



Celebrating
COMMUNITY

**VOICE OF THE
SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

June 2025

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY



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THE PATHWAY FOR SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

For forty years now in the Archdiocese of Bombay, the Small Christian Communities have been a vital way of “being Church” – of witnessing in the society. As we celebrate this milestone, let us retrace the evolution of the Small Christian Community (SCC) and reflect on its intended functioning and relevance for our times.

The seed for the SCC was sown by Bishop Bosco Penha, a great visionary, during the first ever Bombay Priests’ Synod in 1980. In a co-authored Position Paper, (then) Fr Bosco proposed the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) as a model for building up the kingdom of God in which the priest’s role is to be builder of a community. The paper stated that: “Community happens where there is sharing of experiences, interests and problems. But sharing cannot take place among 5000 people. The strategy lies, therefore, in concentrating on smaller localities of about 30-40 families, of more or less similar background.” Three facets of the BEC/SCC emerged:

1. The community is missionary in nature, as explicitly noted in the Statement of the Synod – “open to the larger community in which it is situated, and to which it proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed.” Proclamation in our plural country calls for inculturation, dialogue and cooperation.
2. Common issues or problems in the locality are a starting point for community interaction and organisation, a process of unification that must be ultimately Christ-centric and sustained, and thus we all must be committed to the struggle for social justice.
3. The community is to be organised by a core group of key persons in the locality; thus lay leaders must be comprehensively trained and oriented towards community-building; this is the same strategy Jesus deployed when He chose and commissioned the apostles.

As a progression of these facets, and given the socio-economic situation in our country, the need was felt later for Small Human Communities (SHCs).

In the past four decades, our SCCs have thrived in mission and faith formation. SCC leaders play a key role in visiting homes, praying the community Rosary, discussing faith themes, organising community Masses and get-togethers, bringing Communion to the sick and home-bound, and so on. Should our SCCs continue with all of this? Yes, absolutely and undoubtably so. However, the commitment to the struggle for social justice seems to have largely devolved to Centres for Community Organisation (CCOs) – and there is discontent because their outreach is being availed mainly by people of other Faiths. We have not achieved our full potential as SHCs. How can we better proclaim, and better foster dialogue and cooperation in our increasingly polarised society? How does an SCC bond with members who are more comfortable with digital interactions? Do our SCC leaders serve or dictate?

At the FABC 50 General Conference, the Church in Asia resolved to reorient our BECs/SCCs towards becoming catalysts of renewal in society, empowering the faithful to serve as bridge-builders and bridges, i.e. to move more purposefully forward as SHCs. Care for our common home as envisaged in *Laudato Si'* is another important way in which we can come together. Certain BECs in Asia have begun transitioning towards becoming basic ecological communities.

Nevertheless, all these considerations are moot without being close to God in and through conversation with the Holy Spirit. In the Archdiocese of Bombay, we have already initiated reflections on the emerging future of SCCs in a Synodal Church. Our SCCs are now reflecting on the following questions individually, in teams and in the whole group: 'Who are you as a group before God? What are you called to do? How do you do it?' They go on to discern how to transcend fear and doubt in a culture based on cynicism and pessimism in order to lean into what is possible. These reflections...

are guiding the SCCs into being more inclusive, faith-formed, collaborative and relevant. The process may be slow, but the Spirit will definitely guide our SCCs in building up the kingdom in creative ways that best suit our times and circumstances.

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva

**family is where faith is handed on
from generation to generation —
it is shared like food at the family
table and like love in our hearts.
Therefore, the family is a
privileged place to meet Jesus.**

Pope Leo XIV

(at Jubilee of Families, Children,
Grandparents and the Elderly)



ST ANDREW CHURCH, BANDRA

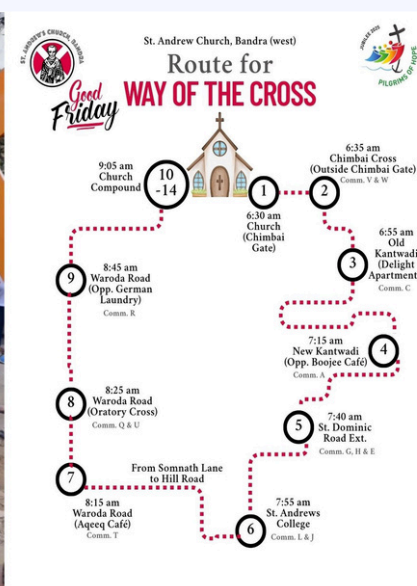
Celebration of the Day of Consecrated Life



Members of the PPC and Priests of St. Andrews' Parish along with Brother Dorson celebrated the day of Consecrated Life on Saturday 22 February 2025.

