

St. Anthony Indian Mission

P.O. Box 486

Zuni, New Mexico 87327-0486

Toll Free Phone: (866) 832-8816

Website: www.stanthonyzuni.org

July 2021

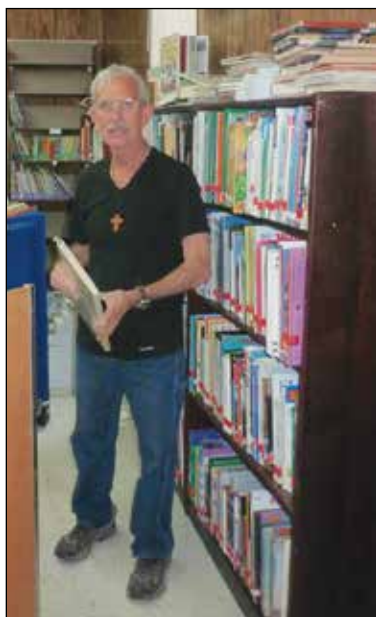


From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings from a wonderfully wet Zuni! Yes, we've had several days of good rain and pray that it continues. Our local Rain Dances must have encouraged the reluctant clouds. Many parts of New Mexico and neighboring states are still dangerously dry so we count every drop as a blessing.

Our summer school was a wonderful success. With 58 students attending every day for "in-person learning," teachers reported great strides being made by the students. Under the direction of Ms. Angel, all the teachers employed creative learning techniques such as mathematics with handicrafts and language arts through novels and stories. The students were actually sad when summer school came to a close.

I am more than delighted to say that we have a full faculty lined up for the new school year! As I mentioned in my last letter, two of our teachers had decided to move on, and now both have been replaced. Ms. Edwina (a Zuni) will move to 2nd grade under the mentoring of Sr. Marsha, and we await the arrival of Sr. Ragini from India for 4th grade. Each of our Indian Sisters is very highly qualified, however the usual visa delays still plague us. Thankfully Ms. Walker who retired in January has offered to do a long term substitution until Sr. Ragini arrives. How blessed we are!



One additional member of our staff arrived at the end of June: he is Joe Worthington and he will be directing our students for gym classes. Joe is a Lay Associate of my Religious Order -- SMA Fathers -- and has served as a nurse for disabled children in a refugee camp in Ghana for the last eight years. Needless to say I put him to work upon arrival. He is currently reorganizing our library under the guidance of Ms. Laura, our 7th grade math teacher.

As you might expect, July is a very quiet month academically, with students and faculty away on their long summer break. But academics is the only area of school life which has been quiet. "Clean Up and Prepare!" has been my battle cry as we eagerly await the return of the students in August. This summer we have only our basic staff with which to tackle the many repairs and upgrades needed. Five acres and 15 buildings take a lot of maintaining!

After the major work carried out during the summer of 2020, we had planned only one large project for this year and that was the gym. Built in the 1930s from local stone, we have been slowly making improvements on the gym over the years since I arrived. Now it is time for repainting the entire

inside of the building while retaining its unique artwork. But as is the case with so many items, the cost of paint has risen sharply and the estimate (despite my best begging and bartering) is around \$6,000! So that will have to be delayed for some time yet -- hopefully next year.



Meanwhile we are engaged in more mundane activities such as preparing the classrooms. The previous year's classroom decorations are still in good condition, but before classes can be set up floors need to be cleaned. Our two custodians have been working tirelessly on this huge job. Isaiah and Ms. Cordelia have almost completed the task despite the enlarged classrooms. And the task is not a simple one. First off, all desks and furnishings have to be removed, and then the floors must be washed, stripped of old wax, rewashed, then "neutralized," then waxed afresh, and finally the furniture returned. Mr. Isaiah (the father of one of our 2021 graduates) commented, "I never knew what went into running a good school until now."

Nor have our two maintenance men been idle. Recently we decided it was time to tackle the basement of the administration building. This building (built in 1923) originally housed the first classrooms. Over the decades, its huge basement has accumulated an incredible amount of obsolete equipment including ancient televisions, primitive computers, tons of seasonal decorations and even a collection of vinyl records! (The guys looked at me in awe as I spoke of "45's, 33's and 78's." They had never heard of such things. In fact, do you know what I'm referring to or am I just showing my age?) Anyway, all of these items had to be carefully sifted, and then either restored or discarded. Understandably, the staff seems to radiate fear whenever I say, "Oh I've got an idea!" but miraculously they put up with me and get the job done. I will not bore you with more details of our annual clean-up. Suffice to say, the tasks are taken up and completed by our capable and dedicated staff.

As I write to you there are still two weeks to go before Enrollment Day, but already we have 134 students registered for the new school year. The elementary grades are still relatively small, but the junior high grades are standing at around 14 or 15 to a class. We have a good number of new students moving in from various public schools, so there will be a few initial challenges for our faculty. But they are more than capable of dealing with whatever arises and integrating the new students into the wonderful family atmosphere that is St. Anthony's.

Many of you -- our faithful friends of St. Anthony's! -- have added a little (sometimes more than a little) to your regular contributions during this difficult year, and I hope that I managed to thank you individually. My thanks are not just for the much needed donations but for the sheer goodness and sacrifices which are made to maintain our School and for the future of our students.

As we move steadily closer to our 100th year, I can only count myself blessed that I am able to play a small part. Once again, a sincere thanks to you for making it all possible!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire