

# ST ANDREW'S HIGH SCHOOL

In the annals of the educational field in our Archdiocese, it is noticed that the now well-known Catholic educational institutions had humble beginnings as small parochial schools. **St. Andrew's High School is one of these.**

**Braz Fernandes**, to whom we are indebted for most of the information on the early history of our parish, writes in his "History of Bandra" that a small school, the first in Bandra, was founded in 1780 by the parish priest, **Fr. Francisco de Mello**. Teaching the rudiments of the Catholic faith at first, this school in 1782 included other subjects, the medium of instruction being Portuguese. From 1839 a lay teacher assisted the parish priest but his services were discontinued in 1850 when two curates were posted to the church.

It would appear that the value of education was being realized as during the period 1833 to 1843 there were five private schools located at Kantwadi, Ranwar and Rajan, some of which were under the control of the parish priest while others were private institutions. It must have been for uniformity of teaching methods that the students of these schools were taken by the parish school in 1864 and the parish school accordingly enlarged.

A noteworthy event was the visit of the archbishop of Goa, **Dom Ayres de Ornellas de Vasconellos**, to the Church of St. Andrew in 1875 and to commemorate this visit the parish school came to be known from this date as "The Ornellas School". The increasing usage of the English language necessitated the opening of an English teaching section upto the Third Standard in 1882 and in both the sections there were 125 boys. Till 1892, education was imparted free of cost as the expenses of the school were met from the funds of Mt. Mary's chapel. The St. Joseph's Convent School was already in existence from 1864 but the fees charged must have been the reason for girls of not too well-to-do parents to seek admission into their parish school from about 1884. By the close of the century the decline of Portuguese influence found both the sections amalgamated into an English teaching school named "St. Andrew's."

Admissions steadily increased and by 1911 the existing structure adjacent to the church had to be built, the funds for which were obtained through subscriptions and a donation from Cardeaux Mrs. M. in memory of her husband besides the church contributing the balance. This little parish school got an impetus in its educational standard with the appointment in 1913 of **Rev. Fr. Roque Fernandes**, M.A. as its Principal. A son of the soil he felt that educational facilities should be freely available, if the people of Bandra had not to subject themselves to the inconvenience of attending schools in Bombay and to this end he laboured incessantly. In 1916, the school was recognized by Government and by 1918 it was a Middle School. But his ultimate objective was a High School, the first to be in Bandra and this dreamer of great dreams saw the fulfillment of his dream in 1919. Weak in constitution, the effort of his labours took heavy toll of his health and though he was practically on his death-bed after realizing his dream he must have felt that much had still to be done when he died on 13th January 1920.

We will not agree with his thoughts for at the judgement seat we are sure no citation

would have been more apt than "well done thou good and faithful servant".

Though recognized as a High School in 1919 it took some time for classes to be opened till the Matriculation Standard could be reached and therefore the first batch of students appeared for the matriculation in 1921. The need for education was so great that accommodation even in the two additional buildings adjacent to the churchyard was insufficient. Like men of destiny who seem to arrive on the scene just when needed and rise to the occasion St. Andrew's had such a one, in **Vicar Rev. Dominic De Sa**. Negotiating with the recently formed Salsette Catholic Society Housing, he obtained a large plot of land, four acres of which were in exchange for scattered plots of land bequeathed to the church while the fifth was purchased.

The foundation of the building was blessed on 18th April 1926, by **Msgr. S. O. Xavier**, administrator of the Diocese of Damaun and on completion at a cost of about a little over two lakhs was formally declared open on 4th December 1927 by the **Hon'ble Sir Leslie Wilson**, Governor of Bombay.

The massive stone-grey building practically lost in the vast expanse of playing field reveals Rev. Fr. De.Sa as a man of foresight and courage to have undertaken a project involving an expenditure which many another man would have fought shy of. His foresight is all the more revealed when no difficulty of land was experienced for the construction of an additional wing in 1964.

This extension was built at a cost of about two lakhs and made possible by the present **Vicar, Rt. Rev. Mgr. George Fernandes** taking upon himself the initial responsibility of raising the loan to meet the expenditure. Thanks to the untiring efforts of the **Principal, Rev. Fr. Nereus Rodrigues**, and the Parent-Teacher Association, the debt is steadily being liquidated.

The Parish authorities were alive to the need of providing free education and maintained a free school in the buildings adjacent to the church compound as well as one at Khar. These primary schools for children unable to pay any fees were closed in 1934 as the number of students considerably decreased to justify such institutions and such students were given free education in the boys' and girls' section of St. Andrew's High School.

St. Andrew's was a co-educational institution till the boys section was shifted to the new building in 1927, though both the sections were under the control of one Principal.

For better privacy and space the girls' section was shifted in 1944 to the building in the land now occupied by the **Carmel Convent** and was segregated from St. Andrew's in 1954 when taken over by the Apostolic Carmel nuns.