Commencing on a spiritual note, the Eucharist was celebrated at the St. Andrew's College Chapel; followed by an evening of food, fun and fellowship.

Walking Way of the Cross



The youth of the parish organised a walking way of the cross through the streets of Bandra. A carefully planned route laid the path to visit various crosses across Bandra and hence a wonderful and prayerful morning was orchestrated.

Bible Cosplay



COMMUNITY O
Aralyn Dsouza
Norisca Dsouza
Rebecca Vaz



The Multipli(CARE)tion
Community Q&U
Genevieve, Melanie, Marie, John, Gerard, Rekha,
Bradley, Barbara, Annie, Charlotte, Joan, Artie,
Rosha, Snehi and Venita-Ann



FAITH THROUGH THE ROOF - MARK 2: 1-12
COMMUNITY A -Adore, Agnes, Apoline, Catherine, Cynthis, Fulpati, Gilroy, Kevin Loretta, Luke,
Sheldon, Victor, Vincent, Donna

A competition was organized by the Parish where each community had to depict a scene from the Bible through pictures. A number of entries were received and 3 winners emerged from this competition as above.

Rosita Coelho

Parish SCC Coordinator, St Andrew Church, Bandra

ST ANTHONY PARISH, MALWANI

The purpose of SCCs

The aim of Small Christian Communities is to foster fellowship and give the members of the community a sense of belonging, while at the same time, rendering any assistance and support they require. In a nutshell, here's what we do.

Small clusters or groups may meet up to recite the daily Rosary at the many crosses/chapels in the vicinity. They may meet as a cluster in individual homes (including elders and children) to read and reflect on the Holy Bible.

During the year, each SCC (total of 45 SCCs) celebrates its patron saint's feast, bringing together all families of the community in prayer through the Eucharist, followed by fun-filled activities and fellowship.

Newer members get to know the existing members, and there is a true sense of camaraderie and solidarity. The presence of the priest(s), Brothers assigned to the parish, and mentors, make these events more meaningful.

The Infant Jesus Novena at the Infant Jesus Chapel brings many a Pilgrim of Hope for spiritual blessings. The late evenings include games, talent contests, and more, including culinary delights to satiate one's physical needs. One of the most-loved saints, especially for us parishioners, is St Anthony and June 13 is celebrated as the feast day. A beautiful novena dedicated to our own personal teacher, preacher and healer, is open to throngs of devotees, and culminates in a feast celebration. The SCCs decorate the church and the chapel, besides animating the Eucharistic celebrations.

In the month of May, daily Rosary is recited together as a community to deepen our faith and personal relationship with Jesus and Mother Mary. The community comes together again during the month of October for the daily recitation of the Rosary.

Other spiritual services that the SCCs prepare and participate in include the Exaltation of the Cross, Rite of Presentation of the Lord's Prayer, Lenten prayers and the Stations of the Cross, Advent Wreath Prayers, Eucharistic Adoration for the Feast of Christ the King, to name just a few.



During the month of November, all zones enthusiastically participate in the Parish Family Day (PFD) as they vie for the No.1 position; prizes, trophies and medals are given to winners. Parades and processions of SCCs proudly waving their community flag,

splashes of colour and fabulous performances add to the success of the event, as families come in large numbers to enjoy the evening. Prior to the PFD, scores of children, youth, and adults take part in sporting events and other community/zonal activities like rangoli/lantern/diya making, T-shirt painting, and mocktail-making. The prayers and worship during the weeks of Advent and the Christmas Eucharistic celebration culminate in a week of loads of fun events. During the week prior to Christmas and after, the SCCs take part in competitions including carol singing, star-making, and crib-making. Christmas brings family members from outstation and abroad, who join in the community and parish celebrations to make this the most joyous season of the year.



