

TONSURE OF TWO MONKS AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA

On Friday 14th August Great Vespers was served for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos at the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria, conducted by His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, together with His Eminence Narcissus of Naucratis, Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria and His Grace Germanos Bishop of Tamiathus.

Before the Dismissal and in an emotional atmosphere, His Beatitude the Patriarch tonsured as monks two of the African novices and students of the "St Athanasios" academy of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas in Alexandria, Markos Kalinga and Seraphim Ilomo bestowing on the names Markos and Nicephorus, in this way honouring the Saint Apostle and Evangelist Mark, founder of the Apostolic Church of Alexandria and the Venerable Nicephorus the Leper.

The new monks originate from Central Tanzania, from the Holy Diocese of Arusha. They were baptized at a young age and throughout these years studied through the Orthodox Church with love, self-sacrifice and modesty and came to love the life of total dedication and service.

They come from poor but pious families of Iringa and from a young age they went to work with great deprivations but always, with the help of the church, they completed their schooling in their homeland. They are defined by the integrity and modesty of their character and the spirit of learning and obedience to the Primate of the Alexandrian Church who is the Father of all Africa.

During the Monastic Tonsure the Alexandrian Primate, visibly moved spoke to the new monks Markos and Nicephorus,

emphasizing: "I want to wish our two children Markos and Nicephorus that their journey they begin today as monks, be blessed. Each object that I gave them symbolizes something. The black cassock, the Cross, the prayer rope, the candle are all symbolic for this journey which we the Hierarchs also once followed, leaving behind father, mother, brothers and sisters, home and country to follow the monastic path, the path of dedication and as the prayer says: "if you perfect this" then the eternal crown will be with you. But, But no matter how hard we try, it is impossible for Christ to forget that we have dedicated everything to him and so, full of mercy, he will open the gate of Paradise because he knows that in His name we have given everything for all". At another point in his homily His Beatitude asked all the mothers who were in the church at the Monastery, to give their blessing to the new Monks so that God will strengthen them in order that they may serve the Patriarchate and the Monastery of St Savvas. For the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, His Beatitude said that whatever words are said today will be few and poor compared with what we owe to All-Holy Virgin.

Finally, it should be noted that during the Vespers the Blessings and Praises of the Virgin Mary were sung in front of the shrine of the Mother of God.