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Baptism a first for Syro-Malankara community

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The Syro-Malankara Catholic community in Adelaide has been blessed with its first baptism since commencing in 2013.

Fr Stephen with Isabel Simon's parents Pradeep and Neethu, her godparents and grandparents after the baptism. Picture: Kelly Barnes

Isabel Simon was baptised at St Brigid's Church, Kilburn, by Fr Stephen Kulathumkarott, coordinator of Syro-Malankara Community, Oceania.

Based in Adelaide, Fr Stephen said there had been many baptisms in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane but it was "wonderful to celebrate our first baptism here in Adelaide".

The Eastern Catholic community, which migrated from Kerala in South India, traces its origins to St Thomas the Apostle in 52AD. It still uses the Syriac language, which Jesus spoke, in its liturgy.

The rapidly growing community now has 13 mission centres in major cities in Australia and New Zealand.

Fr Stephen said the baptism service differed from that of the Roman Catholic Church in that three sacraments of initiation are received together. Baptism is immediately followed by Chrismation (Confirmation) and Holy Communion.

Fr Stephen said symbols and signs were an important part of the liturgy which was musical in nature with the community singing and chanting all prayers.

"The baptismal pond is filled with hot and cold water which symbolises the warm water in Jordan where Jesus was baptised," he said.

"The celebrant baptises the child in the name of the Holy Trinity and gives the child to the godparent invoking the Holy Church to receive the child, born in Holy Spirit and Water."

Fr Stephen said the Adelaide community was small but "vibrant". Members held regular Holy Mass on the first Sunday of the month and a night vigil every first Friday. The community was actively engaged in prayer meetings as well as social activities and charity works.

For more details on services and the community, contact Fr Stephen on 0427 661 067 or frstevek@gmail.com.

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