

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once more from the High Desert, living up to its name as temperatures rise under the cloudless blue skies. I delayed a little in sending out this month's letter so as to report on our annual graduation ceremony, as our 8th graders depart to begin their new phase of education at high school.

My strongest recollection of May 2024 will be of cakes! I think we cornered the market this year. There was a cake for First Holy Communion one Sunday, cake for Graduation the following Friday, followed closely by cake the next Sunday for Confirmations and finally on the last day of school -- a farewell cake for three of our teachers, who sadly, are leaving us this year. Even my conspicuous sweet tooth was a bit "over-indulged" with the surfeit of cakes!

But first let me speak of our graduates. Our tradition is that the graduating class lead a prayer service in May during which they crown the statue of the Blessed Mother. This they did with amazing dignity in full Zuni traditional dress; it was beautifully executed.

Following this, the students individually presented their portfolios to a panel. It was the first time I had been part of such a panel, and I was very impressed with the students' presentations. I was especially struck by their objective assessment of their own shortcomings and the ways in which they were seeking to improve. They answered questions posed by the panel, and I was astounded at the thoughtful ways in which they responded. That to me speaks volumes regarding the benefits of attending St. Anthony's and the success of our faculty's commitments to the students.



Graduation day finally arrived. It was my 10th time officiating at St. Anthony's graduation Mass, yet even so I was more than a little nervous. The Mass is always an act of thanksgiving for the graduates and for the faculty. The School choir, under Sr. Marsha's direction, sang beautifully. The graduates ministered at the Mass with the readings, prayers and offertory. As always, those prayers give thanks for those donors and friends (like you!) who make St. Anthony's possible.

At the end, Mr. Bobelu, the 8th grade home room teacher, called each graduate forward and I had the honor of presenting them with their diploma and Sr. Marsha, our principal, handed each a personalized copy of the Holy Bible. Our hope and prayer is that they will make good use of Holy Scripture as they step outside of the comfortable and safe environment of St. Anthony's into the big wide world.

The following week the local high school had its graduation. We noticed with no small sense of pride that graduates of St. Anthony's took places of honor



at that ceremony and were selected to give speeches and introduce special guests. We were further encouraged as we learned of our alumni being granted entry into colleges and universities throughout New Mexico. May the Good Lord keep them safe.

The week following graduation was filled with fun as the other grades looked forward to the summer vacation. Despite Sr. Marsha's strict reminder that it was still "learning time", there was much joy and hilarity permeating every classroom.

As School closed at lunchtime on the 24th, I made my contribution by supplying ice cream for all the students, which of course raised the excitement level even further. As the students headed home, a blanket of silence descended on the campus.

The faculty, too, were exceptionally quiet as we gathered for a special lunch in the cafeteria. As I mentioned, three of our faculty are leaving us this year. Ms. Chimoni, who has been the heart of our Kindergarten for the last 14 years is finally retiring from teaching. She will be coming in during the new school year as required, but health issues are preventing her from taking up a full time position. We will miss her greatly since she has provided our students with a solid basis for learning as well as introducing them, ever so gently, into academic discipline. Sr. Ansi has been appointed to a new institution in Texas. Her departure date has yet to be fixed and so she will be with us, we hope, for the first part of the new year. Mr. Jeremy (6th Grade, social studies and religion) will leave us to return to his home in New Jersey. Each of the three has become deeply rooted in the hearts of us all, and we will miss them sorely.

As I write to you, summer school has started, so happily there are signs of life around the campus once more. For myself and the staff the next few weeks will be filled with maintenance work as we prepare for the reopening in August. I mentioned in previous letters that I was thankful not to have needed to dig up the parking lot because of plumbing issues. My elation was short lived as a noticeable depression in the parking lot became deeper. Excavation was required to find that the asphalt had been laid on top of a now rotting tree stump!

The quadrangle in front of the classrooms is once again overgrown with weeds pushing up through the gravel. So we decided to cooperate with Mother Nature rather than fighting against her and are reworking the whole area. So there is much to keep us occupied over the summer "break". But as Graduation has shown, it's all for the "kids" and so very worthwhile. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.



Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire