

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings from the Zuni Pueblo where the crisp feel of autumn is in the air, and the oaks and cottonwoods are flaming yellows and burnished golds.

I returned from my trip to Scotland to find the buildings still standing, the School fully operational and the office work up-to-date. It made me wonder if I was needed or even missed? As it turned out, however, Sr. Marsha in her daily school announcements had been keeping the students apprised of my travels. Her announcement regarding my safe arrival "over the pond" had been met with cheers in every classroom.

And upon my return I encountered many warm greetings from the students who wanted to know every detail of my trip. They could hardly believe that in the tiny parish of Aucheterarder, Scotland, where I celebrated Sunday Mass, the people still opted for Mass in the garden despite the rain (see accompanying picture). The warmth of the students' reception really caused my heart to miss a beat or two. I truly am getting very sentimental, but perhaps that is not such a bad thing.



In my absence three different priests celebrated the Wednesday "All School Mass" for the students -- all of whom were well received at St. Anthony's. Students were not slow to tell me how they especially enjoyed Fr. David. He is of very slight build and not too tall. I am told that he spoke in a way that all the students could understand -- each at their own level, which is no small achievement. I suspect that the younger students have adopted him as an honorary Zuni. We will need to have him back again.

I am delighted to report that we continue to be free of any new Covid cases. Nevertheless, we are maintaining precautions such as distancing, masks, disinfecting, and "fogging" the School completely on the second Friday of the month.



In fact the School became a venue for the local hospital to hold a drive-thru vaccination point for both Covid and seasonal flu injections. Taking place at the departure time for students did produce a major traffic issue. Always inventive, Mike and Matthew set up a two lane traffic system in the parking lot: pick up students in one lane and vaccination in the other, which seemed to work out fairly well.

Our teachers are reporting that students who needed to do some "catching up" after a year of distance learning are

making good progress. Several teachers are devoting additional attention to those students needing the most encouragement. I really enjoy watching the interaction of our teachers and students. The teachers most certainly maintain class discipline, but when passing through the School I am never disappointed to hear laughter coming from the classrooms.

The great project of the month was joining in the worldwide "care of the earth" awareness endeavor. Sr. Marsha offered a pizza party prize to the class that produced the best posters. The natural Zuni artistic talent came to the fore and she had a difficult time judging among the results. Many outstanding trees, forests and flowers came to life in the artwork! Although few of our students have ever seen the ocean, delightful seascape art appeared with fish, whales and even the occasional shark. (Imagination is a wonderful part of childhood!). Perhaps most important of all were the signed promises to care for the environment and to avoid littering our beautiful homeland. The project ended up costing Sr. Marsha several pizza parties and a whole load of candy for runners-up. Everyone received some form of approval.



I seldom report to you on our School Board which meets quarterly or on an *ad hoc* basis. It consists of representatives from parents, faculty, parish and the local community. Our meetings are inclined to last several hours because of chatting and friendly banter. In the absence of our chairperson, who is ill, I have been leading the meetings of late. Trying to keep us all on track is no easy task and distractions inevitably take place. But it is through these side conversations among members of the local community that great ideas and information come to the table such as social and family difficulties.

Our "accreditation visitation" for St. Anthony's is scheduled for October 2022. The faculty is already working hard in preparation for this visitation (a major task), and the School Board is undertaking a survey regarding the evaluation of the School by the local community.

The School Board is indispensable when serious decisions need to be made. On the rare occasions when we've had to address a personnel problem, the Board's wisdom has always provided the best solution. With regard to Covid protocols, the Board decided to continue to suspend our school bus pick-up and drop-off until the second semester to maintain our social distancing; in addition, they decided to delay restarting the monthly bingo which is a much needed source of revenue for the School. With the upcoming gatherings of people for Halloween festivities, "Mud Head Day" (a major local event), and Shalako in December, the diverse local community participation by board members becomes our "eyes and ears." They are on the alert to make us aware of any additional precautions that need to be taken. The Board monitors every aspect of school life including: academics, staffing, finance, security, building maintenance and equipment -- and our role within the community. It is truly an invaluable asset to St. Anthony's and for those of us who bear responsibility for its day to day operations. These good folks are truly in touch with the heart and soul of St. Anthony's and make it their own.

It has been another amazing month of learning, laughter and lively growth. I can't thank you enough for making it all possible!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Patrick McGuire". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Patrick McGuire