

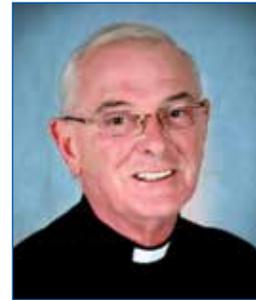
St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

September 2022

Sometimes I feel all I can do is sit back and scratch my head in wonder!

I had our August newsletter all written and ready to send when our printing machine decided to give up the ghost. It took the tech guys so long to repair the machine that it became too late to send it out. We did manage to put it on our website, but this letter is meant to be a sort of "catch up" for the missing weeks. So forgive me if I repeat some of our news.

Thankfully the students are back and full of energy, and they seem genuinely happy to be back in school. I suspect their parents are even more delighted. This has been a very long hot summer for all of us. Many of the students have grown and changed over the summer months, some of whom I could hardly recognize. The Pueblo still encourages the wearing of masks, but it doesn't help when your old eyes are trying to identify students in class.

We are returning to our full range of sports and social activities as long as the virus stays under control. This week, sign-up sheets went out for cross country running and we are being inundated with eager applicants. We have even begun elections for a student council. It's now almost three years since we have been able to hold these events, and all are eager to take part despite the grueling trails that the runners will follow.

Just before St. Anthony's re-opened, three teachers reported that they had been in contact with people who tested positive for Covid and, as such, they had to isolate for 5 to 7 days. Poor Sr. Marsha had to scramble for teachers to cover classes for the first few days of lessons. As usual, our faculty rose to the task and classes took place as planned. It was another small reminder that we are not "out of the woods" quite yet, so caution is still our motto.

One seemingly small event raised spirits when junior high classes returned to the cafeteria for meals. Last year they would collect trays for breakfast and lunch to eat in their classrooms. Having the whole School together at lunch really creates a "buzz" of lively excitement that is truly infectious in a good sense.

It was wonderful to have the students back, but it also meant that my carefully planned summer maintenance schedule had to be brought to a conclusion. (Not that we had been able to adhere very closely to my plan as such. . . .)

Two unexpected tasks took us by surprise. The first was an underground water leak at the teachers' accommodations. Stemming the flow of precious water meant digging trenches to find the source and then reworking the ancient piping. This



job was complicated by the arrival of the monsoon rains which proceeded to fill the trenches more quickly than we could empty them.



The second task to be addressed was the discovery of a large bee colony located in the roof of one of our oldest buildings. Given regulations concerning the eviction of bees, it took four people six days to remove the hive. One consolation came as several staff members were able to procure jars

of honey. That was one long process that I carefully supervised from a great distance!

As of late July we were a little behind schedule when we received a wonderful blessing. A group of 18 high school students from Centennial, Colorado visited us. The young people were nothing short of marvelous in aiding the teachers to prepare classrooms, helping with painting, working with custodians, and weeding around the campus. Their cheerful industry meant that St. Anthony's was well prepared for the return of the students. What a blessing those young people were!

Our weekly routines are now well underway. This, of course, includes our Wednesday "All School Mass." I was pleasantly surprised that last year's choir still remembered their hymns and sang with gusto. But it was the kindergarten class that touched our hearts as they led the whole school in a reflective song after Holy Communion. They even added gestures to their rendition.

Thanks to a government scheme (unusual for private schools), we acquired over 100 new laptops for our students to use. They of course had to be set up and protections put in place for the sake of the students. That meant several days of IT work, but they are a wonderful new asset for the students and their much needed skills for the modern age.

We still have not been able to operate the school bus service for lack of a driver. Hopefully we will find one soon. You would not believe how old our buses are; although still operational, they really need to be replaced. I have been saving funds for that project but still am a long way from achieving the goal.

The first round of student testing is underway as I write. This is particularly important since it is a guide to teachers on how best to assist the students. We held the first teacher/parent conferences in late August with a near 100% turnout of parents. Clearly our parents take seriously Sr. Marsha's reminder that education is a partnership of home and school. I was delighted when several parents took time to drop by the rectory for a quick chat with their old pastor.

I am well into my 8th year at St. Anthony's and should have learned by now that I can plan as much as I like, but there will always be hitches. But whatever comes our way, when it is met with faith and a prayer for the wellbeing of the students -- it becomes a blessing. It is truly a wondrous experience.

As I always say, and mean it sincerely -- thank you for making St. Anthony's possible!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire