

St. Anthony Indian Mission

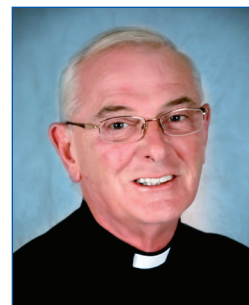
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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

A most happy and blessed New Year to you!

So far 2022 seems to be moving at a remarkable speed, or perhaps it's just my age telling me to slow down and enjoy each day as it comes. Good advice at any age I think!

The Christmas season excitement that has always been a hallmark of St. Anthony's had to be scaled down again this past year, but nevertheless the Pageant was very enjoyable. It was all hands to the wheel as we rapidly decorated the church so that we could anticipate Christmas during our all-school Mass on the last day of the semester. The students, especially the youngest, were in awe of the crib scene (minus the baby of course) and the particularly beautiful Christmas tree. There were a few confused faces as they spotted the miniature figure of a highland cow that I brought back from Scotland and could not resist slipping into the stable. No one had ever seen a long haired cow!



Thanks to the generosity of our friends, every student left with several bags of goodies, including reading material and a toy or two. Precautions meant that we could not host the usual visit by Santa. The children all readily accepted the explanation that because of Covid Santa was running behind schedule. I had to laugh, when in answer to a first grader's inquiry, Sr. Marsha replied that the teachers had been designated "deputy elves" for the week. In fact they had spent several late nights sorting and packing the gifts.

After the students left we had a brief gathering of the staff, and although there was a collective sigh of relief, there was also a genuine sense of loss as the students dispersed for another two weeks and the blanket of silence descended over the campus. Everyone had put so much effort into making sure that the students would have the best possible Christmas that they were completely exhausted -- albeit with a great sense of satisfaction.

Brimming with New Year spirit, the students returned to class on January 3rd, with several of the teachers having come in on January 1st and 2nd to prepare their classes. All were keen to swap holiday stories and settle back into learning mode. We kept the church decorations in place to keep the spirit and memory of Christmas alive. We even had a distribution of candy canes after the first school Mass of 2022.

Beginning the first week of the spring semester, our upper grades were subject to exams, and I am pleased to say they demonstrated that, despite the long vacation, they had been keeping up with their studies. Meanwhile, the faculty is preparing for the all-important parent/teacher conferences due at the end of January. While most will be "in-person" conferences, a few will be

on-line. Sr. Marsha and the faculty have met in preparation for the conferences and as usual they will be approached on the basis of the whole person's development: what is positive in the student's progress and the necessity of parental participation in the educational process.

The virus, of course, has managed to find its way back into the Pueblo. Thankfully our protocols have proven to be an effective means of protecting our young charges. Recently, two students tested positive and so their entire classes were sent into isolation. (We are maintaining a 10 day isolation period because of the variety of opinions on the need for only 5 days.) None of the other students were infected and all are returning to class next week.

One consequence of the latest surge is the need for renewed caution. The faculty gathered to discuss Catholic Schools Week which is always very enjoyable for the students and which we had planned to conclude with our Native American Day celebration. However, large gatherings still cannot be safely undertaken. Undaunted, we are planning other ways to celebrate the Zuni cultural heritage which we hope will include music, art and perhaps even storytelling. These activities we plan to "live-stream." We will put notices on our website stanthonyzuni.org with a link to the live-streaming site.

This month we welcome a new addition to our faculty. A retired teacher who has lifelong experience in remedial teaching with a specialization in reading has volunteered to join us for the remainder of the school year. Her aunt was a teacher in a nearby Native American school in Arizona, and Ms. Barbara wanted to give some of her time to assisting with the work to which her aunt had given so much of herself.

For me this is yet another sign of the abundant blessings with which the Lord cares for St. Anthony's. We still await the arrival of a Sister from India (the process is well into its second year). Meanwhile, Ms. Walker, our long term substitute, has been expertly teaching her class while another teacher will soon be taking maternity leave. So Ms. Barbara's arrival is perfectly timed for a smooth transition for our students. Who could have "planned" such a blessing?



As I have mentioned in previous letters, once every six years we have our official accreditation visit. Our next visit is scheduled for October of 2022. Our preparation work of submitting self-assessment studies is due in April. Under the guidance of the incomparable Sr. Marsha, the faculty has divided into twelve study groups for this purpose and the onerous task is almost complete. So we look forward with confidence to the months ahead.

I am reminded to mention our "Title One" classes which are designed to give a boost to students who have fallen behind or need extra coaching. This year Ms. Angel (yes that is her real name) has had great success with many of the students who are now able to maintain grades alongside their classmates.

The Christmas decorations may have been put away but the students are in high spirits; all have peace in their hearts and are looking forward to enjoying every day in a great year. As always, thank you for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Pat-".

Fr. Patrick McGuire