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Diocese of the Armenian Church
630 Second Avenue, N. Y. C. 10016
ARCHBISHOP SION MANOOGIAN

*File: Armenian
Clergy*

Primate of the North American Diocese
of the Armenian Church

Archbishop Sion Manoogian, Primate of the North American Diocese of the Armenian Church, was born in 1906 in the ancient city of Van, Turkey. He was only a young lad of nine when he lost his entire family - his parents, an elder brother, and two young sisters - during the deportation and massacre of the Armenians in 1915.

During the succeeding years of war, massacre, and pestilence of World War I, he joined the long refugee caravans from Van to the Caucasus, and back to Van, then to Persia and to Mesopotamia. Finally, in 1922, he was sent with a group of 850 homeless children to the Armenian Monastery of St. James in Jerusalem, where he was admitted to the Jarankavoratz School and later to the Seminary maintained by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In the preceding years, he had received a part of his secondary education in the Armenian schools in the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. At the Seminary and later in the Theological School, he had the good fortune of studying under such inspiring teachers as the scholar patriarchs, Elise Tourian and Papken Gulesserian, and the Rev. Fr. Bridgeman, an Episcopalian clergyman who served in the Armenian Seminary of Jerusalem for many years.

He was ordained a deacon in 1926, and upon his graduation from the Theological Seminary in 1930 he was ordained a celibate priest; and according to custom in the Eastern churches, his Christian name, Sargis, was changed to Sion.

The Rev. Fr. Sion served in various administrative capacities in the Monastery of St. James, especially as a teacher in the schools under the sponsorship of the Patriarchate. In 1938, he was invited to the United States as pastor of the Armenian Church in Providence, R. I. He was ordained a Bishop in 1945 by Catholicos Georg VI, at Holy Etschmiadzin. In 1946, he was named as Vicar General of the mid-western states of the Armenian churches and he served for three years as chairman of the Council of the North American Diocese.

Bishop Sion was named Apostolic Delegate to the South American Diocese of the Armenian Church, in 1952, by Catholicos George VI. As in the United States, his service as spiritual head of the Armenian religious community in Latin America proved most fruitful. Through his efforts were established new churches, a spacious Diocesan Office, various schools, Sunday schools, auxiliary bodies, etc. He was made an Archbishop by Catholicos Vasken I in 1955.

On November 16, 1959, the Diocesan Assembly of the North American Diocese of the Armenian Church elected Archbishop Sion as the Primate of the North American Diocese of the Armenian Church and his election was confirmed promptly by Vasken I the Catholicos of All Armenians.

Archbishop Sion is a prolific writer. His works include:

"The Mystery of Vardanantz," an interpretation of the Battle of Avarair which the Armenians fought in 451 in defense of their Christian religion.

"The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem" containing a history and general description of the Holy Places, especially the sacred shrines in the custody of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

"Luminous Figures" which contains studies of the lives of some of the most revered Fathers of the Armenian Church.

"The Armenian Church and Her Teachings" an outline for the use of English speaking young people.

"Messages of the Gospel" a collection of sermons.

"The Christian Doctrine" a textbook for Sunday schools and parochial schools.

"A Month in Armenia" - impressions gained during the National Ecclesiastical Assembly at Holy Etchmiadzin which elected Georg VI as the Catholicos of All Armenians.

"The Meaning of Prayer".

Still in manuscript form are:

"The History of Moses Khorenatzi" the 'father' of Armenian history.

"Introduction to the Holy Bible" which is now used as a textbook in the Theological Seminary of Holy Etchmiadzin.

Archbishop Sion is an American citizen. It is his strong conviction that responsible citizenship is one of the essentials of Christian virtue. "A good Christian and a bad citizen is unthinkable," he says, "for the entire Christian precept is based on love and thoroughgoing loyalty."