

Establishment of the Assyrian Theological College of Nisibis

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The Assyrian Church of the East is reviving the heritage of its spiritual and intellectual schools, which have long been absent. These schools include the schools of Edessa, Nisibis, Gonddeshapur, Ctesiphon and others. This long lost spiritual heritage is being revived with the Patriarchal blessing of the late Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV and our current Patriarch, His Holiness Mar Garages III Sliwa. The Assyrian Church of the East in Sydney and under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Mar Meelis Zaia AM, has made a series of great achievements in Australia such as the construction of two special schools for primary and secondary education, a language college, a child care center and the construction of a retirement village.

During the celebration of the third millennium of Christ at the Kokheh Church in the year of 2000, His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV the late Patriarch, in his speech in Baghdad, spoke about his vision to build a special theological college for the Assyrian Church of the East.

His Holiness the late Patriarch repeatedly declared his desire for priests to equip themselves with necessary qualifications to enhance awareness of their ecclesiastical mission in a manner consistent with current and contemporary cultures. He was fully aware of the importance of a conscious faith in the originality of the Church, the leadership and revival of a new Assyrian society.

The Patriarch's awareness of the message of the modern Church led him to extricate the Church from its periods of stagnation, in its theological and philosophical

thought, and to elevate it to its prosperous side. The Church is reaping the benefits of what the Patriarch had planted in them, resulting in the Assyrian theological college to become in the near future, the main nucleus of the Church's spiritual and heritage glories in Australia.

The Patriarch Mar Gewargis III Sliwa also had established the Theological School in Baghdad where many priests and deacons have graduated and continues their higher education in various universities and returned to serve their parishes.

The Assyrian Church of the East in Sydney will return to the theological path by combining its scattered academic skills from different continents, to dedicate its efforts and experiences in the Nisibis College, to spread the Church's message in a profound academic way. Through this vision, the Nisibis College is intended to be the most appropriate place to acquire the spiritual and intellectual heritage in the long term, in a manner that is compatible with the challenges of this stage and its demographic imbalance and which will have reoccurring and powerful impacts on the future of the Church in the diaspora.

This college will be a tribute to the old intellectual and historical schools and the heritage that guarantees the sovereignty of the Assyrian Church of the East amidst churches rich in theological and spiritual diversity. The existence of theological and intellectual schools has been a major contribution to the intellectual and literary movement of Christianity for centuries, as the contributions of its writers was the fruit of those teachers who studied or taught these schools.

Information on the Nisibis Assyrian Theological College

The aims and objectives of the college

The College seeks to:

- Provide the theological teachings and the religious heritage of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, aiming to preserve its identity.
- Prepare the clergy for the sacrament of Priesthood and refine their skills and knowledge through academic study as they serve their parishes in a manner consistent with their modern mission.
- Train deacons and teachers to be consistently active in the Holy Apostolic catholic Assyrian Church of the East's theology and Christian education.
- Develop the skills and knowledge of the leaders of youth committees to be able to face the various challenges.
- Prepare the church leaders to be familiar with the spiritual and theological heritage of the Church and the fulfillment of its apostolic essence.
- Preach and revive the identity of priesthood and the missionary service that the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East had previously performed.
- Train faithful men and women to serve the dioceses on the basis of the Christian faith.
- Prepare researchers in the theology of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East.

Distance Education (Online):

The College will offer distance education to those outside Australia by studying online, where the college will interact with the online learners, offering them the curriculum through a systematic study supported by video. The students are required to pass the units they have studied.

For those interested in studying in Australia, the church will start building boarding schools for students who wish to stay there.

Location:

St Narsai Assyrian Christian College at the Horsley Park, Sydney Australia.

Funding:

The Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East has allocated one million dollars (AUD) for the purpose of starting this college, where it will cover \$750,000 (AUD) in tuition costs and \$250,000 (AUD) for the purpose of establishing a library containing and references and books of the Church's spiritual heritage.

