

Gates of Ionian Village closed, but program and content is wide open



Fr. Gary Kyriacou- Director, Ionian Village

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the cancellation of the traditional beloved Ionian Village Summer 2020 program, the Administration team is still hard at work. The Office of Ionian Village has already begun, and will continue, to provide ministry virtually. From Vespers to devotional sessions, many opportunities exist for the youth of our Archdiocese, parish youth ministers, and parents to connect with our amazing life transforming ministry.

The summer kicked off with an historic meeting of several former Directors of Ionian Village. Fr. Gary Kyriacou, the current Director of Ionian Village, met with Fr. Costas Sitaras, Mr. Michael Pappas, and Fr. Evagoras Constantinides on Wednesday, May 20, 2020. The former Directors shared insights, traditions, and the influence that Ionian Village provided to thousands over the years. The Directors will continue to meet on a somewhat regular basis to discuss Alumni

engagement and opportunities to help make Ionian Village affordable and accessible to as many youth of our Archdiocese as possible.

The Office of Ionian Village is developing a variety of Alumni engagement opportunities such as reunions, retreats, and trips that will be scheduled and announced as soon as it is safe to gather. In addition, IV virtual content is being introduced to rekindle the flame of faith experienced at both IV and Metropolis Summer Camp programs. Upon returning home, campers and participants can easily fall away from the good habits developed during summer programs. IV is working to build a ministry that all programs can use to connect with their camp participants year round.

Coming soon from the Office of Ionian Village is a series of recorded and live conversations with Marissa Garoufalis, a school social worker located in Chicago, who was the Director of Support and Outreach at IV last year. The summer of 2019 marked the first time a mental health professional was officially part of the Ionian Village team. Schools around the country are pouring resources into mental health and wellness programs. A real need has arisen in the last decade for children and young adults to have access to professionals in this field. Ionian Village has been at the forefront of this trend, working with Marissa to develop and refine her role and how it can be implemented at camps across our Archdiocese. Last summer she led portions of Staff orientation and spent significant time training them on how to handle situations involving their campers and themselves. In the upcoming videos, Marissa will introduce her experience, her role at IV, and answer questions and comments about mental health and its applications in life and at camp. Look for Marissa's webinar in early June.

Every evening at Ionian Village begins with Vespers. The Office of Ionian Village hosts this service online weekly and will continue through the summer. Every Thursday evening at 8:30PM ET, former campers, staff, directors, medical staff, clergy and their family members gather on Zoom to pray. The Office of Ionian Village has creatively outlined the best way to gather a large group to chant and read assigned parts by members participating from all over the country.

While many of our Greek-American teenagers may not walk through the gates of Ionian Village this summer, IV is still working to provide an opportunity to deepen the faith and appreciation for our shared faith and Greek culture online this summer. The COVID-19 pandemic has shut down many business and programs, but nothing will keep the Office of Ionian Village from making the love of Christ and His Church relevant for the youth of our Archdiocese.

For more information about Ionian Village and how you can support the ministry, please visit www.ionianvillage.org.

[Source](#)