

St. Anthony Indian Mission

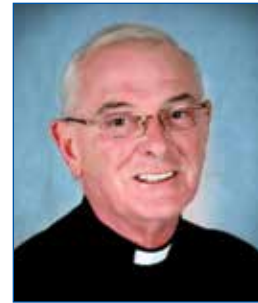
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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Warm greetings once more from all of us at St. Anthony's! I say "warm" in the hope that friendly words will compensate for the chilling winds and snows that we have been experiencing. We wake up to sub-zero temperatures, followed by bright sunshine in the afternoon -- and then snow falls overnight. Our valley Pueblo never quite lines up with the "accu-weather" forecasts. When neighboring areas are contemplating spring planting we are hit with snowstorms or dust storms or anything else Mother Nature has with which to surprise us!

To be honest, the reality of our remoteness is deep in my thoughts at this time. The day had seen fierce snowstorms when I was called to the local hospital. The roads were slippery, and the snow continued to fall. A man had fallen while opening a gate for his wife. Internal bleeding called for emergency treatment, followed by surgery at a larger facility. Because of the storms, he could not be transported out of the Pueblo until the next day. Despite all efforts, he never regained consciousness and passed away a few days later. Thankfully, I had been privileged to administer the sacraments to him.

Moments such as that bring to mind our human frailty and the necessity of "being there" for each other. And of course being ever thankful for the dedication of doctors, nurses and neighbors. Although we may be only 40 miles from the nearest large town, at times it can seem infinitely farther. Such vulnerability necessitates the support of the community, inventiveness in distress, and above all it means being good citizens with Christian hearts.

In some ways, those sentiments reflect the essence of our activities at St. Anthony's as we focus on the positive formation of our students. Knowledge and skill sets are only some of the elements that contribute to persons living out of Love.

The academic rigor of the School continues unabated. Sr. Marsha (our principal) visits each class every day. I was fascinated as she shared with me the inventive ways our teachers find to engage their students. Sr. Marsha also facilitates the ongoing formation of our teachers with the introduction of new methods and the availability of teaching aids. Our recent Student Recognition Day highlighted the outstanding progress being made by our students, bearing testimony to the efforts of both staff and students.



The highlight of this month was Catholic Schools Week, when we celebrate our identity as a school and as individuals. After two years of reduced activities (due to Covid) we were able to "let our hair down" a little more this year. Each day had its particular theme: crazy hair day; dress up and dress



down days; pajama day; and movie day to name but a few of the more fun-oriented events. Our kids are truly inventive when it comes to having fun!

On a more serious note, you may remember that last year we held a Festival of the Saints where students made presentations of particular Saints who had caught their interest. The winners of each school's exhibition (within the diocese) then displayed their presentations at our Cathedral, and our Bishop duly presented awards after he had celebrated Mass for the schools in our area. I was very proud when two of our students won awards. (Thankfully, I was not a judge. One can quickly lose popularity when choosing one student's efforts over that of another!)

As it turned out, I was the official St. Anthony's driver who transported the students to the Cathedral. I also con-celebrated the Mass, and was the most popular person in Gallup when I took the students to McDonald's on the way home. As has happened at other times, strangers remarked on the good manners and behavior of our kids in the restaurant. I was even more proud as I noticed some students share with those who were short of cash for their meals. I made up a few cash shortages as well, and I must say -- never was a Scotsman so happy to fork out cash!

A second event took place at our weekly "All School Mass." The students had all been considering the topic of "Bullying" and its prevention. They prepared posters on the subject, and then together with parents and guardians they brought their posters to church and presented them before the Lord at the altar. The posters were later hung in the School cafeteria to remain, as a reminder, for the remainder of the school year. It was an important life lesson carefully considered, and in a way sanctified, as they brought their thoughts in visible form before the Lord.

I had to be on my best behavior when the Superior General of Sr. Marsha's religious congregation visited us for two days. Sr. Patricia has, as one of her duties, to visit each of her congregation's missions during her term of office. I was delighted to find that she came from London, very close to where I had attended seminary. She had also ministered in Glasgow at a parish where I also had helped on several occasions. She visited with our students who were fascinated by her gentle north London accent. We had much to speak about, and she was intrigued as I gave her (what Sr. Marsha calls) my "25 cent tour" of the Zuni Pueblo. She saw the beauty of our town, the difficulties confronting our people, and the joy in our students as well as their reverence at Mass.

I began this letter by sharing some of the thoughts within my heart during a sad moment, but I hope that my recounting of some of these other events will show how we strive to address the realities that our students face and how we are preparing them for the days that lie ahead.

Thank you for making it all possible.



Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire