

ST. ANN'S CONVENT, BANDRA



Bandra, popularly known as the “Queen of the Suburbs,” was chosen by our Sisters in their search for a transit house in Bombay. The responsibility was entrusted by the then Provincial Superior, Sr. Leonilde Denis Lewis, to our stalwarts, Sr. Louisa Martin D’Cunha, Superior of Mithapur, and Sr. Barbara Highmoor, Superior of Jamnagar.

They sought the help of Fr. Peter Lewis, Parish Priest of Infant Jesus Church, Nashik, and brother of our late Sr. Lucy, as well as Mrs. Grace Gomes, sister of our late Sr. Angela and aunt of our former Mother General, Mother Ernestine Fernandes. They approached Mr. William D’Souza and Mrs. Jessie D’Souza, the owners of the house at 12, Chimbai Road. Though the owners had already agreed to sell the house to another party, Fr. Peter strongly recommended our Sisters to them. Through Divine Providence, on 8 September 1974, the birthday of our Blessed Mother, the Sisters received the good news that the owners were willing to sell the house to our Congregation.

The Provincial Superior, Sr. Leonilde, was informed the following day. A token amount was paid, and the necessary formalities were completed by Sr. Leonilde, Sr. Louisa and Sr. Barbara. The house was purchased for Rs. 3,65,000/-. The Mithapur community contributed Rs. 1,00,000/-, donated by Tata Chemicals Limited, Mithapur, while the remaining amount was contributed by the Jamnagar community. The furnishing of the house was entrusted to Jamnagar. The piano belonging to the previous owners was also purchased for Rs. 5,000/-.

Sr. Cesira Salice and Sr. Claudina Anselmo Pereira, accompanied by Miss Philo, a helper from Jamnagar, were sent to stay in the house until it was furnished and the Sisters appointed. In the initial stages, the community received generous assistance from its neighbours.

Mother Consiglia Perego and Sr. Leena Mathias were appointed to the community and began a crèche, which was later continued by Sr. Ilaria Martin Rebello. Sr. Immaculata D'Souza started a tailoring class. Later, Sr. Elvira Sebastian Sequeira and Sr. Joseph Mani joined the community. In 1977, Sr. Jacintha Saldanha and Sr. Lucia D'Cunha came to Bandra as students. Our neighbours, Mr. Lancy Leo and Mrs. Gaye Leo, along with Fr. Ozzie's mother, were very cordial and generous towards our Sisters and helped them with food and other needs during the early years.

On 21 February 1979, when the North Province was erected, the Bandra house became the Provincialate. Sr. Benjamin Joseph served as the first Provincial Superior from 1979 to 1991. The community also served as a Juniorate during 1985–1986, with Sr. Emerenziana D'Souza as Superior and Sr. Letitia D'Souza as Junior Mistress.

Sr. Patricia Fernandes served as Provincial Superior from 1991 to 1996. From 1997 to 2000, Sr. Benjamin Joseph served as Provincial Superior for the third time. On 21 August 1997, Sr. Benjamin Joseph, Sr. Margaret Mary and Sr. Rosa Kutty Joseph Urulel, together with Kishori, the kitchen helper, left for Delhi, and the Provincialate was subsequently shifted to Vikaspuri, New Delhi.

From 1997 to 2003, Sr. Tecla Pillay was in charge of the Bandra community. Our Sisters also worked at Holy Family Hospital to support the community financially. Sr. Magline Gomes served as a supervisor, while Srs. Katheena Joseph Thekkumcheril, Rufina Noronha and Regi Thomas served as ward in-charges at different times. In 2001–2002, the community also welcomed aspirants and a postulant who pursued their studies through St. Andrew's Open University, with Sr. Roseline Varghese as their mistress.

From 2007 to 2011, Sr. Anita Leena Lobo, during the last five years of her life, served at the Centre for Community Organization at St. Andrew's Church, Bandra. Sr. Prakash rendered her services in the parish office. Sr. Betty Lobo, after receiving training at Dilkhush, worked at Happy Hours Centre, Khar, for two years. Srs. Vera Almeida and Magline Gomes offered their services in evangelization at Divine Tabor Ashram, Kalyan.

The Bandra community continues to welcome Sisters, students and others who come to Mumbai for treatment, studies or short stays. Since the city has many educational institutions, our Sisters are also sent to different colleges for higher studies. We reach out to the lonely and housebound through frequent home visits and by administering the Holy Eucharist. In collaboration with LASA (Lay Associates of St. Ann), we provide meals to 15 poor persons every Saturday.

Since 2022, the community has also been providing shelter to working women and students who come to Mumbai in search of employment and education. We thank the Lord for the gift of this community, situated close to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Mount and surrounded by many churches. We remain deeply grateful for the loving care, support and friendship of our neighbours. May the Lord be praised for His abundant providence and blessings throughout the years.