Children's Day, Parents' Day, and Senior Citizens' Day are other events planned and executed, giving all the participants a good time,

Visiting the home-bound, sick and elderly, is one of the activities that SCC animators and coordinators do on a regular basis. Outreach programmes include visiting the Aged and Children's Homes, giving donations to needy families in kind or cash. Animators make it a point to visit the homes of those who have lost their loved ones for a prayer service before the funeral.

Proclaiming our Christian faith through community service and being involved as agents and witnesses of Christ's love is true discipleship. Thus, the faith of the laity nurtures and develops fervour in others to join in the services that, at the end of the day, is a Celebration of Community!

Sunita Frank
St Anthony Parish, Malwani

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH, ORLEM, MALAD WEST

The Animators of our parish strive to be a driving and unifying force in our SCCs, with a focus on Spiritual, Social and Outreach activities. Activities in the recent past included the Rosary, Way of the Cross, Children's Day, Elders' Day, Cluster meetings in many sectors, and the Inter-Religious Dialogue Cell celebrated Christmas and Christian Unity in our parish.



Michelle Pinto
Parish SCC Coordinator, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Orlem

OUR LADY OF NAZARETH COMMUNITY

SACRED HEART CHURCH, ANDHERI EAST

Lenten Pilgrimage

During the season of Lent, our Small Christian Community dedicated to Our Lady of Nazareth came up with a novel suggestion during the monthly SCC meeting. We decided to embark on a visit to 14 churches in the Archdiocese of Bombay starting from South Mumbai, and winding our way through Dadar, Bandra, Santa Cruz, and ending at our parish of Sacred Heart, Andheri East. The animators got together, coordinated the visit, and got the required permissions with the help of our Parish Priest.



This was a different kind of pilgrimage, especially during this Jubilee year when the Church is reflecting on our role as Pilgrims of Hope, anchored firmly in Christ. Along the way, our community made this a Lenten pilgrimage too by reflecting on the Stations of the Cross at each church. For a city that never sleeps and is always on the move, this visit brought back fond memories for a few members who recalled their humble beginnings as they came to Bombay years ago in search of jobs in the Fort-Colaba area, and how their journey of hope took them from their busy and modest lives there to more meaningful and economically better lives as they settled down in Andheri.



Every church that we entered had some story and connection. For some, it was their childhood parish and the accompanying schools where they studied; for others, it was the church in which they got married; for some, it was the parish where they courted and found their future life partners; for others, it was the church they visited while working in that area. To add to that, there was so much history and good architecture to appreciate in each church, and also a tinge of sadness to see that the once flourishing churches were today a shadow of a glorious past. For many, it was a time of reflection and thanksgiving for the many graces they had received from the Lord.

All the parishes welcomed us and ensured we were comfortable. Our group was a good blend of lay people, young and elderly, residents of Shanti Ghar, religious sisters, and we were led by our spiritual directors - Fr Callisto Gomes SVD and Sr Agnes. The religious sisters and residents of Shanti Ghar animated us in prayer, and the lay people ensured the day was filled with interesting episodes from the past, indulging in some clean good fun. It was a time of praying together as well as bonding with the community members.



"The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps." (Proverbs 16:9) This was very true, because while the organisers depended on Google Maps for the itinerary, it was finally the Lord who helped us navigate through the unpredictable traffic on that day, gave strength to our elderly members, and ensured that we were on schedule.

Phyllis Pereira

SCC Coordinator, Our Lady of Nazareth Community
Sacred Heart Parish, Andheri East

ST THOMAS COMMUNITY

OL DOLOURS PARISH, SONAPUR

Pilgrimage to Bhate Bunder, Uttan



Early on January 11, a group of tenacious St Thomas community members hopped onto a minibus that made its way to Our Lady of Vailankanni Shrine, at Bhate Bunder. It was a cool and pleasant journey, as the bus wove through early morning traffic, punctuated by the passing around of homemade sandwiches and fresh batata wadas. We prayerfully prayed the Rosary enroute.

On arrival at the Shrine, we relaxed and enjoyed a hearty breakfast. We then went to pray at the Shrine as a community, and had a “Small community prayer service with the Jubilee Cross”. The prayer was published in *The Examiner* by Fr Cleophas Fernandes. We prayed for various intentions, after which we relaxed and chatted in the gardens. It was a good time to bond as a community as we took in the fresh salty sea air with a hint of the smell of dried fish from a distance.

We played a game of housie and had a sing-song session, followed by a simple traditional meal of fish (both fried and curry), vegetables and local hand bread.

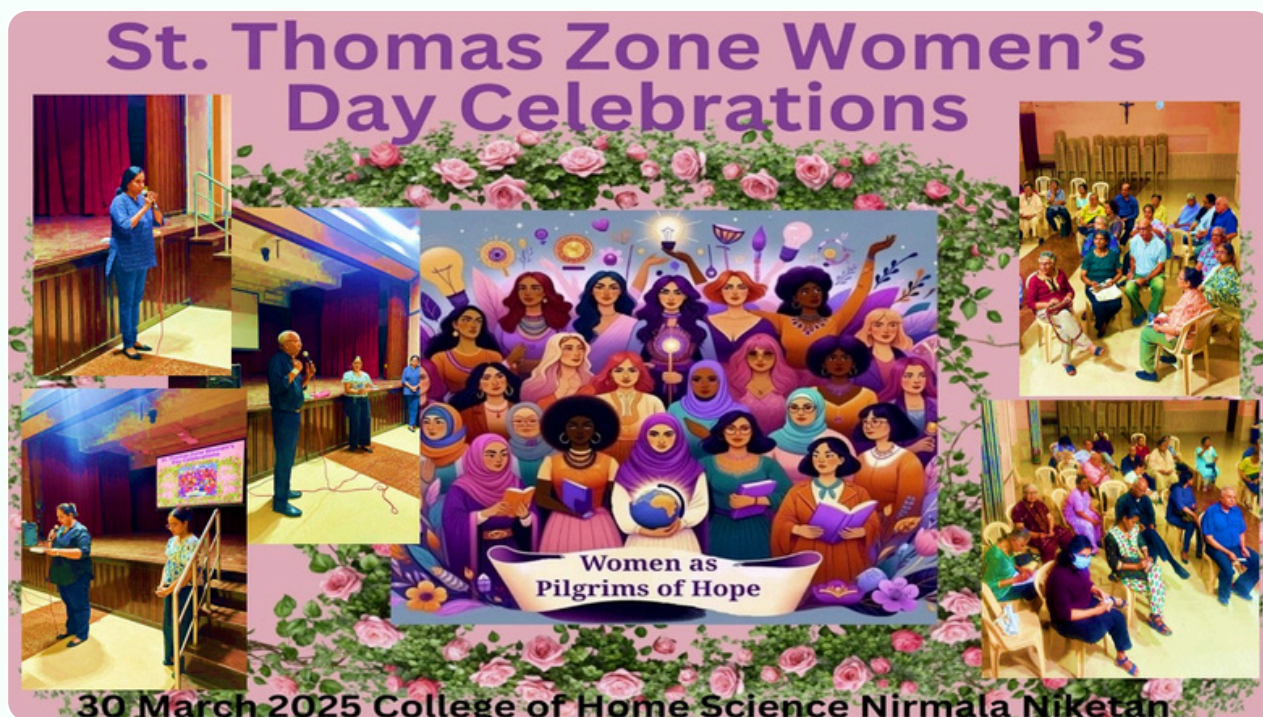
At about 3 p.m., we visited the House of Charity and interacted with the inmates and sisters. We were amazed at how the nuns and the community in the parish were actively involved in taking care of the young people of different ages with Down’s Syndrome.

We offered them tokens of appreciation and took lots of photos. We prayed at Our Lady of the Sea Church, Uttan where the special Jubilee Cross is kept and gained a Plenary indulgence!

Finally, we returned home by bus, praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet on the way. We were peaceful and content with our picnic cum pilgrimage and time shared as St Thomas Community. We are grateful to Christopher, our community leader, his wife, Avril, and Sr Rena who made all the arrangements and took care of everything to the finest detail! We are truly blessed to have them in our community! May God bless St Thomas Community, and we hope many more members can take an active part in our activities in future.

Glynis Saldanha

Women's Day celebration



On March 30, members of the St Thomas community headed to Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science to celebrate Women's Day, the first time such an event had ever been organised within the SCC. As Charlton Pereira, Samantha Vaz and Shania Sequeira — our community's youth and future leaders — took the initiative to plan and organise this event in secret, members did not know what...

to expect when they walked in. Thanks to the youth who paid meticulous attention to ensuring that every member had a good time and the ever-welcoming DHM - Daughters of the Heart of Mary Sisters (Nirmala Niketan) who warmly received us at their premises. Special Thanks to the Superior, Sr Sabeena Gonsalves.

The evening was a roaring success -an event of celebration, reflection and community togetherness.

We were happy to have with us Fr Cherian and Deacon Inacin, who spoke meaningfully about the role of women. We began the evening with a prayer, then a slide show focusing on 22 important women from the Bible such as Mary, Ruth and Hannah and their devotion to God in even the toughest of circumstances. Following this, the group was divided into five teams, and a quiz handed out. Members had to answer questions about Biblical women and other prominent women worldwide. The quiz was not only an opportunity to test our knowledge, but to engage in teamwork and get to know our community members better. There were several spot prizes, following which the youth organised a unique version of Housie, based on well-known songs instead of numbers. Snacks were served and takeaway gifts were made possible, thanks to the support of our generous sponsor. There was an exceptional turnout at the event, with many women also bringing their male partners and making it an inclusive celebration.

Our coordinator, Christopher Pereira, briefed us on the upcoming events and past activities undertaken by the SCC. The vote of thanks was given by Wilma Athaide, who acknowledged the efforts of the organising team.

We look forward to more occasions of togetherness. May God bless our community.

Mylene Sequeira

IC CHURCH, BORIVLI

We at IC Parish are known to 'rock' any event that happens at our parish level. Now, we are re-organising ourselves to 'rock' local community events with the same enthusiasm and joy!

In July-August 2024, we celebrated Parents' Day, locally, in our sectors. In fact, many of us even celebrated Parents' Day in our clusters of families. Attached are pictures of that celebration from five clusters.



Viraj Almeida

Parish SCC Coordinator, IC Church, Borivli

DEANERY TRAINING

South Mumbai Deanery Fellowship Gathering: A Resounding Success

The SCC Committee of South Mumbai Deanery, led by Fr Tarsicius, hosted a vibrant Fellowship Gathering at the Fort Convent School Hall on Sunday, March 16, 2025 from 10:30 a.m. to 2 pm. The event witnessed an overwhelming response from all the parishes within the South Mumbai Deanery.



88 Community Leaders and animators representing Our Lady of Health, Cavel, St John the Evangelist, Fort, St Teresa, Girgaum, St Ignatius, Mandvi, Gloria Church, Byculla, St Joseph, Umerkhadi, St Anne, Mazagaon, St Stephen, Cumballa Hill, Our Lady of Dolours, Sonapur, St Francis Xavier, Dabul, and Holy Name Cathedral actively participated.

The participants were warmly welcomed with tea and snacks before engaging in an interactive workshop by Mrs Reena Poddar from St Pius X Parish, Mulund. Reena shared insights on the origin of the term "animator," which comes from the Latin word "*animare*," meaning "to give breath to" or "to enliven," rooted in "*anima*," which means "life" or "soul." She urged the animators to breathe life into every soul they encounter through their interactions.

Group discussions centred on the challenges of forming Clusters, and generated creative, practical solutions to address these issues. She explained the role of animators and how we need to network with other Cells and Associations in the Parish. We learnt the dynamics of building connections.



Our cluster is like a **‘Treasure Box’**; our role as animators is to identify these pearls and motivate them to actively participate in the life of the parish. Do I seek for the lost sheep? Those on the peripheries – Uninterested/Untouched/Untapped? She provided valuable insights on integrating their presence and talents within the community. **Visiting families** is the most **important mission** of an animator.

In this ‘Jubilee Year’, as ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ do I bring hope to the families in my cluster and parish?

The Bible is our source, giving life and direction to us, animators and coordinators. Reena shared her personal experiences; through various group activities, she enabled us to face the challenges that animators face constantly. The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” From it, we draw strength and courage to live our Christian calling and to face the challenges that come our way daily.

A powerful touching moment of ‘love in action’ took place when Reena washed the feet of four participants... a gesture reciprocated by another participant washing hers.

The enlightening session concluded with a delicious lunch.

A heartfelt thanks to the Organising Team – Fr Tarsicius Fernandes, Mr Victor D’Souza, Sr Rena Rodricks, and Mrs Saviana Phulsunghe – for a well-organised and highly appreciated Fellowship Gathering.

ARCHDIOCESAN-LEVEL TRAINING

Skills for SCC Animators 2025



I had the opportunity to participate in a two-day informative workshop on 'Skills for SCC Animators' at Sarvodaya, Goregaon on May 10-11, 2025. The workshop (open to the whole diocese) helped us to experience the skills required to bring the community together. On Day 1, we had great guest speakers, including Adrian Rosario (who took us through various topics like the SCC Vision Statement, Process of building SCCs, Conversations in the Spirit), Francis Vaz (who explained the concept of Cluster Formation and Functioning), Clipsy Banji (Community Organisation), Rena Rodricks (Visiting), Bishop Allwyn (The Relevance of SCCs vis a vis the Synod on Synodality).

We gathered at the Sarvodaya Grotto for the evening Rosary, and continued with an interactive discussion on involving youth and children, as well as working youth (through YCW), by Willrine, supported by Rena and Adrian. We ended the day in solace and peace with thoughts of the beautiful meaningful day.

I stayed back at Sarvodaya, and had a restful night, all energised for Day 2. We met in the hall for Gospel Sharing, followed by a session on the Role of an Animator by Reena Poddar and Communication Skills by Roland. We worked on a Strategy for Action in our own SCCs and parishes. Nisha Drego took us through her experience of forming and sustaining clusters. We closed the workshop with the Eucharist celebrated by Fr Gilbert de Lima.

The workshop was an eye-opener and gave me a brand new perspective to the word 'Animator'. It brought about a change in the way I look at SCCs. The experiences that I took from here will help me and all the animators who attended this workshop. It opened new avenues to bring about changes within our communities.

The highlight of Reena's session was when she washed and kissed my feet, and emphasised that this is what we need to do within our community. It was an emotional and heart-warming gesture that made me realise that we need to humble ourselves to touch the lives of people.

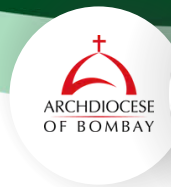
- Our Vision Statement 'No One Should Be in Want' is so Apt, and makes us want to Live the mission with a purpose.
- MBWA (Management By Walking Around) will always help us animators explore the lanes and by-lanes of the community in search of people in need.
- Identify Influencers: Some people can motivate and influence others; we need to tap and identify them, and get them to assist us in bringing the youth back to the community.

I am a transformed person thanks to this highly interactive workshop, and I will use the ideas and experiences to help build a better community for my people.

Alsten Pereira
St Joseph Church, Juhu



Jubilee of SCCs in the Jubilee Year 2025



Plans for the Jubilee of SCCs – July 2025

Deanery-level

- A meeting of the Parish SCC Coordinators of each Deanery to be held.
- Each Deanery SCC Coordinator (priest) to visit 1-2 SCCs in the parishes of the deanery (to gauge their functioning). Bp Allwyn will also visit a few SCCs across parishes.
- Deanery Training session for SCC Animators to be organised.

Archdiocesan level

- Reflection paper for July to focus on the Relevance of SCCs
- Expansion of the Archdiocesan Resource Team (ART) for SCCs

Published by Bp Allwyn D'Silva & the Archdiocesan Resource Team for SCCs

(Ms Praneeta D'Souza, Ms May Fernandes, Ms Candida Mendoza, Ms Rena Rodricks dhm, Mr Sanjay Dighe, Mr Sandesh D'Souza, Mr Adrian Rosario, Mr Johnson Saldanha, Fr Ajit Tellis)