

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Autumn greetings from the high desert, where the first signs of fall are beginning show forth. After such a disappointing monsoon with almost no rain, we look forward to the local cottonwood and scrub oak dazzling us with their fall colors. (It is rather nice to speak of such ordinary things rather than renovations, distancing and safety measures!)

Let me first say a huge thank you to the many donors who have inquired after the safety of our students. There have been many inquiries, particularly from friends who have been sponsoring individual students. One lady wrote: "How is my little one? I am almost terrified to ask!" I was happy to scribble an "all is well" message in reply. But as I did so I reflected on how often sponsors have treated their students as almost part of their families. I recollect how in my first year here two sponsors arrived from San Francisco for their student's graduation. I know that they continued to keep in touch with the student through high school and even when she went off to college!

There is so much more to the relationship between donors and students than simply the all-important finances. A bond is often forged that is long treasured. The thought stirs memories of when I sponsored students through school in Nigeria and Liberia -- grown men now, they still speak of "My Fr. Patrick."

As I joyfully reported in my last letter, St. Anthony's opened this fall with a "hybrid" system of students studying either at home on-line or in person in the classroom. We will continue to offer this arrangement for the duration of the first semester. Despite the additional burdens that this system places on our faculty and resources, it is working quite well except for the few technical problems that have presented themselves.



Here are two pictures of our Cafeteria: pre-Covid on the left and our current situation on the right.

dropping the computers and cracking the screens to parents simply forgetting to charge the battery!

Technical problems aside, the normal school routine continues. Each grade is in what we term a "bubble," that is they stay within their own group to ensure proper distancing. Meals are served in classrooms and, where necessary, teachers move from room to room. Students of course need breaks and exercise. It's fun to watch small groups play basketball while maintaining 6 feet

distancing from each other. Needless to say the students find ways of working it out, new forms of competition are invented, and there are moments of hilarious laughter (from behind masks of course). Basketball re-invented!

Even with the reduced number of students actually in School, the youthful zest for life is frequently on display. During renovations we found several chalk boards that were no longer in use. Jonathan, one of our teachers, suggested mounting them on the outside walls for the students. This photograph is the result from the 4th grade students. The newsletter is available on www.stanthonyzuni.org if you would like to see the photographs in color.



We are still operating without a full office staff but somehow managing to keep correspondence and records up to date. This necessarily involves people covering multiple jobs, but that too has its advantages. I am becoming ever more familiar with our friends through personally handling correspondence. I am now a regular attendee at the local post office to pick up and deliver the mail. Priscilla and I have established a great system whereby I give an envelope to Cordelia (our custodian who lives next to Priscilla), then Priscilla processes the documents from home and returns the envelope to me by the same method. Of course Priscilla is always mindful of keeping watch on the pennies. Virginia and Vernalita come in and help out from time to time. Lulita and Sr. Marsha keep the School side operating with the regular assistance of Deeann our computer teacher, now that the "end of quarter" reports are prepared. Faculty members continue to assist each other with mastering the on-line teaching program.

We have temporarily taken on two additional people to assist with sanitizing (a frequently used word in the current lexicon) on a daily basis and the Friday afternoon "fogging" of all the buildings. In the school cafeteria where Birgetta and Audrey daily scour the kitchen everything is dazzling. We do try to make good use of those pennies!

I must also commend our parents for their attention to our requests. Recently, one of our sixth graders was feeling a little unwell, and so his mother kept him out of School for two days to be safe and the whole of the first floor was dutifully "fogged." It turned out that the student had been up very late the night before School and was simply over tired. Again it was a small event, but one that proved our safety protocols are working and that all are paying due heed to the situation in which we find ourselves -- for the sake of everyone.

I am thankful that unlike so many other areas Zuni seems to be on top of the virus with no new cases recently. I pray daily that it continues to remain that way. October should be a time when we are preparing for Native American Day and of course inter-school sports such as cross country and basketball tournaments. Sadly these will not take place this year which will make them all the more enjoyable when they resume, as they most certainly will.

As Mother Nature prepares to go into hibernation, we see beautiful glimpses of red and gold and the cycle of life continues. Students are learning and laughing, teachers are encouraged with progress and we all look forward to being once again the vibrant life-giving family which makes up our little School. Thank you for making it all possible!

Sincerely,

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

Fr. Patrick McGuire