

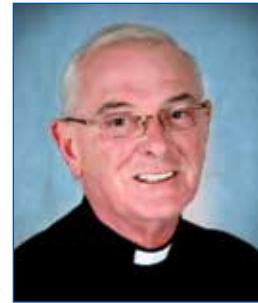
St. Anthony Indian Mission

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May 2022

From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Springtime greetings from Zuni, where the May sunshine is warming us both within and without. On Sunday I noticed a luxuriant grass growing by the roadside, though what was sustaining it is a mystery, since it has been very dry for several weeks. Mother Nature finds a way to let the sun bring forth the unique beauty of our pueblo surroundings, and the rapid approach of the end of the school year adds buoyant smiles to the already radiant faces of the students.

They say one should never begin a letter with an apology, but I do so seeking your understanding as our letter is late again this month. Hopefully we will soon return to our usual schedule, updating you on the life of St. Anthony's Mission School, which you generously make possible.

One piece of news that I must share immediately is that 10 of our alumni have been included in this year's National Honors Role! While we sincerely congratulate them, I feel that our School and our friends deserve a wee smile, as we see the efforts we make "bearing fruit, fruit that will last" -- to quote from Scripture.

May is arguably the busiest month at St. Anthony's: we are not only bringing the school year to a close, but each of the staff is busy trying to complete their own individual workloads as well -- with many critical meetings to attend on top of everything else.

As I mentioned in my last letter, on their return from Easter vacation the students went into exam mode. The silence around the classrooms was intense. Some years back I noticed students being overconfident with exams with unfortunate results. Not so these days! From the youngest to the oldest, they made every effort toward well-deserved outcomes. Report cards are being prepared as I write, and I know that there will be many more grateful smiles among students and parents alike.

During May we had a rather beautiful church service prepared and carried out by our graduating class. The whole School gathered in church as the 8th graders processed inside in full traditional dress. The boys formed an honor guard for the girls as they approached, carrying flowers and a small crown. They led the School in prayer and ceremoniously crowned the statue of Mary. They concluded with prayers for the other students, for our donors, and for peace. They brought an inspiring dignity to the service which reflected the inherent dignity of the Zuni people.

The service is available on our live-stream website -- <http://stanthonyzunichurch.dyndns.org>. I will leave it on the site for a while. (The first few minutes were simply folks gathering, so please persevere to the end.)

Since the graduates were in traditional dress, this was also a wonderful pre-graduation photo opportunity. I asked the students to pose in the front room of the rectory where there is a collection of Zuni pottery acquired by the Franciscan missionaries over many years. The ceiling is impossible to photograph in its entirety, but it has a





mural depicting the first arrivals in Zuni, ornamented with traditional designs. It was painted in 1928 by a gentleman whose great great grandchildren still attend St. Anthony's. Just being in that room seems to generate a pride in the students, as they see their heritage preserved and honored. (Personally, I am always nervous in the room in case I should break anything!)

May is the traditional time for our young students to receive their First Holy Communion. Srs. Satya and Ansi and Ms. Leola had been preparing them since the beginning of Lent. This year the parents chose to have the girls wear white dresses and the boys to dress in more Western attire. Two of the children had been unwell prior to the group event, but thankfully they were able to receive their First Communion the following week. The joy amongst the children was obvious as they joined other students for Holy Communion at the Wednesday All School Mass. (It did mean two special cakes for the

feast afterwards but no one complained -- least of all me!) I smiled as two rather elderly members of the parish told me that as classmates they had made their first Holy Communion together. There are certain things a person never forgets!

Lastly, I wanted to mention two smaller events that took place recently. This year, the first through fourth grades have been raising plants in their classrooms from seed. They transferred their fledgling plants to planters in the yard, and every day they tenderly water the shoots and stand in awe as they measure the growth. The wonder in the eyes of the children is infectious. We also introduced the students to pottery making which is becoming a lost Zuni art but which is an elective in High School. The pride with which the kids show me their creations is incredible. I am excited to see the finished articles next month!



We are on the last run up to graduation and the end of the year. As I look back on the last few weeks, I am amazed at the breadth of education that we offer our students. Obviously our academic efforts are proving successful, with many alumni receiving National Honors. But we can also count achievement through our emphasis on traditional values that engender a wholesome pride within hearts. Not least of our achievements lies in an awareness of our students as they grow as spiritual people who find wonder in creation and become solid, caring and loving members of their community. The May sun is indeed shining. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.



Sincerely,

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

Fr. Patrick McGuire