

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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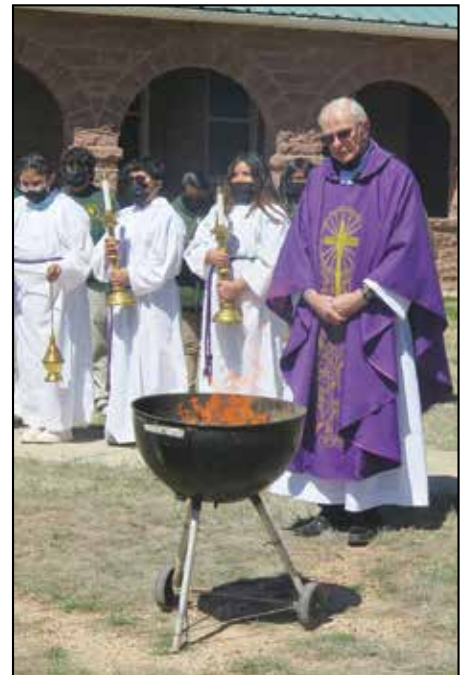
From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

There is an old saying: "you win some and you lose some." The adage is reverberating through my thoughts as I consider the last couple of weeks at St. Anthony's.

But let's begin with the winnings that must never be forgotten. I ended my last letter as we prepared for Easter celebrations. How could they possibly be complete without an Egg hunt? Our Fifth graders very eagerly organized the event for the lower school. (This has developed into a tradition for our Fifth graders.) Even the uncooperative weather would not stand in their way: would you believe the winners found the eggs buried in snow!

It was a great prelude to the final day before school closed for Easter break, heightening the excitement among the students. The last day of school was taken up with our All School Mass, after which the school dismissed at lunch time. The unique moment was after Mass when the school assembled in the parking lot around an early Easter fire. Into that fire we put the Lenten pledges from the students on how they could help "Jesus carry his cross." These were undertakings focused on how they could help others. As the smoke dispelled into the air, we all prayed that their prayers would be taken to heaven but remain deep in their hearts. It was a significant moment for all of our students.

I was delighted when many of the students, particularly our altar servers, attended the Triduum services (Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday). They had been only briefly prepared for the very different worship of those days, but rose to the occasion with great dignity. They even asked a few questions about the symbolic actions of Good Friday. Definitely, another win! (I even had some leftover candy on Easter Sunday, so that was a win for me.)



The greatest win for us was the arrival of our new school bus. Our two existing buses date from 1999 and 2007. They have served us well but age is telling. I long ago started to put a little money aside each year for their replacement, but was nowhere near to meeting the cost of a new bus. With amazing generosity, one group made a major contribution towards the cost and a group of Sisters added to the fund. Together they met 70% of what was needed. Finally, after months of waiting, the new bus arrived in Zuni. The win was that the bus arrived, the loss was that I actually had to pay for it! It was a big surprise on the first day back at school when a brand new bus arrived at each pick-up point on our route. The kids were delighted at the sparkling new ride, complete with music and seat belts. How long it will stay that way will be a wonder to behold.

We, of course, had to bless the bus which we did after Mass. First we prayed for the Lord to send his angels to protect those traveling on the bus,



after which I blessed the bus with copious amounts of holy water. But the ceremony would not have been complete without the traditional "launching." The cork was popped from a bottle of fizzy drink (non-alcoholic of course), a drop poured for the ancestors, then the remainder was lavishly spread around the vehicle, with a few drops reaching the heads of the students. The kids loved the last part.

As you might imagine, with so many wins, I was feeling pretty elated. I should have known better. For some time now the plumbing in our teachers' apartments has been troublesome. Over the years the building has been subject to many alterations. No one really knew how the pipes ran, nor where clean-outs and joints were to be found. None of our routine "fixes" seemed to solve the problem. Eventually we tried to locate the trouble spot, only to find that the sewer line running under the 'L' shaped building was cast iron, buried deep in the earth -- and it had broken. I believe that it dated back to the 1950s. So the excavations began. The pipe runs under three apartments and all the floors had to be ripped up. The further along the line that we dug out, the deeper the pipe went underground.

Needless to say, it was a dreadful job to undertake. I had to call in help, and the men bravely crawled under the floors to expose the pipework. Outside the building we eventually found a clean-out buried two feet underground. The how and the why will probably never be known.

It was an unexpected hardship for our budget. But at least we solved the problem. Ordination to the priesthood never prepared me for the challenges of St. Anthony's. But at least my skill set has increased yet again.



There are so many different aspects to ensuring that we provide a safe, secure, healthy environment, within which our students can obtain a solid education. I have had to learn how the education system works, (I daily give thanks for Sr. Marsha's experience and the faculty's dedication), while acquiring ever greater knowledge of the technology needed today to provide for the students' education -- in addition to gaining an understanding of our Native American culture, building and safety requirements -- and now the language of plumbing!

Every day at St. Anthony's brings a new adventure -- sometimes a great challenge -- but always with genuine gratitude for our wonderful students. Although we still have several weeks left in the semester, the students are now looking ahead to the summer vacation. And with the coming of vacation, of course, comes that mixed joy and sorrow as the 8th graders graduate from St. Anthony's and prepare to move on to High School and a whole new way of life.

Wins or losses, miraculously we make the best of our situation. "With God being for us, who could be against?" Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire