

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings from the high desert where winter is slowly changing into spring despite some very cold evenings and nights. Although we have been through a rough winter, we are grateful for the snow and rain. We all know how necessary this moisture is to see us through the high heat of summer.

I apologize that my letter is late once again in being sent out. The good news is that it seems at last we have mastered the process that Ms. Priscilla had handled so well for many years. It is a great relief for me that both Daphne and Valerie have settled into the administration positions from which our dear Priscilla and Lulita retired last year. These were "big shoes" to fill and both are doing admirably -- freeing yours truly for more pastoral tasks.

Our students returned after the Christmas break full of energy (where do the young find it?), and ready for fun and learning. The fun side of school certainly encourages the students to enjoy the academic center of their day.

One event that is always embraced by the students is Catholic Schools Week. This year, crazy hair day, pajama day, etc. were augmented by a "Mini Carnival." Basically, a whole host of games were set up at which the students won tickets. There several different prizes available according to the number of tickets won. It was hilarious: a couple of parents arrived wanting to take part and were disappointed when told it was only for students! (Some even claimed the rank of alumni but the organizers held fast.) It struck me as significant when junior high students claimed "cuddly toys" as their prizes. So they do grow up, but thankfully the "inner child" remains.

An innovation begun last year and held again this year, was the "Miracle Fair." For this exhibit, students chose a saint, researched the person and produced a poster presentation of their findings. I was impressed on two levels: one was the depth to which some students went to understand the person they were presenting; the other was the links they found between the saint and lessons from Holy Scripture. It gave me a fresh insight into the blessings of being at a Catholic School. Many parents turned out to view the presentations which afforded



me the opportunity to chat and get a renewed sense of just how supportive our wonderful parents are! The only downside was that I was appointed one of the judges. But I did my best, and prizes were given out for the best presentations which included gift vouchers and much sought after "secular" basketballs!

The academic activities continue alongside the fun. I, of course, take an interest in the progress of all the students. Recently, there had been a delay in restarting our "Title 1" program to boost the progress of some of the



students. Our Miss Angel, the teacher for this program who had made terrific progress with the students, unfortunately had to leave us and there was a delay in finding a replacement. Thankfully, however, Mr. Jim has arrived and is taking the students in hand. Coming from the public school sector, I think he recognizes the benefit of our smaller classes and the ethos of the School. The students have taken to him and already progress is being made.

Sr. Marsha and I did have to face a major difficulty when one of our Indian Sisters was temporarily transferred to another convent. The long and short is that another Indian Sister had to leave the country because of immigration difficulties, which left her school in difficulties. The transfer left us short one teacher. With amazing generosity, Ms. Trudy came out of retirement to fill our vacancy. The students of course love her, and I am grateful for her great kindness. It does leave us short of substitute teachers in emergencies, but other members of our staff have been quick to respond to the needs of the moment. That speaks to me of the great commitment our faculty has to their students. All of our teachers go well beyond the ordinary requirements of a job, and, as I do, see their task as a vocation born of love for the children.

Basketball season is well underway. We have had two home games so far which were a joy to attend, despite some of our teams not doing so well. Even so, St. Anthony's sportsmanship was proudly on display. In one of the games, the team from St. Bonaventure's fielded some very tall players which was somewhat intimidating for our naturally smaller Zuni students. Nevertheless, St. Anthony's put up a great show. I laughed my heart out as I watched one of our "tiny by comparison" fifth graders dance around the near-six-foot opposition. He was great!

The holy season of Lent is upon us. I issued cards and envelopes to all the students on which I invited them to write their Lenten commitments and seal them in the envelopes. These they duly presented at the altar during Mass on Ash Wednesday. During the course of Lent, I will return the envelopes to the students unopened -- just as a reminder of their promises. It is a sneaky way for me to keep them focused on Lent as a time for inner growth of the spirit.

Early Lent and Easter does mean crowding several spiritual activities into a very short time while ensuring the holistic growth of the students. It is a challenging time, but thanks to the expertise of Sr. Marsha and our faculty it will ensure the well balanced development of all of us.

As I write to you drums are echoing across the campus as students prepare for Native American Day. That will be another amazing event, to be detailed in my next letter. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.



Sincerely,

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

Fr. Patrick McGuire