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BASRA & THE SOUTH CHALDEAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE

Saint Thomas Chaldean Catholic Church

Basra Centre

1883-2019



The church of Saint Thomas today, it serves as a shelter for low-income families

The Basra Chaldean Archdiocese Publishing

2019

Dear reader:

The Basra Chaldean Archdiocese is happy to publish many newsletters about Basra churches, Christianity & old civilizations in Mesopotamia, plus other education issues.

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Saint Thomas

Christian Malabar tradition confirms that there were links between the city of Orhay (or Edessa, south Turkey) and Malabar (in south India). The area was reached through Mesopotamia and the Gulf by passing the shores of Euphrates or Tigris Rivers and then through Basra and Shatt al-Arab. It is believed that Saint Thomas took this route to India and was martyred in Malabar.



Thomas the Apostle *ܬܘܡܐ ܫܠܝܗܐ* (*Thoma Sheliha*), was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus according to the New Testament. Thomas is commonly known as "Doubting Thomas" because he doubted Jesus' resurrection when first told of it (as related in the Gospel of John alone); later, he confessed his faith, "My Lord and my God," on seeing Jesus' crucifixion wounds.

Traditionally, Thomas is believed to have travelled outside the Roman Empire to preach the Gospel, to the states of Kerala in present-day India, and converted several people. After his death, the reputed relics of Saint Thomas were enshrined as far

as Mesopotamia in the 3rd century, and later moved to various places. In 1258, some of the relics were brought to Ortona, in Abruzzo, Italy, where they have been held in the Church of Saint Thomas the Apostle.¹ He is often regarded as the patron saint of India.

Thomas first speaks in the Gospel of John. In John 11:16, when Lazarus had recently died, the apostles do not wish to go back to Judea, where some Jews had attempted to stone Jesus. Thomas says: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."(KJV)

Thomas speaks again in John 14:5. There, Jesus had just explained that he was going away to prepare a heavenly home for his followers, and that one day they would join him there. Thomas reacted by saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

John 20:24–29 tells how doubting Thomas was skeptical at first when he heard that Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to the other apostles, saying, "Except I shall see on his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." But when Jesus appeared later and invited Thomas to touch his wounds and behold him, Thomas showed his belief by saying, "My Lord and my God".

(from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_the_Apostle)

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The Archbishop Israel Audo

In 1867, the Chaldean Church members in Basra reached 1500. The church of Saint Thomas was built in 1880. Source mention that Patriarch Youhanna VIII Hormuz opened a Chaldean mission in



1883 in Basra and Al–Ashar under the supervision of Fr. Israel Audo (see his picture).

Church of Saint Thomas

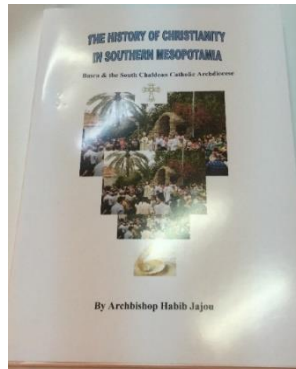
Built in 1885, it is one of the oldest Chaldean churches in Basra. Its design incorporates eastern style elements, and primary school was built next to it. Despite being severely damaged by a huge fire in 1983, it continued to serve its members until 2004. Today, it provides shelter for the poor families. In the last 120 years the church witnessed 1167 burials, 684 marriages and 3501 baptisms.





Frontal view of the Church of Saint Thomas

For more information read the
Archdiocese's Book: *The History of
Christianity in southern
Mesopotamia*



Please pray to the Church in Iraq



Address: St Aphram Chaldean Catholic Church -Ashar/Breha,
Al-Estiklal St., P. O. Box: 217, Basra/Iraq
Fr_habib@yahoo.com
Facebook: Habib Jajou [Tel:07730661413/](https://www.facebook.com/HabibJajou)