



# History

## History of St. Dominic Savio Boy's Home Established 1969

### Services:

1. High School
2. Boy's Home
3. JN IOS
4. Special School
5. Prafulta
6. Sports Complex

The dream to begin a work at Andheri was in the mind of Msgr. Mathais at the very inception of the Salesian presence in Bombay. Yet the actual establishing of the Salesian presence at Andheri never took off until 1967. Way back in 1923, Mr. F.A.C. Rebello, an influential catholic of Bombay wrote to Msgr. Mathais, the Superior of the Salesians in India, that the Catholics of Bombay lacked facilities for technical education. He requested him to consider setting up a high school at Andheri, an agricultural colony at Vikhroli and a technical school at Chembur.

In December 1924, Msgr. Mathais went down to Bombay and was the guest of Bishop Jose Pereira of Daman at Colaba. In the company of Vicar general who was extremely friendly, he was able to visit all the places where a Salesian work would be started. Bishop Jose Pereira wrote a long letter to Fr. Rinaldi the Rector Major of Salesians, on July 22, 1925 in which he expressed the need of diocese and earnestly requested that some Salesians be sent to start a high school at Andheri. But a little later Msgr. Returned to Portugal and Bishop Jose Pereira died. Everything came to a standstill. Only Mr. Rebello continued to write and to insist.

The extraordinary visitation of Fr. Peter Ricaldone to India in 1927 brought about a decision. In November 1927, Msgr. Mathais accompanied him to Bombay. After visiting all the places which were being offered, and after knowing confidentially that the paroado jurisdiction would soon disappear from Bombay-which would mean more difficulties for Salesian entry into Bombay, he wrote to Msgr. Xavier, the administrator of Daman, on December 5, 1927 saying that the Salesians had in mind to establish three works at Andheri, Vikhroli and Chembur but since the high school at Andheri could not be started at once, they would all avail themselves of the offer of the Bombay Catholic Welfare Organization and take over the Catholic Educational Institute at Tardeo as a temporary measure.

In this way that, although Andheri was uppermost in the minds of the pioneers, Tardeo and Matunga received prime focus of attention and developed much earlier.

Fr. Maschio, who had by 1965 a well established propaganda office, did not lose sight of Andheri. Nor did he forget his promise to his Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias, to build an orphanage for the destitute of bombay city. A plot of land was then in the name of carmel convent and under the ownership of Eminence was acquired at the cardinals insistence. The paper deal and conditions are not too well known.

In 1967 the land was acquired and almost immediately the site was cleared for work on the building to begin. During the first few days Fr. Victor D'souza would supervise the work at the site while residing at the Lady of Dolours Church, Wadala. He would spend the whole day here. Fr. Antonio Alessi too had done invaluable work together with Fr. Maschia. Both would come regularly and to follow up the construction work undertaken by architects Patki and Dadarkar.

The building consisted of two L shaped blocks of 2 storeys each. The left the section houses the boders with accommodation for about 200 inmates; the other and larger block was the school building. The estimate for both the blocks was over Rs35 lakhs.

In 1969, the pioneering band of salesians to occupy the building which was still under construction consisted Fr.Charles Restelli , Fr. Crispino D'souza and Bro.P.M Thomas. Fr. Restelli was transferred from St.Bede, Madras and appointed rector of new house. As all pioneering and early days are considerable hardships had to be over in matters pertaining to food, accommodation, pollution due to the construction work, noise, etc.

In the month of June Fr.Richard D'souza joint the staff as confessor. Occasionally the confessor from Kurla and Borivali would offer their service in matters spiritual.

True to its name the criterion for selection into the orphanage and its reference was as follows: First priority would be given to the complete orphanage boy. Next preference was the one parent boy. The third option would be for those boys from poor broken families. To this day this policy is maintained in the selection of Boarders.

Hardly had they begun when the demand began to increase. The number of Boarders which were around 122 in 1969 swelled to 135 by June of the same year. Boys continued coming all through he year and the deserving cases were accommodated.

No Uniform had as yet been selected. Was only in the following Year after much struggle, that the school was given government recognition and a uniform comprising of Khaki, trousers and white shorts was sanctioned.

From the very begging, sports occupied an important place. The playground was attended: grass was planted to keep dust away; leveling was done to prevent soil erosion. The boys too reciprocated well and in a matter of few years rose to heights of glory, becoming a challenge in football, hockey, and athletics to all school in Bombay.

I n 1970 Fr. Salvador was appointed Rector and Bro. P.M Thomas was the principal. Two clerics, Bro. James Sequeira and Bro. Lawrence D'souza were sent to the first time as assistance. The number of boys in the school went up to 241 in just 31 day scholar and 35 semi boarders. The latter belonged to economically backward homes. Hence they spent the day in school and were given breakfast, lunch and tea. During this period the house system was initiated and the staff and students buddled with enthusiasm. The excitement reached its peak when for the first time school sports were held. Fr. Bonny D'souza succeeded Bro.P.M Thomas in June 1971.