Opening Date:

The college will commence at the beginning of the academic year 2020. The academic year is divided into four terms from February to December, between 4:00 -10:00 pm weekdays.

Curriculum - the curriculum includes but will not be limited to:

- Divisions of theology, systematic, comparative, Pastoral, literary
- Canon Law
- Philosophy
- Liturgy
- Paternal studies
- Written studies in the Old and New Testaments
- The science of interpretation
- Historical and cultural studies
- Church heritage
- Comparative Studies of Religions
- Pastoral psychology

- Preaching, evangelism and missionaries
- In addition to teaching the languages of the Bible, Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and live languages

Qualifications granted by the College:

- Diploma in Theology or in the language and Ecclesiastical rites – two years full time
- Undergraduate Bachelor Degree in Theological Sciences - four years full time (first year is Preparatory).
- Postgraduate Master's Degree in Theology - two years full time.
- Postgraduate Doctoral Degree (PhD) in Theology – four years.

Admission Requirements for Diploma and Bachelor's Degree:

- The applicant must be at least 20 years of age.
- Have a high school certificate (stage 12 in Australia) or equivalent, at least, to study the diploma and bachelor's degree.
- To submit a certificate from the priest of the applicant's parish outlining his commitment to his faith and interest in studying the Bible.
- Have the ability to speak and listen to Assyrian and English languages.

- Pass the interview with the Dean of the College.

There will be an inaugural meeting in Sydney that will be attended by His Beatitude Archbishop Mar Meelis Zia, His Grace Bishop Dr. Mar Awa Royel, His Grace Dr. Mar Abris Yohkannan and Reverend Archdeacon Dr. William Thomas, early next June, to plan and approve the curriculum. Professor Rifaat Ebied the head of the department of the Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney a founding member of the college, Professor Sebastian Brooke and Siri College (St. Ephrem Institute for Ecumenical Research in India) have also joined in the establishment of the college. The College will also work closely with professors at Macquarie University and other international universities.

The lecturers of this college will be members of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East who have received their doctorate/s. They will take the internal teaching of students in the college in both full-time and distance modes of study.

The Nisibis College will be affiliated with the Sydney College of Theology, founded in 1983 to provide theological teaching in Australia, New Zealand and other countries through direct study or online.

The Assyrian College of Nisibis will join this institution in order to ensure the academic safety of its teaching program. The certificates from it will be recognized internationally.

The Nisibis College will join the family of the Theological College of Sydney headed by Dean Diana Speed, which includes the following colleges:

- Australian College of Christian Studies (ACCS), (formerly Emmaus Bible College)
- Australian College of Ministries (ACOM)

- Catholic Institute of Sydney (CIS)
- Eva Burrows College (formerly Booth College)
- Nazarene Theological College (NTC)
- NSW College of Clinical Pastoral Education (NSWCCPE)
- St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College (SAGOTC)
- St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College (SCTC)

It is worth mentioning that efforts were made to establish this theological college where the church contacted Professor Dean Speed, the Dean of the Theological College in Sydney, for the purpose of joining this college to the family of the recognized theological colleges in Australia. The College of Theology was established on July 20, 2017, during the visit of His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Sliwa to Australia. She expressed her wish for this fruitful cooperation and she noted it was her pleasure to accept the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East to the family of the theological colleges accredited in Sydney. She will work closely with the Church to launch this college.

The Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East also obtained the approval of professors at the various universities in Sydney, as well as the clergy of the Church with a Master's Degree and Doctorate in Theology. The future plan of the Church in Sydney, with a sufficient number of specialised academics, is to turn this college into a multi-faceted university.

The success of the Nisibis College depends on the motivation and interactive response of the students, and their zeal to revive their spiritual heritage, where the Church will offer the study research and skills, and it also depends on the parishes of the Church of the East by sending their students to take this opportunity. The Church in Sydney, after completing a sufficient number of specialized academics, aims to transform this college into a university with multiple departments.