

# St. Anthony Indian Mission

P.O. Box 486

Zuni, New Mexico 87327-0486

Toll Free Phone: (866) 832-8816

Website: [www.stanthonyzuni.org](http://www.stanthonyzuni.org)

March 2021



From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Lenten greetings from Zuni!

I am really not a person who remembers dates very well, but March 15th 2020 is indelibly written in my "wee brain." It was the day that we had to close St. Anthony School, saying goodbye to the students -- for how long nobody had any idea. Approaching the one year anniversary, I cannot help but reminisce. I expect everyone is tired of hearing about the virus and all that has come with it, so I will not linger on the subject except to say that things are looking up but we have a long way still to go. There are lessons to be learned, however, and even some positive outcomes to be considered.

Our abrupt closure during Lent last year brought our normal outreach activities to a halt, although we did manage to bring some comfort to those in need of assistance. At present, students cannot participate as actively as they would have in past years, but we continue to encourage them to do what they can to provide food and clothing to those in need, particularly to the homeless. In fact throughout the year we have shared our resources whenever we found the need. Safety protocols prevent the students acting directly, but we act on their behalf. I like to tell the students they are a light (however small) in someone's darkness; we are just letting them shine.

That reminds me to mention the day the lights went out! A new electrical sub-station was being put into service and for at least a day the whole Pueblo was without electricity. This is not something new to me since when serving in West Africa we would often be weeks without electricity or water. But it came as a bit of a shock when I realized how much we depend on electricity.



Our continual improvements in the School facilities and teaching methods, so necessary during the pandemic, cause us to make full use of the internet and computers; they in turn rely on our central computer server. Despite backup systems, an extended shutdown of the server could mean a loss of internal systems that have been so painstakingly adapted to our needs. We closed the School for the day and suspended teaching. Even with computers at home the students did not have the power to operate them.

Both the server room and the cafeteria require a great deal of electricity to keep food safely refrigerated and electronics in good working order. One generous gentleman loaned us his powerful generator to secure those areas of the campus. Some other much smaller machines provided emergency power in other buildings, but since we have thirteen separate buildings on the campus not all of them could be served.

Visiting the fourth grade classroom recently, I noticed Mr. Bryston had an overly tall lectern set up on top of which was a camera. He was giving a

lesson on compass points and some students at home could not quite grasp some parts of the concept. So he marked out a compass on the floor of the room and the students in class took their positions as the sun and the planets. He televised the activity to those at home. It is another one of those little moments when we see our teachers making the best use of what little is available and making learning fun.



Easter is a big community celebration for us as many of our young people are baptized or make their First Holy Communion, and the older students receive Confirmation. We were deprived of these celebrations last year but are determined not to be so again. While anticipating that large gatherings will likely not be possible, we are arranging a series of smaller services that will go on for several months. We will make sure that our young people will not miss out. There is plenty to do and we are even making tentative arrangements for groups to come during the summer

vacation. St. Anthony's always looks to the future!

I believe that the real lesson to be taken from the experience of this strange year is twofold: first, the wonderful fruits of cooperation when we work for the good of all; and second, the importance of adaptability. Always remain flexible has become our motto!

Specifically our "on-line" parent/teacher conferences demonstrated both these qualities. We found that parents were anxious to help in tutoring the students who were finding at-home learning difficult. The teachers were equally willing to give parents coaching on how to deal with the issues raised. The group that has presented the most difficulties is of course the youngest students. Miss Chimoni and Ms. Phyllis have been remarkable in helping both these young students and their parents to overcome the difficulties with excellent results. Young people are adaptable, but it is not quite so easy for the parents. Yet time and again throughout this year we have seen teachers and parents struggle successfully through difficulties for the sake of their children.

I never tire of being thankful for our faculty and staff: be it teachers finding novel ways of making lessons a reality or the staff delivering student meals to parents in their cars as they pass by the cafeteria door. When Missy and Cordelia spot a car, they know immediately at a distance which student is to receive which lesson package. Running out with lunch bags and lessons, they keep the line moving smoothly and always with laughter. Often when the line is long, teachers miraculously appear to give a hand and lend a word or two of encouragement for the parents. Who needs electricity when you have people power?

My own small part in our daily life is to keep our heads above water financially and lend a hand wherever I am able, even if it means learning about generators, computers, cameras or whatever. It is a daily struggle (particularly when it comes to using a screwdriver or a wrench!), but in all of this I do feel particularly blessed knowing that our students continue to grow in knowledge and grace. Thank you for making it all possible and being that special blessing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Patrick McGuire". The signature is stylized and written in cursive.

Fr. Patrick McGuire