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## **Celebrating Nikos Kazantzakis: A Transformative Experience for Greek American Students**



The recent visit by the International Society of Friends of Nikos Kazantzakis to the Greek American schools within the Archdiocese of America was not just an event; it was a celebration of cultural heritage and an opportunity for our youth to engage deeply with one of Greece's most revered literary figures.

On October 21, 2024, representatives from the Society were warmly welcomed at Saint Demetrios High School in Astoria. Students enthusiastically showcased projects about Kazantzakis in the "Petros Patridis" hall, highlighting their creativity and understanding of his literary impact. The next day, at the "William Spyropoulos" School in Flushing, students in grades 4 to 8 engaged in lively discussions, supported by an age-appropriate video. This enthusiasm continued on October 23 at the "Argyrios Fantis" School, where students collaborated in groups to explore Kazantzakis's life, responding actively to questions and demonstrating curiosity about his contributions.

Feedback from both students and educators was overwhelmingly positive. Children emerged with a deeper appreciation of Kazantzakis's multifaceted personality and the motivations behind his journeys. They grasped the essence of his quest for understanding, which drove him to explore the world and connect with diverse cultures.

Academics and scholars accompanying the Society echoed this sentiment, expressing admiration for the students' proficiency in Greek, their pride in their heritage, and their disciplined approach to learning. Their reflections emphasized that these students are not only absorbing knowledge; they are embodying the very spirit of Kazantzakis—curious, passionate, and committed to understanding their cultural identity.

The Director, Dr. Anastasios Koularmanis, representing the Office of Greek Education, extended heartfelt gratitude to the school administrators and educators who facilitated this significant event. Their dedication to preparing students for such an enriching experience cannot be overstated. It is a testament to the vital role our schools play in preserving and promoting Greek culture.

In a world that often emphasizes the individual, this event served as a powerful reminder of the importance of community, education, and cultural heritage. By bringing together students, educators, and distinguished guests, we celebrate not just a literary legacy but the rich traditions that shape our identity. These young students, as they continue their educational journeys, are not only gaining knowledge but also developing a deep appreciation for their roots and the values that unite them. This collective experience fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, empowering them to carry forward the spirit of their culture into the future.

Let us continue to support initiatives that enrich our students' understanding of their heritage and inspire them to engage with the world around them.

Photo: GOARCH/Department of Greek Education.

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