

**A** native of Aintab (1904) Abp. Tiran Nersoyan was born Nersess Tavoukjian, the son of a priest and a former schoolteacher. At the age of 11, he and his family became refugees, traveling by mule to Aleppo. The boy endured many hardships, especially hunger, even after his father returned from the exile which he and other priests and leaders had to undergo.



The Tavoukjian eventually went back to Aintab, and in 1921, Abp. Yeghishe Tourian, then Patriarch of Jerusalem, gladly accepted his former pupil's son, now 17, in the seminary. Nersess graduated, taught at the lay school for the children of refugees, and was ordained a deacon, studying at night with Abp. Tourian, who taught his young students church history, liturgy and philology.

On the day of the Feast of the Transfiguration in 1928, Nersess walked to the altar, escorted by his father, and was ordained by Patriarch Tourian. He was sent to London for academic training, chiefly at King's College, and went back to Jerusalem to teach in the seminary, of which he became principal in 1932, serving in that post for five years. Back in London, he had charge of the Armenian Church which, in 1938 and thereafter, meant enduring the blitz, counseling and entertaining hundreds of Armenian-American G.I.'s, celebrating Divine Liturgy with bombs dropping all around.

Abp. Tiran was elected Primate of the American Diocese, arrived in 1944 and was installed by the late Abp. Garegin Hovsepianz, then Primate. The new Primate served for ten years; during his tenure, ten new churches were built in the United States, the Diocesan constitution and administration were modernized, and the difficult groundwork prepared for the erection of a Cathedral. (Not to mention many other accomplishments, such as the establishment of the ACYOA, bringing young theological candidates to study in the United States as future parish priests, and translating the "badarak.")

In 1956, Abp. Tiran went to Jerusalem where the St. James brotherhood chose him as *locum tenens*. Elected Patriarch in 1957, he served until August 1958, but the King would not give him the necessary "ferman," and deported him. (Ties to Etchmiadzin were suspect in that familiar period of McCarthyism and anti-communism.)

New York has been Abp. Tiran's home base in recent years; a long series of invitations to serve as celebrant of Divine Liturgy in our churches around the country, to give lectures on a great variety of subjects, religious and otherwise, with which he is conversant, and to write articles, has been a way of life for him. He is in constant touch with his brother, Dr. Hagop Nersoyan in Ohio, a sister, Mrs. Mariam Jebejian, and several nephews and their families. And with a great host of friends and admirers, many of whom are here tonight to honor Abp. Tiran Nersoyan, an illustrious Armenian-American clergyman.