

## Archbishop Nikitas visits the Youth Camp



His Eminence, Archbishop Nikitas made his very first Archpastoral visit within his new Archdiocese by choosing to spend time at the Annual Summer Camp of the Greek Orthodox Youth of Great Britain, on Monday 29th July. He did this just two days after his enthronement, and following a hierarchical liturgy with nine bishops in attendance, and dozens of visiting clergy.

At the camp, he was warmly greeted by the children singing “AXIOS” to the Byzantine melody, followed by many boisterous shouts of the same. He was officially greeted by Fr Oeconomos John Hookway, camp chaplain, and Fr Protopresbyter Stephen Maxfield, priest of the area. Sister Magdalen of the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Essex was also there leading activities during the day, as well as other visiting priests and clergy.



Camp Director, Sava Conomos, said “It is a great honour, and good sign, that after such a packed week of events His Eminence made the seven hour round trip from the capital to greet us at our humble camp. Actions speak louder than words, and

the fact that Archbishop Nikitas took time out of his already busy schedule to spend time with our children and young people, fills us with hope for the future of our Church.”



Over one hundred people, volunteers and campers, spend a week under canvas, living as a community benefitting from fresh air, communal meals, prayers, lessons, games, discussions, lots of singing, campfires and other activities. Strong members of the community have grown out of the camp, and it has encouraged many young people to find their vocation in the priesthood, or other Church ministry.

While at the camp Archbishop Nikitas connected well with the children and young people present. After the youngest child established His Eminence's age and background, the seniors felt more comfortable with the Archbishop and quizzed him about his future plans, but also with many deeper contemporary ethical dilemmas, and questions about gender issues and human rights. The campers were enthusiastic with Archbishop Nikitas' response. Camp volunteer, Joe, who attended camp himself as a child, and is now studying Theology in Greece, said "The Archbishop was really positive with us! I'm extremely impressed!"



The children and young people then entertained His Eminence with traditional dances and lots of singing.



The children gathered round Archbishop Nikitas and enthusiastically gave him the hand-made card that they had crafted for him earlier that day. They ended the day singing spiritual songs, and were absolutely delighted when Archbishop Nikitas turned around, just before departing, and taught them a Spiritual Song that he knew from the Deep South.

The camp started in 1992, in a farmer's field with some borrowed tents. It has grown over the years, and recently managed to acquire its own piece of land. However, the campsite still has no electricity and running water.

GOYGB has struggled for 12 years without electricity. This means no fridge, no freezer, and no lights. Deacon Panteleimon Maxfield, Chairman of GOYGB, said, "We are Orthodox, so ascetism, fight and struggling in the faith, is at the heart of what we do, but the extra effort made to cope without electricity and running water instead could be directed to enrich the lives of our campers for the greater Glory of God, if we had better amenities."

The Camp is currently running an urgent appeal this year to get electricity, water, and some better storage for camp equipment. £30,000 is needed as a next step to help secure some basic amenities.

If you would like to help the camp in their appeal you can contribute with a PayPal Donation

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