



Η ΧΡΥΣΗ ΓΕΦΥΡΑ



the golden bridge

SPRING 2013



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Dear Fellow Alumni,

One year ago, when we launched the first issue of The Golden Bridge, I cited the mission of the Ionian Village Alumni Project: to connect all of us that were blessed to be a part of the Ionian Village experience. Yet, now, I am humbled to admit that I never fully comprehended just how deep, and how strong this Ionian Village experience really is.

Since last year's launch, I led my first summer as Director of Ionian Village, an opportunity that allowed me to truly feel the phenomenal effects of the program from an entirely new point of view. As the Director, I experienced Ionian Village not just as Cabin Kerkyra Staff, not just as part of the Music & Greek Culture team, but totally and completely – with the entire camp. I grew close to campers from all different cabins, from all over America. I connected with each and every one of our amazing staff of young adults. I listened to the ongoing and ever-present struggles our teenagers are having in their everyday lives here in America. I watched the Olympics, Junkyard Wars, and Sandcastle Competition, cheering on not one cabin, but all of IV, witnessing the miracle that brings 250 complete strangers into a huge, united, loving family.

Throughout the year, I traveled across the country to various youth events to promote Ionian Village. Wherever I visited, I met wonderful people that have been touched in some way by Ionian Village. And these alumni, parents, friends and relatives don't just mention in passing their connection to the camp, they come running up to me, gushing about Ionian Village, sincerely excited to share their stories.

Recently, we held our 2012 Reunion in Washington, D.C., which tied everything together for me, showing me months later the very real impact of the Ionian Village experience on our campers. Over three-fourths of the summer's participants joined us, each one with a heart full of love for their Ionian Village family, overjoyed to see their best friends again, embracing each other with open arms.

The Ionian Village Experience is very real, and indeed very powerful. It lives forever in each of our hearts and minds. Those 20 beautiful, life-changing days full of laughter and tears, ferry boats and monasteries are what connect us. What I have come to understand over this past year is just how deep, just how moving the Ionian Village Experience is. What I have come to appreciate is the absolute and overwhelming love that exists amongst each of us. And, just as love should, the most beautiful quality of this love among our Alumni for Ionian Village is that it only continues to grow.

As we continue to build the program and renovate the physical camp, I am constantly uplifted by your thoughts, your notes and emails, your prayers, and most importantly your constant support and love. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and pray that St. Dionysios and all the Saints of the camp continue to keep the light of Ionian Village alive and strong within each of our hearts. Ionian Village is a lot of different things to so many different people, but there is one constant, one ever-present truth, and that is that IV is Love.

Fr. Evagoras



IONIAN VILLAGE SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY CYPRUS AND CRETE MAY 30TH TO JUNE 9TH



Ionian Village Spiritual Odyssey is a spiritually enriching pilgrimage open to young adults ages 19 through 28.
Be a part of something special.
www.ionianvillage.org



Spiritual Odyssey is an Ionian Village program for young adults, ages 19-28, giving them an opportunity to travel to sites of both historical and spiritual importance, while exploring their faith with other people their age.

This year's fun and exciting pilgrimage gives its participants an opportunity to do more than just travel, it allows them to experience sites of Orthodox and historic importance with other young adults, and most importantly, to grow together as a group, experiencing their faith and culture with each other and as a family.

Cyprus and Crete are two incredibly unique islands, rich in both culture and religion. As two of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, each has developed individual characters that, although a part of our larger Hellenic heritage, are also exceptional for their level of introspection, localization, and relative independence, expressed in local language variations, highly specialized cuisines, and beautiful forms of religious worship. These two gems are not to be missed!

CYPRUS:

LARNACA, LIMASOL, PAPHOS, KYKKOS MONASTERY, AGIA NAPA, NICOSIA

CRETE:

HERAKLION, XANIA, AGIOS NIKOLAOS, RETHYMNON



#IV2012 Reunion in Washington, D.C. The Best Reunion of your Life!!

From March 15th - 17th, 2013, the Office of Ionian Village hosted the annual Summer Reunion in Washington, D.C. With 193 campers and 31 staff members in attendance, almost 75% of the Ionian Village 2012 Summer Family joined us - the largest Ionian Village Reunion in recent years! We walked through the monuments on the National Mall, toured the Capitol Building, explored picturesque Georgetown, and enjoyed an evening boat cruise on the Potomac River complete with dinner and dancing. The weekend culminated with a beautiful Divine Liturgy at St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Cathedral. The Reunion was filled with smiles, hugs, laughter, and memories as campers and staff relived their summer at Ionian Village together.

We will let our campers tell you exactly how it felt to see each other again through their own tweets to the right!



victoria kardashian @victoria_arg

If I click my heels three times and say there's no place like home will I be in Greece or DC again?
[@IonianVillage](#) [#homeiswheretheheartis](#)

Amalia @amalia_523

[@IonianVillage](#) μου λείπεις

Nike Pappas @nikepappas

So nice to be reunited with great people!! Love you [@IonianVillage](#) 2012.

Anna Elliott @annaelliott22

So blessed for all the memories, experiences, and relationships of Ionian Village. Love and miss you all so much! [#IVForever](#) [#AGAPE](#)

Maria Benson @Mariaschino22

Since [@frevagoras](#) said we cant have [#postreuniondepression](#) i want my IV people to know that you are my life and i had THE BEST time [#IVagapi](#)

Koni M. @itskoni

I don't even know where to begin but all I can say is thank you IV for bringing extra happiness into my life

itseleni @3L3N111

I love IV more than anything in my life. They are my family.

Nicole Manouselis @nicolemano

Bittersweet ending to the [#ivreunion](#) I love my fam so much idk what I'd do without them [#ivagape](#)

Αλέξαντρα Νικολις @nikolisali

How did I get so lucky to share this experience with these remarkable people? [#IV2012forever](#) [#IVreunion](#) [#AGAPE](#)

Stephanie Sikkila @sasikkila12

God. Christ. Family. Love. And the best summer of your life. [#allyouneed](#) [#IVreunion](#)

Joe Demetroulis @joe_a_d95

Im not usually a cryer but im pretty sure that ill cry when I have to say bye to the best group of people I know [#IVReunion](#) [@cabinepiros](#)

Alex Lilly @alexlillyyy

Could not feel any more blessed or at peace
[#IV2012](#)

Victoria Anthony @princessvixx

"There is no such thing as post-IV depression because all there is, is IV love." Best weekend with the best people I know [#IV2012](#)

Αλέξαντρα Νικολις @nikolisali

I forgot how incredible this all was. This is family. This is agape. Fr Evagoras certainly knows how to bring us together again. [#IV2012](#)

Victoria Anthony @princessvixx

Literally this reunion could not have come at a better time. I needed this [#IVagapi](#) [#IV2012](#)

Nicole Louca @nicole_louca

I wonder if we will all recognize each other now that we take real showers and are wearing clean clothes [#iv2012](#) [#reunion](#)

Joe Townsend @WhatmynameisJoe

Amazing weekend with some amazing friends, Miss you all already. [#IV2012](#) [#ivlove](#)

Katina Kondilis @KatinaKondilis

Sooooo when's the next reunion...? [#IV2012](#) [#missmyfamilyalready](#)

Melina @melinamagrips

Best reunion of my life [#IV2012](#) forever

Amalia @amalia_523

Δεν θα ξεχάσω ποτέ, Ionian Village [#IV2012](#)

Κασσανδρα @cassandrahearts

If home is where your heart is, my home is IV.

Nicole Louca @nicole_louca

Havent been this happy in such a long time
[#somuchagape](#) [#iv2012](#)

Carter Anderson @carterandersonn

IV REUNION!!! [#IV2012](#) [#cantcontroltheexcitement](#)

Anastasia Zavitsanos @anastasiaz213

Family reunion in approx. 24 hours. [#IV2012](#) [#FREAKINGOUT](#)

CATCHING UP WITH...

LETERIS "TERRY" SITARAS

(ALUM, 1985, 1989, 1995-2001, 2005, 2010)

For this issue, we caught up with Leteris Sitaras (also known as "Terry") – an Alumnus who has been to Ionian Village a total of eleven summers! Leteris was a camper in 1985 and 1989, a staff member in 1995, 1996, 1997, and 2005, a member of the office staff in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001, and an Orthodox Life Leader in 2010. You might remember Leteris for his active involvement in the Ionian Village Periptero, for his extremely friendly, outgoing, and fun-loving personality, or for any number of his original songs, many of which have been performed over many summers at IV.

Leteris grew up in Baltimore, Maryland and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from Towson University (1996). He currently lives and works in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Fay, and their two children. Following his love for working with youth, Leteris is currently the Youth Ministry Director at St. Demetrios Church and is also the Director of All Saints Camp in Gig Harbor, Washington during the summer.

TGB: ELEVEN SUMMERS AT IV! THAT IS VERY IMPRESSIVE – AND ENVIABLE! SOME OF OUR ALUMNI MAY REMEMBER YOU AS "TERRY," AND SOME MAY REMEMBER YOU AS "LETERIS." COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THIS TRANSFORMATION?

LS: Growing up in Baltimore everyone called me Terry, My Papou, Leteris Sitaras, passed away in 1999 and I started going by Leteris to honor his memory. I always looked up to my Papou, as a child I remember wanting to knock out my front tooth and grow a mustache so I could look like him. We held a mimosino for him at the church in Vartholomio that summer; I decided then and there I wanted to be called Leteris too. Most people in Seattle call me Leteri or Lefty.

TGB: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AT IV?

LS: Some of my favorite memories from IV were performing various skits and songs over the years: "Bug Busters" a parody of Ghostbusters performed by myself, my cousin Basil Sitaras my first year as a camper; "Psycho Camper," in my early years as a counselor and the "Souvlaki Song," my ode to Kyria Sophia and her cooking which I'm surprised to find out is still in the IV songbooks to this day; "50 Evro – Live at the Parthenon" was a rap myself and a few campers performed, not only at the Parthenon, but we convinced the "lounge singers" and band on the boat from Athens to Aegina to let us perform during their set. Another great memory was the first time I went to see and venerate St. Dionysios. I always loved the iconography in his church and it was awesome being able to see the Icons of the Creation and Last Judgment go from line drawings to finished icons over the years.

TGB: HOW DID YOU FIND YOURSELF SETTLING IN SEATTLE, ALL THE WAY FROM BALTIMORE?

LS: I was hired in December of 2000 to be the Youth Ministry Director for St. Demetrios Church in Seattle, Washington. After the summer of 1999 at IV, I decided to find a job in Athens and live in Greece for a year. One day while reflecting on life on my balcony in my apartment in Kato Patissia, I decided the only thing I really loved was working with the youth of the Church. That decision led me to move back to the states and eventually find the position at St. Demetrios. I've been happily serving the church ever since. I also direct All Saints Camp in Gig Harbor, Washington in the summer, which gives me the opportunity to continue working in camping ministries as well. It's been great having many IV alumni be a part of All Saints Camp too!

TGB: WHAT ELSE DO YOU DO WITH YOUR TIME?

LS: For the past few years, my hobby has been collecting classic arcade games and pinball machines. There is a great group of collectors in Seattle and we even put on our own Pinball and Arcade show for the public in June with over 350 games for people to enjoy. My current collection consists of 12 arcade games and a pinball machine. Some days I spend more time fixing the games than playing them but it comes with the hobby. I have a couple of claw machines that we use at our annual festival and I keep one in my office for the kids to "play until they win" on their birthdays.



Leteris "Terry" Sitaras (right) at the Acropolis with Eleni Statigakes, a.k.a. 50 Evro! Performing "50 Evro - Live at the Parthenon," an original rap.

TGB: TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

LS: I met my beautiful wife, Fay, during coffee hour after church in 2003 and two years later we were married. We now have two awesome children, Katerina (6) and Anthony (4). Fay is more than I could have ever asked for in a wife and mother to our children. She works for the Department Social and Health Services and is a Seattleite to the bone. Our kids are huge Baltimore Ravens fans, but they are can't decide if they like the Mariner's or Orioles better. They also love travelling and taking road trips to find unique roadside attractions. My family travelled to IV in 2010 and had a chance to see and experience Ionian Village for themselves.

TGB: HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR EXPERIENCE AT IONIAN VILLAGE HAS IMPACTED YOUR LIFE?

LS: IV had a major impact on my life. I wouldn't be working in youth ministry if it wasn't for the growth in faith and life that I experienced at IV. I experienced healing and personal growth from my conversations during free time with my uncle, Fr. Costa Sitaras, in the pines. I learned a tremendous amount from Mr. Michael Pappas, Director of IV 1997-2001, about how to work with young people, and I value his mentorship. I grew spiritually in seeing the saints, praying everyday and learning how to live our faith, not only at IV but in my daily life as well. I hold the friendships I made at IV very close to my heart. The staff members I worked with over the years, the campers I met and counseled, the number of people that touched my life in big and small ways are very important to me and I appreciate the times I had. It's also been great to see so many former campers return as staff members and give back to the ministry. It has also been a blessing to have had the opportunity to work with them on staff at IV too. There are many people from IV I still talk too and many more that I think about often. I'm not on Facebook too much but I do enjoy seeing what people are up to, I need to make a better effort to stay in touch. The people I miss the most are Kyria Sophia & Kyrio Christophoro, George and their family. It was great seeing their post on Facebook the other day. They are more than just the caretakers of IV; they are family.



Leteris Sitaras (right) taking in the Stadium at Ancient Olympia in 2010 with his family: wife, Fay, and children, Katerina and Anthony.

THE IONIAN VILLAGE POOL RENOVATION PROJECT

AN EXCLUSIVE SNEAK PEAK FOR OUR ALUMNI

We are excited to officially announce the Ionian Village Pool Renovation Project!! Graciously sponsored by Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism, the Pool Renovation Project will once again bring a modern, state of the art pool to the Ionian Village campgrounds, a true feat both for the size of the pool and for the camp's rural location.

When Ionian Village was first built (1968-1970), the Archdiocese made sure that the campgrounds had the very best facilities of the time. Now, more than 40 years later, the pool was showing its age. For the past several years, George Nastoulis and his team have worked increasingly hard prior to every camping season to seal cracks in the pool and to free the pool of debris and mold after a winter of unuse.

The new Ionian Village Pool currently under construction will be a modern, safe, self-maintaining system that will provide respite from the hot Grecian sun for the next generations of Ionian Village campers. The final plans include non-slip turquoise and blue ceramic tiles across the entire interior, a white marble lip around the exterior with an overflow basin, and an expanded and fully finished deck. The new pool will rest within the footprint of the original pool, maintaining the traditional Olympic-size and shape. A special feature of the new pool is the depth - the outer edge will be 1 meter deep (~3.5 feet) and will dip into a deeper center of 1.5 meters (~5 feet). This will allow the entire length of the pool to be used for the annual Water Olympics and will create a much more usable pool space. 2013 Campers - get ready for the Grand Opening!

*Background Photo: A full view of the new pool.
Photos right (top to bottom): Demolition of the existing concrete foundation in the early stages of renovation;
Ongoing demolition and filling in the deep end; George Nastoulis (full-time caretaker of the Ionian Village property) with Fr. Evagoras proudly showing off the work so far; Laying of the beautiful non-slip tiles that will completely cover the interior of the pool.*





A SHORT HISTORY OF BARTHOLOMIO

BY KONSTANTINE SALMAS

This village is shy. It looks like the people have folded up their talents and gone inside. It's as if the centuries have removed their confidence. They've been beaten back by oppression. Nothing too impressive shows on the street. The stories the campers will tell begin in these small quiet places.

Maybe the heat pushes everyone inside. We are here in the morning. The sounds are minimized even more in the afternoon. Even when we pull into the town with all our buses, the level of activity does not increase. Our faces look in all directions. We are hundreds of faces, standing outside our buses, looking in all the different directions. In my mind, I look through the city to the grocery store at the end of the street. This comes from multiple visits in multiple years.

When the group is gathered and quieted, we walk to the church. The outside is one color and unimpressive, aside from the architecture, like the village. This church architecture is everywhere in Greece.

It was an invention way back. It is recognizable without trying too hard. In a world of rectangles and squares, domes stand out. Inside the church, the campers are impressed. There doesn't seem to be an end to the iconography. We've gone from the silence of the outside to a well thought out internal monologue. The interior here is where Bartholomio is speaking about all the really big important things in a really big and clear and understandable manner. What is this interior that wears this expansive internal monologue on its inside telling us to do? How are we supposed to tie ourselves to these scenes of the life of Christ and the history of the Church on the walls and to the dome with its figures?

The village has produced little noise this morning. The Church does things from the inside out, too. This can help us understand the quiet of a village.

There are two quiet, side by side in this small village. Memorable stories come from small places like this. Many of our families come from places like this. It's good for the kids to pass through this. The stories wait. They are coffee beans waiting to be removed from branches.

Bartholomio and the areas around it are dominated by agricultural land. Greece and its history are scattered around here. Small heads of Plato and Aristotle on store shelves, jewelry with the Greek key design on glass countertops, shirts and stickers with Greek blue. There are also small icons on the store walls, which are a snippet of the entire conversation seen inside the church.

We walk through Bartholomio, including its church. The priest speaks to the kids about the love of God. He speaks to them about the construction of the church. One of the workers had a weak faith. He was working on the dome of the church. The remainder of the story, the thing that makes it a story to repeat in the silence of the outside and inside this internal monologue on the walls, is what connects our lives to the Church. The worker fell. "Panayia, save me," he said. He must have shouted. Maybe the words, on the other hand, barely came out from shortness of breath. He felt someone carry him to the ground. He was not hurt at all. When things like this happen in a town, there is no reason for a lot of noise. The buildings don't need to stand out when there is strong evidence of God acting. Maybe things are so quiet because everyone is processing stories like this. They're not shy, but otherwise preoccupied, like the village itself.

The experience of this place, like their experience of Greece through Ionian Village, hides in them. This is how experience is meant to work. At some point in their life, it will come at them like hail with fuller meaning. Stories begin in small quiet places.

Left, from top: The exterior of the Church of Kimisis tis Theotokou (Dormition of the Virgin Mary) in Bartholomio; Venerating an icon of the Theotokos donated by the worker after he experienced the miracle. Opposite: Campers in awe of the interior, completely bathed in light, and covered in iconography.



THE IONIAN VILLAGE ALUMNI PROJECT: 1,807 AND COUNTING

1,807 REGISTERED ALUMNI AND COUNTING...

The Ionian Village Alumni Project, which was launched in November of 2011, is an ambitious initiative to establish connections between the thousands of faithful who have experienced Ionian Village since its beginning in 1970.

In a year and a half, over 1,800 Alumni have registered with the Alumni Project! This immense response rate speaks to the life-transforming experience that is inherent to Ionian Village, yet our number is still far from the over 16,000 that have participated. The overarching goal of the Alumni Project is to strengthen the shared love and appreciation for Ionian Village by not only reuniting friends from the past, but also by providing the opportunity for new relationships and memories to grow. We hope you will join us!



The
**IONIAN VILLAGE
ALUMNI PROJECT**
www.ionianvillage.org/alumni

THE IONIAN VILLAGE

PROSKINITARION: \$ 10,000

This beautiful stone covered Proskinitarion dedicated to Saint Dionysios will be permanently installed along the pathway to the Ionian Village beach, with its views to Zakynthos. The Proskinitarion will include a mosaic icon of the Saint who has offered his love and protection to the camp for so many decades.

FRESHWATER DRINKING FOUNTAINS: 15 AT \$ 1,000 EACH

These fountains will take advantage of the delicious, cold fresh water that runs underneath the Ionian Village campgrounds. Scattered across the camp, the fountains will quench the thirst of our campers and will permanently eliminate the need to purchase and maintain costly water bubblers each summer.

BEACH FRONT LIFEGUARD STAND: \$ 700

A tall and sturdy Lifeguard Stand will assist our Lifeguards in ensuring the safety of all 250 campers and staff during our Free Swim time at the Ionian Village Beach.

DIVINE LITURGY BENCHES: 20 AT \$ 500 EACH

Unfortunately, the benches that have seated thousands during Divine Liturgy in the Outdoor Chapel for so many years are in a state of disrepair. New benches will provide a place for prayer and reflection for years to come.

SOUND SYSTEMS: 2 AT \$ 1,500 EACH

The Sound Systems currently used at Ionian Village are bulky, outdated and finicky after so many years of use and storage. Two new sound systems will provide music and excitement for many summer evening activities. One sound system will be permanently mounted in a new outdoor multipurpose space. The second sound system will be fully portable to travel for all of our evening activities.

ARTS & CRAFTS TABLES & CHAIRS (SETS OF 1 TABLE & 6 CHAIRS): 10 SETS AT \$ 300 EACH

The Arts & Crafts tables and chairs, although weathered with decades of signatures and notes, are wobbly and unstable. Each new sturdy Arts & Crafts table will be custom built of solid wood and made to outlast lots of creative (and messy!) projects.

POOL BENCHES: 42 AT \$ 500 EACH

Just as the Divine Liturgy benches have grown old with loving use, so have the poolside benches. A new set of Pool Benches will provide respite and relaxation for campers and staff during Free Swim and the beloved Water Olympics. The new benches will compliment the design and feel of the brand new Ionian Village Pool.

ALTAR TABLE CLOTHS: \$ 1,000

A new set of beautiful Altar Cloths will visually enhance the daily Orthros and Vespers Services at Ionian Village as well as Sunday's Divine Liturgy. The set will include coverings for icon stands, a covering for the altar table, and all cloths used by the clergy to consecrate Holy Communion.

The beautiful Ionian Village campgrounds have provided solace and peace to its campers and staff for over 40 years. As is expected after so many years of loving use, many of our furnishings are beginning to show their age! Please contact Fr. Evagoras to make a contribution to our Wish List or towards Ionian Village!

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WWW.ORTHODOXMARKETPLACE.COM/IONIAN-VILLAGE



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IONIAN VILLAGE 2013



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