

ARCHPRIEST SEMPAD DER MEKHSIAN

Archpriest Sempad Der Mekhsian was born on February 25, 1927, with the baptismal name of Megrdich, in Havav, Palou. He moved with his parents to Aleppo where he attended the Sahagian School. In 1953, he married Hripsime Sarafian in Aleppo. They had one child, a daughter, Lori.

In 1954 he was admitted to the Theological Seminary of the Cilician See in Antelias, Lebanon. On November 11, 1956, he was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Khoren Paroyan, Prelate of Lebanon, and later Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. His sponsor during the ordination service was the Very Rev. Karekin Sarkissian, later Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, Antelias, and Catholicos of All Armenians, Holy Etchmiadzin. Also ordained on that day were two of Der Sempad's classmates, Archpriest Moushegh Der Kaloustian (retired pastor of St. Illuminator's Cathedral, New York City), and Archpriest Gorun Shrikian (retired pastor of St. Sarkis Church, Dearborn, Michigan).

Der Sempad served as pastor of St. Stephen's Church in Larnaca, Cyprus, from 1957-1962. He served Soorp Khatch Church, Bethesda, Maryland from 1962-1966; St. Hagop Church, Niagara Falls, 1966-1969; St. Hagop Church, Racine, Wisconsin, 1969-1984; and All Saints Church, Chicago, Illinois, 1984 to 1989.

In recognition of this many years of dedicated service, Der Sempad was recognized in several ways: in 1963 he was presented with a pectoral cross; in 1987, the right to bear the "Flowered stole" (Dzaghyga Pilon); and in 1989 he was given the title of Archpriest.

In 1977, only 50 years old, he had open heart surgery. A dedicated servant to God and a faithful shepherd of the Armenian Church, Der Sempad passed away on Sunday June 2, 1991, after a long and valiant battle against heart disease. To the very end, Der Sempad prayed that he would be well enough to serve the Armenian Church as he had for 35 years. During his years of service, Der Sempad gained the love and respect of his colleagues and his parishioners.