

ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY OF HIS GRACE BISHOP OF AROUSA AND CENTRAL TANZANIA

On Saturday 29th April, the eve of the Enthronement of His Grace Agathonikos Bishop of Arusha and Central Tanzania, with the blessing of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa and in the presence of His Eminence Dimitrios Metropolitan of Irinopolis, Caretaker of the Diocese, a group of visitors from the Holy Metropolis of Kitros and Katerini, comprising the Very Reverend Archimandrite Maximos Kyritsis, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of St Dionysios in Olympus, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Barnabas Leontiadis, Chancellor of the Holy Metropolis of Kitros, the Reverend Protospresbyter Fr. Angelos Giannikis and the Archdeacon Fr. Panteleimon Tsarapatsanis as well as Monk Marcellus from the Holy Monastery of St Anthony in Arizona, America, in the Missionary Centre of Kidamal in the Iriga district, group baptism took place in the outdoor baptistery of the Holy Church of Ss Andronikos and Athanasia. Specifically, 165 natives were baptized, among whom were many Masai from the surrounding areas. These are moments that remind us of the first Christian years, when you are faced with the enthusiasm and the appeal of faith of those being baptized reflected in their illumined faces. After the baptisms which lasted for four hours, a rich outdoor lunch was hosted for our four hundred brothers and sisters present.

On 30th April, Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, and with the blessing of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, the enthronement of His Grace Agathonikos Bishop of Arusha and Central Tanzania took place at the Holy Church of St Dimitrios in the Hellenic Community of Iriga. The Enthronement took place after the end of the Divine Liturgy and was officiated by the Caretaker of the Diocese, His Eminence Metropolitan Dimitrios of Irinopolis, who read the Greeting of His Beatitude and addressed the newly-enthroned Bishop.

The Enthronement Address of His Grace Agathonikos followed, as follows:

Your Eminence Dimitrios, Metropolitan of Irinopolis, Pious Priests and Deacons, Beloved people of God of our Diocese, Dear friends, brothers and sisters. With great faith and love I gave myself to the Divine will, obeying the call of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa and the Holy Synod of our Patriarchate, who elected me as your Hierarch and Shepherd and I came gladly to live with you to convey to you the peace, joy and power of the Gospel of our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ and also to minister to you. I understand how sacred and heavy the work that I am undertaking is, from the moment that I ascend the steps of the Sacred Throne, because I realize well the priceless value that the soul of every human being has and that I will answer for each one of the day of judgment. A Bishop's Throne is not a Throne of glory, but a form of the Cross, and he who ascends its steps must always be prepared to drink of the Cup of Martyrdom which the Lord drank. St Ignatios the God-bearer and great Saint and Apostolic Father of our Church says that a Bishop stands "in type and place of Christ". Therefore, the true Bishop has as his prototype the Crucified Christ and Golgotha as his place. Imitating Christ's sacrifice a Bishop must offer himself completely to all and to each one separately. This is the continuous sacred journey of the Church to every single soul, because for each person there is a special message from God, that He loved us so very much, that He gave His only-begotten Son "that all who believe in Him will not be lost, but will have life eternal" (John 3:16). The entire essence and importance of the Church's mission is this. That both the lord and the simple worker, the rich as well as the poor, the educated as well as the illiterate, the righteous and the sinner, each one of us, must realise that he or she is a child of God and to know that life and joy begin only when we discover in the depths of our hearts God's peace. God's Kingdom begins in every

heart. Are you at peace with God? You have the strength and the courage to face Him and to call Him "Father". Do you have all the worldly goods, but no peace with God? Then between you and Him there is raised the barrier of sin. I came to serve you and to give you my heart. Please give me your hearts too, so that we can all become one. Because this is the will of God for His Church, "that we may all be one" (John 17:21). I address our priests and I assure them that I will be beside them as a caring father, willing advisor, guide and comforter, but also a conscientious overseer of the precise and faithful and holy fulfillment of our duties to the faithful people. The life of a priest must call and not turn away; must open doors and not close them. It is better to have ten priests who affirm through their lives the presence of God, rather than one hundred who refute it. Priests who embrace the faithful with their fervent and caring prayer, who through the example of their pure lives will lead the faithful to the peace of God. I believe that all the priests in our Diocese will be inspired by this blessed vision. Addressing all our Christian faithful, I tell you my dear and beloved children, that from today you are the subject of my prayer and my pastoral responsibility. I want you to know, that you will find paternal love and true interest in all your problems with all the power of my soul for as long as the Lord will permit. I wish to thank wholeheartedly with deep honour and gratitude His Eminence Dimitrios Metropolitan of Irinopolis through whose hands I am enthroned today, with whom I have a long and genuine friendship from our student years and who agreed to offer the most precious and elite part of his Metropolis, so that today we can all rejoice in the creation of this new Diocese. I hope and pray, Your Eminence that God will grant you crystalline health, so that for very many years you may contribute from your pure heart your love to all of us who honour and love you. Concluding my speech, I turn my heart and mind with gratitude to the Sacred Centre of our Patriarchate, there where the heart of all of Africa beats, in Alexandria and I kiss the Holy hand of our Father Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, Theodoros II, . The Patriarch of Love, the Missionary Patriarch, to thank him once again for the love and trust which he abundantly gave me all these years as I studied under him. His great and pure Patriarchal love, fills with joy and serenity all our hearts and strengthens us in our daily struggle. He is our guide, our inspiration, our blessing and consolation at every step. I wholeheartedly thank my respected Elder Archimandrite Maximos, His Eminence George Metropolitan of Kitrous and Katerini for the blessing of the presence of his Chancellor Archimandrite Barnabas, my dear brother Fr. Angelos Giannikis and his Archdeacon Fr. Panteleimon, dear and precious brother Fr. Markellos from the Monastery in Arizona and my friends Spyros from London, for the trouble and costs of their journey to be with us. May God bless you all. Please remember us in your prayers. Amen.

Immediately following the modest ceremony, a lunch was hosted for all present in the grounds of the Holy Church.