

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

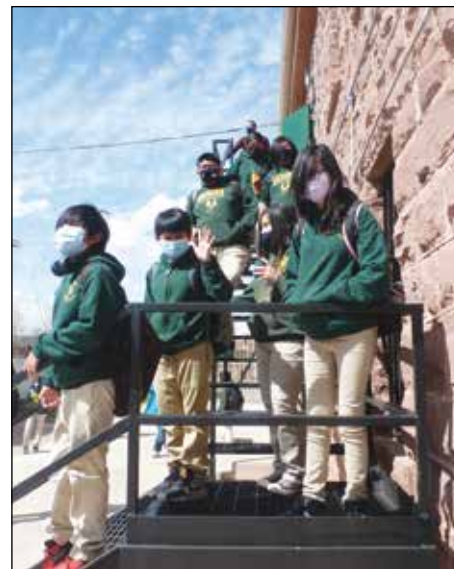
It's all coming together!

I truly hope that you had a wonderful Easter celebration filled with as much light and joy as was ours.

I am in my 34th year of priesthood and have served on several continents, but I can't remember ever having been as elated as I was this year! With glorious sunshine on Easter day, in all four of the churches we look after attendance actually doubled from anything we had witnessed in the past few months. In Zuni, in fact, we reached the maximum allowable capacity (under current restrictions). But perhaps most wonderful of all was the number of our students who turned up on Sunday morning. Whether it was genuine Easter joy or the promise of a candy "give-away" after Mass, to see these youngsters taking their place in the community was uplifting to say the least. Of course we could not have our normal get-together and celebration, but the congregations stayed afterwards and chatted quite a while, reminding us that it's time for us to take up our lives once again.

School had broken up for Spring Break the previous Wednesday, and I felt a sense of reluctance among the students. Clearly those "in class" students enjoy the daily school routine, but there are still a considerable number doing classes at home. Presumably the thought of spring isolation was not an attractive proposition; we all know how young people love to be together.

After Spring Break, however, we found even more students had returned to "in person" classes. We are now at a 60/40 ratio of students "in school" versus studying at home. We are moving forward but always with caution. We have those tiny but encouraging moments such as occurred at our recent school Mass. For the first time in a year we were able to bring the youngest students into the church, dutifully spread out. Their behavior



was impeccable despite being at least 6 feet away from their teachers.



Recently, we had two new attendees who seemed very interested in "in school" attendance. You might remember that last year a horse decided to come to class much to everyone's delight. This year two squirrels took up residence under the cafeteria. Everyone expressed lively ideas on how to catch the interlopers. One grandfather finally won the debate, providing a few pieces of apple to tempt them out of hiding and into a trap. The local Ranger then carefully removed them and released them into the wild. No lockdowns or curfews for them anymore!

Academically we are having surprisingly good results from the end of semester testing. The process was obviously more difficult with students at home, but generally all but a few students are making excellent progress. We are proposing to have a slightly extended summer school to boost those who are in need of help. Sr. Marsha has already organized teachers for the summer, and of course our parent/teacher conferences have alerted the parents to individual students' needs.

On a sadder note, we have to say goodbye to someone with whom many of our friends are very familiar -- if not by sight than certainly through her voice on the telephone. Ms. Vernalita from the Development Office has finally retired after 50-plus years of service to St. Anthony's! She has been experiencing some health issues for some time which have developed further during these last months. Finally she made the difficult but wise decision to retire so as to have the time and energy to grow stronger once again.

We will greatly miss Vernalita's presence around the office and in the School where for two days each week she has been a teacher's aide with the First Grade. Her departure was not part of our plan, but we wish her better health and the opportunity to enjoy some well-deserved retirement time.



Of course the heart of my personal task lies not in the office but with the spiritual lives of the students and parishioners. As I write to you, we have taken the opportunity of relaxed Covid regulations and have arranged the administering of Sacraments over a period of seven weeks before the end of the school year. All told, this will include 24 Baptisms, 21 First Holy Communions and 11 Confirmations. All part, I pray, of God's plan.

Still, it's hard to believe that the end of another school year is in sight. The end of May seems just a blink of an eye away. Yet this year is so different from last year, when at this stage we were experimenting with ways of continuing the students' education, looking towards a generally unknown future and preparing for as many eventualities as we could envision. This year we can be much more certain of how to proceed and indeed have learned new skills acquired during difficult times that will be used to the benefit of the students even more in the year ahead. As the old saying goes "it is an ill wind that blows no one any good." We have, I believe, accomplished much more than we could ever have hoped and will put it all toward the benefit of our young students who in turn breathe life and joy to all that surround them.

Once again, thank you for your incredible generosity which makes it all possible. We simply could not do it without you!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire