



Eastern Catholic Churches

Chaldean Catholic Church of Babylon

Chaldean

The Church of Babylon for the Chaldeans, Liturgical Family: *Antiochene*

1. Cultural Background of Adherents

Countries of origin and history of migration to Australia

Very few Chaldeans emigrated to Australia in the 1960s because most preferred the USA, particularly Detroit, where the Chaldean community was well established. There are now more than 90,000 Chaldeans in the USA. The main migration to Australia began in the 1970s. There are now about 13,000 Chaldeans in Sydney and around 9,000 in Melbourne. In recent years there has been increased migration of Chaldeans to Australia, due to the war in Iraq. There are also thousands of Chaldeans living as refugees in countries such as Greece, Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The first Chaldean Church, St Thomas' Chaldean and Assyrian Catholic Church, was established in Sydney in August 1978. Father Z. Toma was appointed as the Chaldean parish priest. The sisters of the Order of the Immaculate Conception live at Bossley Park and are involved in child care and parish work.

The second Chaldean parish was established in Melbourne in 1982, when Father Emmanuel Khoshaba was appointed as the Chaldean parish priest. The parish is called Our Lady Guardian of Plants, Chaldean and Assyrian Catholic Church. It is in Somerset Road, Campbellfield. In Melbourne, the majority of the Chaldean and Assyrian Catholic community reside in the north-western suburbs, such as Broadmeadows, Roxburgh Park, Meadow Heights, Campbellfield, Coburg and Brunswick. However, some families live in Moorabbin and nearby areas.

The language used in the Liturgy

The common language of communication within the Chaldean Catholic Church is a dialect of Aramaic. However, few people study Aramaic or use it as a written language. Liturgical books, hymns and prayers are reproduced in Arabic and English.

2. Liturgical Seasons



The Chaldean Church celebrates nine liturgical seasons, each with special prayers and readings from the Scriptures.

The Season of 'Soubara' (Advent/Nativity)

This season lasts for four weeks and celebrates the Good News of the birth of Our Lord.

The Season of 'Denha' (Epiphany)

This season varies from four to seven weeks. The feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6 with a special Divine Liturgy commemorating the Baptism of Jesus.

The season of 'Saouma' (Lent)

This season lasts seven weeks and is a time to reflect on Jesus and the significance of our faith. It is a time for repentance and reconciliation.

The Season of 'Qyamta' (the Resurrection)

This season focuses on Christ's conquering of death and lasts for seven weeks.

The Season of 'Shlile' (the Apostles)

The season of Shlile commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost. The Spirit remains with us as the seal and guarantee of the Kingdom to come. It also lasts for seven weeks.

The Season of 'Qayta' (Summer)

This season is a time of repentance. The feast of the Ascension falls in this season and indicates the beginning of the summer season. During summer, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated outside the church building.

The Season of 'Elya/Sliwa' (Elia/Cross)

This season varies in length from two to five weeks and is observed as a preparation for the second coming of Jesus.

The Season of 'Moushe' (Moses)

This season includes the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord and varies from one to four weeks.

The Season of 'Quoudashe-Edta' (The Church)



This season focuses on the strength and foundation of the Church. We remember that Jesus takes the good, faithful people with him into Heaven.

3. Significant Feast Days and Holy Days of Obligation

The liturgical calendar for the Chaldean Church includes holy days of obligation as well as a series of feasts and special commemorations. Some of these holy days, feasts and commemorations are only observed in the traditional way in countries of origin.

St Thomas (Mar Toma) the Apostle

The feast of St Thomas is celebrated on the nearest Sunday to July 3.

St Thomas was the first apostle to the East. It is also the Chaldean Patriarchal Day.

Simeon Sawa (Oldman)

This feast celebrates the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. The focus is on the role of Simeon rather than on Jesus.

Candles are lit by everyone during the Divine Liturgy. The candles are a symbol of Jesus (the Light) entering the Temple. It is celebrated on February 2.

Our Lady Guardian of Fields (Plants) (May 15)

This feast is observed in countries where the people depend on growing wheat and barley for their living. Our Lady is asked to protect these fields from insects, pests, drought and natural disasters. This is an ancient celebration in honour of Mary. This feast symbolises Mary's protection of Jesus and of us. Many monasteries and churches are dedicated to Mary under this title.

St George (April 24)

On this day, people take food to the village church for a shared picnic. An animal is slaughtered on this feast day.

4. The Reception of Mysteries (Sacraments)

Baptism and Confirmation

Baptism and Confirmation are administered to infants. They are usually administered after the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. Infants are baptised by both full immersion and pouring water over the head. After the child is taken out of the water a lighted candle (symbol of new faith) is given to a boy and girl to hold. A white garment is wrapped around the child. The child is then anointed with chrism on the forehead (Mystery of Chrismation). After this anointing two white ribbons are tied around the left arm of the child and godparent. Parents choose one godparent of the same gender as the child. The ceremony concludes with a prayer for the child and a benediction for all those present.

Penance

Children make their first Confession between the ages 8–10 and always before receiving their first



Communion. This mystery is made available every Sunday before the Divine Liturgy (in the church) or in the presbytery. The confessional is used in the church. The language used for this mystery is Aramaic, unless people request Arabic or English. The mystery is received between Palm Sunday and the Ascension, and again prior to Christmas and before the Epiphany (by Church regulation). Children have their own times to receive the mystery.

Eucharist

First Communion is administered to children around the age of 7 or 8 years.

Preparation courses are arranged at the church for the children. The role of the parents is to encourage and support their children. First Communion is seen as a community celebration. The host is dipped in the wine and placed on the tongue.

I've noticed the difference when I've gone to Church with my school. Chaldeans take Communion as both bread and wine. (John)

Marriage

This mystery is not received during a Divine Liturgy unless the couple request this arrangement. Prior to the ceremony the couple are required to receive instruction and go to Confession and Communion.

During the ceremony vows are exchanged. Rings are exchanged by the priest, handing the ring to the groom to give to the bride, and vice versa. Two witnesses are required (usually the best man and bridesmaid). Readings for the ceremony are taken from St Paul's letters and the Gospel of Matthew. These are chosen by the priest.

Holy Orders

The Chaldean Church (like the Coptic Church) has three orders of Deacon:

1. Reader who reads the Old Testament reading and readings from the Acts of the Apostles, at the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days;
2. Sub-deacon who reads the letters of St Paul;
3. Deacon (Evangelist) who reads the Gospels, baptises, gives Holy Communion, marries couples and conducts funerals. The deacon also accompanies the priest during the Divine Liturgy and recites all prayers with the priest, apart from the consecration and invocation of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, there are the orders of priest, bishop and patriarch. The ordination ceremony consists of the bishop laying his right hand on the head of the new priest, the placing of the Gospels in the hands of the priest to signify his work and role, an anointing with chrism on the priest's forehead, and processions where the new priest is led by ordained priests around the altar. Vestments are handed to the bishop who then assists the new priest to vest. At the end of the ceremony the new priest kisses the hand of the bishop as a sign of the acceptance of his authority and receives a special blessing from the



bishop.

Anointing of the Sick

This ceremony includes the recitation of Psalm 51, the Lord's Prayer and an anointing with chrism of the eyes, mouth, ears, hands and feet of the person. There are many prayers said for the person and relatives. The mysteries of Confession and Communion are administered prior to this mystery if the person is well enough to receive these. If the person is near death then general absolution is given and special prayers are recited. Where possible the family is present at the anointing and they join in the recitation of the prayers.

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