The Dominic Savio boy's home with the attached school which was opened in 1969 was registered as a society on Feb 20 1973.

In June that year, Fr. Victor was the head of the institution, while Fr. Jacob took over as the principal. The teaching staff had increased from 8 to 21. In the following year Fr. Victor became the first Rector-Principal with 180 boarders and 196 day scholars. This period has special memories as Dominic Savio sent up its first batch of students and attained cent percent results.

Between the years 1975 and 1981, Fr. Chrysologus D'cunha was at the helm. It was during his term that the kg class and Standard I and II were started. This was due to the fact that the neighbouring Canossa school stopped the admission for boys into their primary section from June 1976. However the admission to the boarding viz. admission from 5th STD only, was left untouched. With the recognition of the primary section in the following year, STD III and IV were introduced. In 1979, the first batches of 43 boys were promoted to STD V.

And years went by and the salesians personnel kept of changing, the institution excelled in studies, often obtaining cent percent results. Besides sports, music was another area of extracurricular development. The school began to have its own band, one that is much sought after even to this day.

In 1980, as the means of training some of the dropouts, the printing press from Panjim, Goa who was installed here for the project, but it did not take off. The Press became a further loss due to several factors- Defective Machinery, lack of trained personnel, lack of managerial and technical know- how in operating the project profitable. As a consequence, the press was closed on December 1993.

Back in 1981 there was a change in management with Fr. Sigmaringa who was appointed as Rector and Fr. Danzil Vaz as Principal. He introduced 'class day' in Primary Section which effectively proved to the parents that their children were individually cared for and the channels and communication between parents, teachers and students were thrown open.

In 1982 a new rector was appointed in the person of Fr. Orville Coutinho. Fr. Cecil Naronha was the Principal. With them, dramatics in school was given special thrust and the best play in the competition was staged on the Annual Day.

In 1985 Fr. Orville continued with Fr. Philip Falcao as Principal. The enterprising and enthusiastic duo strove to make teaching more child oriented In spite of large numbers I each class. Shift system was introduced in 1986. This period saw the beginning of the Pre- Primary section with Mrs. Merlyn D'souza as the head. Rote learning and drilling was avoided through specially prepared worksheets. It also brought about a change in the Secondary section. Mrs. A. Alexander who had been headmistress since 1970 retired. She will always be remembered as one who believes in service with smiles. Miss J.S. Lyer took over from her. In spite of being strict, she was very popular with the staff and students.

From 1989, two young and vibrant Salesians followed each other: Fr.Olympio D'mello was succeeded by Fr. Corlis Gonsalves and Fr. Dominic Almeida was the dynamic Principal. Together they brought about manifold changes in the educational system. The Open School was started. In the primary section, Mrs. S. Pereira, the Primary head teacher with Fr. Corlis Gonsalves as the Rector introduced Work-sheets to reduce the load of books carried by students and examinations become a thing of the past.

Students were evaluated on their day to day performance. In both the sections -Primary & Pre-Primary field trips were organized to various spots pertaining to the topics taught in class. The red letter day for these sections is "Graduation Day" when pomp and ceremony, the students graduate into the next section.

As the school progressed into the 1990's, computer education was imparted from standard I to IX. Skills in speech and drama were inculcated in classes up to standard VIII. An audiovisual section was attached to the library. The physical aspect too had been attended too had been attended to as students were trained in the martial arts and yoga.

By the year 1994, when Fr. Adolph Furtado took up the reins of Rectorship, Dominic Savio's had a strength of 1,520 students and a staff of 70. He took up further initiatives, such as the establishing of the "Special School for the Slow Learners." More restructuring of the school time-table was being planned in order to give greater attention the marginalized sections of the youth population.

In 2000, Fr. Diego Nunes fathered the institution for 6 years paying much attention to the needs of not only the school but the Salesian family comprising to the Co-operators and Past Pupils while the leadership of the school was headed by Fr. Egidius Falcao for a long period of 9 years. He provided an A.V hall, renovated the Science lab, and installed TV in every classroom and a separate Computer lab for the Primary Section. Fr. Ajoy Fernandes, a soft spoken mild psychologist and philosopher carried on as Rector till 2009.

Since 1995, the community of Dominic Savio's has also played host to the many sick confreres of the province through the setting up of the province infirmary. The aim is to administer proper health care to sick and elderly confreres who could be treated with the facilities available at the Holy Spirit Hospital just across the wall.

In retrospect, it is also assuring to note that this institution has contributed it's mite to the fostering of the vocation. Today some of the past pupils are Salesians, a few of whom are holding responsible positions in the Salesian Society..

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