Anne, with their surrounding fortifications, were mined and blown up by the British, with the reluctant consent of the Portuguese. The British feared that should the Marathas occupy the fortifications, they would be a threat to Bombay. The church of St. Andrew was spared by the invading Marathas and was permitted to remain open for public worship. With the church of St. Anne no longer in existence, St. Andrew’s was the only parish in Bandra, whose limits then extended from the Mahim creek on the south to Santa Cruz and Juhu on the north.

In 1853 certain differences with the Vicar of St. Andrew led a group of parishioners to dissociate themselves from the Padroado parish and to ask to come under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of Bombay. Thus was born the parish of St. Peter, the first Propaganda parish in Salsette. In the course of this century, several parishes have been carved out of the extensive parish of St. Andrew: Sacred Heart at Santa Cruz (1928), St. Anne on Pali Hill (1943), St. Vincent de Paul at Khar (1943) and St. Theresa at Pali-Khar (1946).

Though the original church of 1616 was never in ruins, it underwent extensive repairs in 1864. But there is still preserved in the present church the two exquisitely-carved side-altars, pulpit and two large wooden panels, which date back to the 1616 church. In 1966, the original length of the church was extended by 50 ft; the present facade was designed to retain the features of its predecessor.

An interesting cross stands near the southern wall of the
cemetery between the Oratory and the Grotto. This cross was brought here from the ruins of St. Anne’s church. Sculptured from one block of stone, its sides carry 39 symbols from the Old and New Testament. When erected in 1870, a flight of steps led to the base of the cross which were removed in 1917-19, when the present dome-like base was built.

ST. SEBASTIAN, Marouli (Before 1630)

The Franciscans built three churches on the former island of Trombay during Portuguese times, one of which was dedicated to St. Sebastian (cf. Note on the Church of St. Anthony of Lisbon, Mankhurd). The present, little church in the village of Marouli is not of Franciscan origin, though it bears the same name.

The Franciscan church of St. Sebastian was built in the village of Marouli on the site where the present parish school stands. We do not know the exact year of its construction, but according to Fr. Paulo da Trindade, the church and parish of St. Sebastian was already in existence in 1630. In that year it comprised the villages of Manul, Aniquia, Borlem, Varoli, Maroli and Chembur and numbered 720 adults and 120 children. On the evidence of Fr. Paulo, one wonders what source Fr. Hull was following when he stated that 1739 was the year of this church’s foundation (I:10).

If we are to follow Fr. Meersman, it would appear that this church was not touched by the Marathas, for in 1760 the traveller Anquetil du Perron found a “pretty good church” at Marouli being served not by a resident priest, but by a priest from Condita (1957:151). Fr. Humbert, however, finds a priest functioning as the Vicar of both Marouli and Mane from 1760 on (I:190). This arrangement was maintained even when Mane had two churches—one belonging to Pardrado (St. Anthony of Lisbon) and the other to Propaganda (St. Anthony of Padua) from 1860 on. When this occurred, the Vicar of Marouli functioned as the Vicar of the Pardrado church, and from 1907 to 1928 of the Propaganda church as well.

A plague towards the end of the 19th century is very likely the reason why the people abandoned their habitation and the church and moved to the foot of the hill by the creek, where they built the present church in 1900. A porch was added to the church in
1935. In 1978 the facade of the church was broken and the whole structure extended to include the porch as well.

Like its neighbour (St. Anthony, Mankhurd), the parish of St. Sebastian comprises old-time villages and newly-developed Housing colonies, experiences the twin processes of rapid urbanization and industrialization, and includes within its territory the Rashtriya Chemical Fertilizer Corporation and several Petroleum Refineries.

**ST. ANTHONY, Malvani (Parish first from 1630-42 to 1739; again from 1835)**

Before developing into an independent parish in the 17th century, the village of Malvani (Maluana) was one of several villages that formed part of the parish of OL of the Assumption at Magatana (cf. Note on OL of the Assumption Church, Kandivli). It is difficult to say in which precise year Malvani was separated from the parish of Magatana to become an independent unit. Following Fr. Meersman, this separation took place between 1630, when Fr. Paulo da Trindade mentions Malvani as part of the Magatana Rectorate, and 1642, when its name is listed among the Residences established before that year (1971:207).

The Franciscan church of St. Anthony must have been destroyed at the time of the Maratha conquest of the island. For, from 1739, like Magatana, Malvani too passed under the jurisdiction of
the Vicar of OL of Remedy, Poinsur, and thus lost its independence.

In 1835 a new church was built in baroque style, and the parish of St. Anthony had a fresh beginning. In the pages of “The Examiner” (1935:105) this note appeared:

“St. Anthony’s parish is keeping its first centenary this year. This church was built in 1835 and separated from the church of Poinsur, the first parish priest being Rev. Fr. Gomes of Amboli. On March 3, the parish of Malvani will be solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by His Grace the Archbishop of Goa...”

In 1835 the parish of Malvani comprised four villages: Marve, Malvani, Rathodi and Kharodi. In the course of the next hundred years, because of inconveniences experienced in travelling to work, many people from these villages moved to Orlém, Bandra, Andheri and Girgaum. In recent years, however, this trend has abated, and may very well be reversed, as this area of the extended suburbs of Greater Bombay becomes the target of Housing projects.

On the main altar of the church stands a 4-foot statue of St. Anthony which dates from 1835. The parish feast is celebrated in June each year, to which the faithful come from Dahisar in the north to Girgaum in the south, bringing salt, bread, oil, flowers, candles, etc. as offerings in honour of the Saint.
OUR LADY OF HEALTH, Versova (Between 1634-1642)

Regarding the origin of the parish of OL of Health at Versova, a village on the west coast of the island of Salsette, Fr. Meersman notes (1971:206-7):

"Paulo da Trindade, who completed his chronicle about 1635, writes that Versova formed part of St. Blase’s parish of Amboli. However, there exists an anonymous list of 1737 which gives the names of the Residences the Franciscans possessed in the year 1642 and among them we also find that of Versova. Hence we must conclude that this Parish was founded between 1634-5 and 1642."

Our next information about this parish brings us to the year 1700. The Portuguese had erected an insignificant fort at Versova. On February 26, 1700, when the Portuguese garrison at Bassein was occupied with the chieftain of Janjira (Sidi), a force of 2,000 Arabs seized Versova and began ravaging the surrounding villages. They put to the sword everyone they met. Panic spread and the Rector of the church and several thousands of inhabitants fled to Mahim (Bombay). The church was set on fire. Hearing of this raid, the Portuguese in turn attacked and drove the Arabs away (Humbert, I:87-88). We do not know the extent of the damage done to the original church, but it was soon re-built, for we find Versova listed as a Franciscan residence in the Reports of 1713 and 1724.

Fifteen years later came the Maratha invasion. The fort of Versova was the last to fall prior to the capture of Bassein. But the church does not appear to have been destroyed by the Marathas for Fr. Humbert finds it having a Vicar in 1749 (I:142) and regularly after that. The Vicars of Versova, in that period which suffered from a depleted clergy personnel, also looked after the parish of St. Bonaventure at