

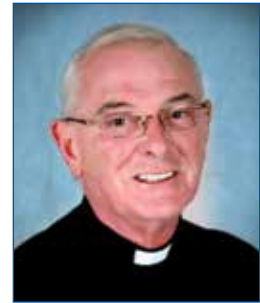
St. Anthony Indian Mission

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November 2022

From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once again from all of us at St. Anthony's where "time stands still for no man," as the old saying goes. On a visit to one of the stores in Gallup, I found Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations all on sale at the same time! No wonder there is confusion for everyone except the kids. The young are determined to enjoy each day whatever comes. That could be a life lesson for us all.

No matter how often I remind our students that Halloween is the Eve of All Hallows (All Saints), ghosts and ghouls still fill their heads for the last day of October. This year was particularly enjoyable for the students, since, for the first time since Covid entered our lives, they could once again let their imaginations take shape in extraordinary costumes. The 8th Grade set to work decorating the schoolyard and left no corner unadorned. Mike the maintenance man was running around fetching masks, cobwebs and a dozen other things from storage; even the staff joined in the spirit. Meanwhile our poor teachers were trying to continue with their lessons.



I am pleased to say that I managed to sidestep being called upon to judge the Halloween costumes. (That is how you can lose friends very quickly!) I contented myself with supplying bags of candy for every student, carefully packed for me by the cafeteria staff. I am heartened by the fact that later in the month the students will put on a display of handiwork depicting Saints of their choice that will be open to parents for viewing. Skeletons and witches will give way to halos and wings.

At the end of October, St. Anthony's had the long awaited visitation from the Accreditation team whose task was to validate the self-study document prepared by the faculty. The team was comprised of a leader from the Accreditation body (WCEA) and teachers from other schools in the diocese. As I have previously mentioned, the self-study probed into every aspect of our school life, including areas such as academic achievements, teaching methods, use and interpretation of data on student progress, relationship with parents and the local community and of course our Catholic Identity. They paid particular attention to the way in which the School had taken seriously and implemented the recommendations from the Accreditation process that had taken place six years ago.



That was a reminder that the process was for the benefit and improvement of what we offer to our students.

The team met with our school board, with parents, with individual faculty members and reported to both the leaders of the self-study program and the faculty as a whole, together with the superintendent of schools for the diocese. It was a short but thorough examination of all that we do in our little School.

The team's recommendations remain confidential until they have presented them to the WCEA commission in the spring of next year. However, they gave the highest praise in every area of their visit and were particularly grateful for the quality and depth of the self-study document that, as they said, made their work exceptionally easy and addressed every criterion with which they were tasked. Congratulations to Sr. Marsha and the faculty for a job well done.

Although the visit was in no way intrusive and all the staff was relaxed and confident, we were still conscious that we wanted to put the "best foot forward" during the visit. When it was all over, I took the unusual step of inviting the faculty to a celebratory meal in Gallup, forty miles from Zuni. (There is only one restaurant in Zuni that is all too familiar to us.) While we wait for the recommendations to be made known, I am certain of an excellent outcome. Meanwhile, it is always good to let people know that they are appreciated.



Before the visit, we had another parent/teacher conference day. It too was highly successful with almost 100% turnout of parents on the day, while those who could not attend at that time met with teachers soon after. It was truly encouraging for the faculty -- all of whom reported on positive feedback from the parents/guardians. We do, of course, stress to parents that co-operation between home and school is essential for the growth of the students. Clearly, the message has taken root.

As I mentioned in my last letter, our cross-country team had a great season. I have been inundated with requests for new uniforms. The kids are really proud to represent their School at these events. The uniforms will be ordered for next year. When the short season came to a close the students were down-hearted for all of five minutes before signing up for the ever popular (and I sometimes think, second religion) basketball season! The gym resounds with bouncing balls and not too gentle footfalls as they hone their skills. Who can keep pace with the enthusiasm and energy of the young? We can but hope to direct it all to good purpose.

We have yet to restart our fundraising activities such as the monthly bingo (being ever cautious of the spread of Covid even in its milder form), but thankfully school days are returning to normal with that fine balance of fun, discipline and learning in which our young charges grow in mind, heart and spirit.

Thank you for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire