

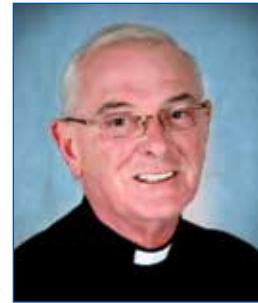
# St. Anthony Indian Mission

P.O. Box 486

Zuni, New Mexico 87327-0486

Toll Free Phone: (866) 832-8816

Website: [www.stanthonyzuni.org](http://www.stanthonyzuni.org)



From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

March 2022

Spring greetings from the high desert!

I apologize for once again being late in sending out our newsletter. We have been quite snowed under recently -- in many senses of that expression -- from actual snowstorms to machines breaking down just when you need them, and of course everything happening at the same time. But then this is the excitement of living in Zuni! As scripture reminds us, there is "a time for everything."

I must begin by sharing the sad news of the loss of Vernalita. Many of our friends will have been familiar with Vernalita's voice when they contacted our School. I know too that she had a friendly relationship with many as she chatted away with donors on the telephone. After fifty-plus years of service to St. Anthony's, Vernalita had to retire a year or so ago because of ill health. Sadly, she passed to the Lord's hands on March 18th, surrounded by family and friends. I was privileged to be able to administer the Sacraments to her before she departed from this life and to conduct our late night Rosary Vigil before her traditional Zuni burial. Such was the respect in which she was held that many of the parishioners joined us for the vigil in her home, including Fr. Dale Jamison ofm who was pastor here for thirteen years and who worked closely with Vernalita, Virginia and Priscilla to build up our development office through which our friends have been able to support and sustain the School.

The evening of the vigil seemed like the end of an era, which although sad, was also a tribute to the unsung work that so many carry out for the sake of our students. I pray the Good Lord will welcome Vernalita into His Kingdom.

As time rolls on, Lent came upon us seemingly very quickly. From my time in Africa, I still hold to the tradition of making our own ashes for Ash Wednesday. Many parishioners bring me their old palm branches which I burn with any excess Holy Oils. My process hit a few snags this year with the result that I produced a very thick form of ashes. The kids were delighted as they compared the marks on their foreheads at lunch, with the refrain "he got you good" echoing through the cafeteria. But at least they all seriously considered what they were going to do for Lent.



As I write, parent/teacher conferences are underway. It's a mark of the parental involvement at the School that the parking lot has been full all day. Sr. Marsha, the principal, always emphasizes the need for parents and guardians to be part of the learning process. I am happy to report that she has been successful in this endeavor -- which the teachers also take to heart -- as they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each student's development, always with a positive approach to the growth of the whole person. I am pleased to say that our students steadily progress in every way.

We had the assistance of a specialist in reading who joined us in January. Unfortunately, Ms. Barbara had to leave us this month and return to Philadelphia

for personal reasons. But not before she gave several of our students the tools necessary for them to develop their reading and other academic skills. We are deeply grateful for her generosity and help to both students and faculty.

On a lighter note, I recently noticed that Mr. Joe, our gym and library teacher, had a birthday coming in March. Joe is far from home and family, so I took the opportunity to express the whole School's appreciation for his contributions. Over the intercom, I announced that he was urgently needed in the cafeteria. A few moments later, he hurriedly entered the cafeteria looking fairly befuddled; it was then that the students shouted "Happy Birthday!" and presented him with a very large cake that was shared by all.



What caught my attention was the buzz of excitement throughout the cafeteria. I had not experienced that "buzz" since pre-covid days. It was a wake up moment for me, announcing that we were returning to a sense of normality. We all still wear masks and practice our distancing protocols, but the spirit of St. Anthony's is undiminished and despite the restrictions, the spontaneous and infectious enthusiasm of the young cried out to me: "enjoy each day, all is well."

There is no letup in our preparations for the renewal of the school's accreditation. The faculty, in twelve groups, has almost completed their self-assessment documents for submission. This month it was the turn of the School Board to complete a survey of their thoughts on the operations of the School. Board meetings are always convivial events and thankfully the members' good humor sustained us as we struggled to synthesize individual responses into a coherent report. I was designated to be the typist for the document. What can only be described as a war cry of "Comma!" resounded from the membership as I confused English and American punctuation. (At least that was my excuse.) The meeting ran from 5:30pm until well after 9:00pm. I went to bed that night praying, "thank you Lord comma for a good day."

As the School runs smoothly through its weekly activities, thanks to Sr. Marsha, the faculty and staff, I am still amazed at the breadth and complexity of tasks that are carried out with such dedication and good humor. Sr. Marsha preparing and guiding the staff for the week that lies ahead; Lulita dealing with the parents and never ending list of e-mails; Priscilla printing off the envelopes for each monthly letter, Virginia (though supposedly retired) asking when she can come to pack the letters, the ladies in the cafeteria preparing wholesome food for hungry kids, maintenance men keeping the computer system running, teachers quietly working with their students, all going on while I get under everyone's feet and find ways to make them all laugh.

There must always be time for expressing appreciation and so once more I thank you for making it all possible.



Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire