

## **Introduction:**

The Chaldeans have come to Australia for the same reasons as other immigrant groups, in search of better religious, political, and economic freedom and opportunity.

There are some 40,000 Chaldean people in Australia, with over 25,000 in Sydney, and about 15,000 in Melbourne. A number of families are found in other major cities including Brisbane, Canberra, Perth, and Adelaide. More than one thousands of Chaldean families have settled recently.

## ***Historical Background:***

The Chaldeans are the native people of what is presently known as Iraq. In ancient times this area was called Mesopotamia, "the land between the two rivers". An advanced civilisation flourished in this region long before that of Egypt, Greece and Rome.

Mesopotamian literature refers to ancient Chaldeans from the Babylonian Period as Kaldaie. Their homeland is Kaldu, and their descent is Kaldieyoutha, after the Biblical term (Chaldeans).

In the Old Testament, they are known as Kashdim / kasdim which means "the powerful, mighty or victorious" which according to modern studies and discoveries was derived from the post-dilluvian dynasty of Kish / (Cush, Biblical).

The Old Testament also gives the Greek version of the name (Chaldeans), Kaldaniyoun which is the common word used nowadays. It appears several times in the Bible.

Father Abraham is a Chaldean who migrated from Ur of the Kaldees to the promised- land (Gen. 12:1 & Gen. 15:7).

The great Chaldean civilisation of Mesopotamia has a history that spans over 7316 years. Our forbearers were pioneers and the inventors in the fields of science and arts, especially in Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine, Architecture and writing.

## ***Language***

Today's Chaldeans speak Aramaic (Chaldean) language, the language of ancient Babylonia/Chaldea, and the language spoken by Our Lord Jesus Christ, his Blessed Mother and his Disciples. Classical Aramaic is still used in the Chaldean Liturgy; the dialect Aramaic -Chaldean- is used at home and in daily life.

## ***Liturgy***

The Chaldeans belong to the "Eastern" tradition of faith. They were converted to Christianity by St. Thomas the Apostle and his disciples Mar (Saint) Addai and Mar Mari in the first century.

The Chaldean Church was the most energetic Christian Church in the world for several centuries and to it goes the credit for spreading Christianity in India, Japan and China. The Chaldean liturgy is very rich and has many hymns, rhythms, music and many Poems. As an Eastern Rite, we give confirmation with baptism sacrament. The language of liturgy is in a classic Chaldean and mixed with local languages like English, French, Arabic. We have some different feasts for example, the feasts of Local Saints or Patrons of each Chaldean Village. We have a fast Of Bayotha of Nineveh for 3 days (**reminisce of prophet Johan and his mission in Nineveh...**), it takes place in the second week before Lent season. During the Lent we normally fast for 50 days but we don't celebrate ash Wednesday.

### ***Chaldeans in the Home Land:***

Chaldean community it is a Patriarchal society (like other eastern society) in which the father was the head of the family. The women followed the traditional roles as wives and mothers. They were the heart and the nurturers of the family, beside their jobs or professions if they have. Children were given a sense of responsibility towards each other and taught to show much respect and honour to their elders.

Traditionally, Chaldean parents emphasised the values of Religion, morality, integrity, hospitality, education, a hard work ethic and very strong family ties.

In general Chaldeans have preference to live in a close community style and close to the Church. Social life is an important aspect of the Chaldean people and it is built on two factors, these are Community and Church. This is evident here in Australia where there is large concentration of Chaldean in suburbs they live in.

### ***Chaldeans in Australia:***

Chaldeans start coming to Australia in the beginning of 1970. Since the Gulf War of 1991, and due to the social and political unrest that followed, thousands of displaced Chaldeans were forced to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries. Australia's intake of Iraqi Refugees included many Chaldeans who were directly affected by those events.

### ***The Chaldean Church in Australia:***

The Chaldeans are strongly attached to their Church, not only for their spiritual guidance, but also as the core of their community. Nearly all educational, charitable and social functions and

services to the community members in Australia are coordinated and implemented through the Chaldean Parishes of Sydney and Melbourne.

### ***Challenges:***

#### **Culture Shock**

Despite the fact that our Parish is relatively new, we have a mix of different generations and these are, older generation who come from Iraq, Iran and Syria whom have a unique vision and way in practicing their faith to those whom are raised here and those born here. This leads to having three generations as a matter of fact.

The mix in generations is at its inception, but the differences are clear and hence we emphasis on many factors such as family and its importance as well as focusing on two factors:

Teaching faith in a way that is customised to all ages, old and young, and practicing this teaching in an easy and simple way to remove any burden on the faithfuls.

Community traditional customs and events, to give two examples are wedding and funerals, as it build stronger community ties. Chaldeans are known to be a closely connected community and hence building these values into the new generations which in turns brings them and ties them closer to the church.

#### **Community Expnasion**

We have noticed in the recent years that many members of the community are moving to different areas for various reasons and this present us with a new challenge. The church does not have the financial and human means to connect and be part of the community in the new areas. Moving to new areas requires building new churches and priests and this is easily achievable given the fact that migration of the Chaldeans around the world has led to shortage in Chaldean priests and was quicker than it takes for priests to complete their studies. It is worth mentioning that all current priests in our parish in Australia are from Iraq. There is however some good news. On 1<sup>st</sup> of September the first Chaldean priest from Australia will be ready to take serve the community. Though he was born in Iraq, he studied here in the seminary and we believe there will be more Chaldean men that will take the call of being priests.

#### **Homeland Belonging**

Our Community here in Australia and due to the fact that they are recent arrivals still have families, relatives and friends still in Iraq and witnessing what is still happening back in Iraq and surrounding countries such as Syria has impact on them. Chaldeans here still have concerns and worries about they love ones and naturally think about how can they support them financially or work towards helping them to leave and come to saver countries. It is clear that

having divisions of the families in many countries impact their stability and the strong ties that they work hard to achieve.

Furthermore, majority of the Chaldean community came from areas where they were ethnically and religiously discriminated against. This has led them to be a separated community and aim to stay closer to their own community members, which in turn has formed an opinion to protect their values and traditions to protect their identity as change can be seen as a threat and a challenge. Having this situation can be seen in a positive and negative way. Positive where the Chaldean community is protecting its faith, identity, values and traditions whom they are very proud of and negatively where they have isolation and not opening to other community and point of views.

### **Culture Differences**

Chaldeans are Eastern Christian group and have their way of living their social life, family values and virtues of life and we have protect them while leaving in the Middle East but this is proven to be difficult given that living in Australia is an open and secular society and are not base on the Christian values.

This culture shock can be viewed from angles and from different perspectives, those that are opening up to their surrounding environment and still maintaining their cultural and family values and try to balance the difference cultures. Those who are changing completely to the new open society and those who have isolated themselves and don't accept the new way of life. I'm happy to see that majority of the community are following the first perspective despite the fact it is not an easy way to manage and live.

The church works actively to create the balance between the two cultures and avoids collision or ignores one group over the others which is a challenging task which in turn places us in position to speak and breach in different way that's appealing to all to prompt inclusiveness.

### **Faith and the Challenge of new society.**

In our homeland, faith is the core value of life and all aspect are look at from a faith perspective and it is not based on theories or conclusions from a scientific perspective and proves which is what is currently been witnessed in Australia. Given the different nature of lifestyle that is based on Christian values and faith or secular and scientific approach of life, which requires constant discussion and teaching to create the balance of the two theories about faith in Christ.

The Chaldean community is working to keep their values and faith and also adapt the new values and way of living by finding the balance to be a active members of the Australian community.

### **Keep points:**

Majority members of the community are still strongly holding on their faith and receive the secrets of Catholic faith of Baptism, Holy Communion, Marriage and Death.

Chaldean migration from Iraq to Australia is assisting in keeping the strong ties of Cultural, Social and Spiritual connection which project positive image and impact to the Australian Community and in turns benefits to our homeland such as multicultural values that are not based on secular point of view.

***Conclusion:***

Like other ethnic groups and communities who have immigrated to Australia, Chaldeans are adopting the Australian customs, values and lifestyle, even as they retain pride in their heritage and family values.

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