

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once more from all of us at St Anthony's, where spirits are high but temperatures are low! I am speaking about both the weather and of course our daily Covid check on students and staff. We are grateful that both are tolerable.

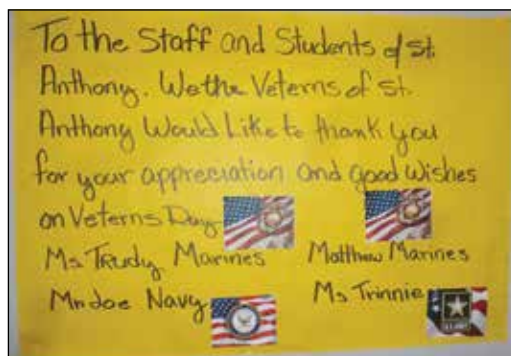
New Mexico has seen a rise in the number of positive Covid cases, although the effects are not as severe as in previous months, but nevertheless concerning. Thankfully, we have been able to avoid any outbreaks at St. Anthony's. Our daily temperature checks have been a wonderful help as, of course, has been our rigorous adherence to "protocols." Twice recently students with increased temperatures were identified, tested and proved positive for the virus. Their entire grades were put into isolation (with learning packages for study) and all safely returned to School with no ill effects. I was thinking that we should adopt a school motto of "Always Vigilant."



I am a little late in writing this month because I had to make yet another sad trip to Scotland for the funeral of another of my sisters. While deeply saddened at the losses (Jane was 92 and Marion was 82) I can be grateful for their long and fruitful lives. With only me and one sister left it seems like the passing of an era (we were fourteen children), but nevertheless there is so much for which to give thanks. The family atmosphere at St. Anthony's (of which I often speak) manifested itself as student after student offered condolences.

November is traditionally the month when we pray for the Holy Souls, and I find it a very moving moment during the "All School Masses" when all the students loudly recite Psalm 130 for their ancestors, those who have supported our School in the past, and those whom we name on our November Lists at the altar. Just another moment of thankfulness that goodness is never forgotten.

I was a little surprised recently when I noticed that our flagpole was flying not only the "Stars and Stripes" but the flag of the U.S. Marines as well. Our third-graders decided that they wanted to hear about service to the country from members of the armed forces. We have four veterans on our staff (one Army, one Navy, and two Marines) so the day before Veterans' Day they gave presentations to the third grade on what "service" means to them. Ms. Walker, their teacher, reported that the event took on a life of its own. Students were enthralled with the presentations, especially because they were from people whom the students meet on a daily basis. As a result, perhaps now there is a heightened gratitude for the freedoms that we



all enjoy. Many of the Zuni people have served in the military, so it is truly a part of their traditional heritage. I was further moved when I found a poster from the veterans in the cafeteria thanking the students for their attentiveness and appreciation. I suspect that this will become an annual event at the School.

Not to be outdone in their "extracurricular activities," the second-graders decided on a Christmas project focused on helping the homeless. All over the School handmade posters began to appear as the students initiated a "socks drive." Their intention is to provide several dozen pairs of socks to be donated to the homeless shelter in Gallup run by the Missionaries of Charity. Having served the homeless for many years myself, I know that socks are a vital necessity for men and women who spend most of their day walking the streets. In addition, the second-graders are writing letters to the homeless to accompany their gift of socks. I suspect that those letters will bring a great deal of joy to those who will benefit from our young peoples' generosity. I am aware that it is only a small gesture towards solving a very large problem, but to know that our students are aware of the hardship that surrounds them and that they are caring enough to do something to alleviate the suffering is knowledge for which I will always be thankful.

Our faculty held their Parent/Teacher conferences this month. I admire the teachers' stamina, as from early morning until late in the evening they meet with parents and guardians, giving each meeting their full attention. In her lead up to the conferences, Sr. Marsha, our principal, reminded the teachers to emphasize the positive with regard to each student. It is this positive reinforcement that gives the students and parents the encouragement to move forward. The faculty always remind parents that there is a partnership between them and the School, and I am happy to say that most parents respond well in this regard.



Speaking with members of the faculty, I find that the students are doing quite well overall. There are cases where there is still catching up for lost time when students were on "distance learning," and this is being addressed on an individual basis. But of course it is more than academic development that concerns our teachers. Their holistic approach embraces the whole person in their care. For a few of the students, coaching and even some counseling is needed. At times this means engaging professional assistance. School counselors are difficult to find, and it is a dream that Sr. Marsha and I share of one day having a counselor as part of our permanent staff. Nevertheless, our teachers make a tremendous effort to fill that gap, and I am constantly in awe of their dedication. How fortunate our students are!

There is so much for which to be grateful at St. Anthony's that I know my Thanksgiving Dinner would be very cold by the time I stop enumerating the blessings which I and our young people receive.

Thank you for being an instrument of Grace and making it all possible.

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire