

File: Armenian Clergy

Rev. Arten Ashjian

Born in Aleppo, Syria, on November 21, 1919. Baptized Antranik at the Armenian Cathedral of Aleppo.

Received elementary education at the Sahagian Armenian Parochial School and the Emmanuel Armenian Evangelical School. After studying for two years at the Junior High School of the American College of Aleppo, Antranik entered the Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem in 1934, having as Dean The Rev. Fr. Tiran Nersoyan.

Among his teachers were Fr. Sion Manoogian, Canon Charles Bridgeman, Shahan Berberian, Hagop Oshagan.

Upon his graduation, Antranik was ordained a full deacon in 1938 by the late Patriarch Thorkom Kooshakian, and studied at the Theological Department of the Seminary until 1941.

Returning to Aleppo the same year, Antranik entered the field of teaching, serving in an all-Armenian community in a suburb of Aleppo, where he taught various subjects, including English, at the Zavarian elementary School, 1941-1946,

Through the efforts of the Rt. Rev. Bishop Tiran Nersoyan, then Primate of the North American Diocese, Antranik came to New York from Aleppo in March 1947, sponsored by Mr. Alex Manoogian of Detroit, and continued his education at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York City. On March 14, 1948, His Grace, Bishop Tiran Nersoyan, ordained Antranik to the priesthood in the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of North Philadelphia, giving him the name Arten. While pursuing his studies, Fr. Arten served as curate of the Holy Cross Armenian Church (uptown in Washington Heights), New York City, and did extensive research in preparing the first book giving the history of the Armenian Diocese and the individual parishes in North America.

Father Arten graduated from the General Theological Seminary in 1950, with the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology. Following his marriage to Mary Harootian of Fresno, California, in the summer of 1950, he was assigned pastor of St. Leon's Armenian Church in Paterson, New Jersey, where he served until August 1952. His next pastoral field was the larger and widely scattered community of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of North Philadelphia, where he held office for more than two years. Since January 1955, Fr. Arten is the Pastor of St. James Armenian Church of Watertown, Mass., one of the largest parishes of the Diocese.

Fr. Arten has been a regular lecturer at the annual study seminarians of the Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America since 1952. He is religious advisor of the Editorial Staff of The Armenian Guardian, the official organ of the A.C.Y.O.A., and an elected member of the Diocesan Council for the term 1955-1959.