

St. Anthony Indian Mission

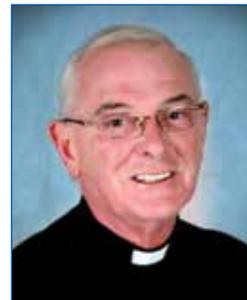
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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

My apologies for being tardy once again in writing. However, much has been happening over these last few weeks as our ever-lively little School moved into yet a higher gear of activity on just about every level!

The onslaught of activities began with taking a group of students to the Southwest Catholic Youth Conference up in Farmington. I was quite surprised when several students had been asking me when the annual event would take place. I was even more surprised by the number of students who signed up to go and turned up on the scheduled day. I ended up with a group of 52 young people from our area. Of the several hundred in attendance, I believe we were the largest single group there. The Conference is an enjoyable mixture of music, talks and prayer. Although I wonder if our stopping at McDonald's for supper on the way home might have been the main attraction!

At the restaurant, I let each student give their order themselves. Every student was clear and polite in their request, and remembered to thank the staff. When I went to pay the bill, the computer hung up several times calculating the various discounts. The manager ended up patiently reentering each order individually. (The bill ended up less than originally calculated.) Staff and customers all seemed to enjoy the experience, judging from the laughter that abounded, and I was very proud of the good manners displayed by our young people.



We soon moved on to Halloween. Our newly reformed PTO worked tirelessly with the students to convert the gym basement from our youth club into a Haunted House. I was astounded at the gruesome imagination of both parents and students. The students took inordinate pleasure in creeping up on me as I wandered through the dark, smoke-engulfed rooms. One of the first graders wanted to check out the Haunted House with permission of his parents. His grip on my hand tightened as we passed from scene to scene; it made me feel quite brave.



With several other haunted houses taking place at the same time, I was concerned that all the effort might be in vain. Nevertheless, by the end of the evening, 250 people had passed through our doors -- all of whom judged St. Anthony's to be the "scariest". It was great fun, of course, and raised the public profile of the School. Tidying up afterwards was quite another matter.

The exuberant energy of the young burst forth with a Halloween parade around the school courtyard. Again, I marveled at the creativity of the costumes: some were complex, but others

were remarkably simple and effective. The parade was followed with "trick or treat" visits between classrooms. (My stock of candy was soon gone, of course, but the students did not forget to leave a piece or two or three for their old pastor.)

Toward the end of that evening came the installation of our student council members. They gathered in the church after the All School Mass. Each with a lighted candle promised to serve the School community to the best of his or her ability. Each was presented with a badge of office, and the whole School united in prayer that they would be blessed in their undertakings. I was quite touched to receive their commitments and look forward to working with them and their guidance teachers.

Indigenous Week followed a couple weeks later. Some days students were allowed to wear traditional dress to school, while on other days they wore specified colors to commemorate historical events. When that week was finally over, everyone looked quite tame in their school uniforms.



While all this was taking place, genuine education continued unabated. I certainly did not envy our faculty as they bravely sought to impart new knowledge and skills to students who were looking forward to the next fun-filled day. Yet they succeeded and kept the overexcited pupils on track in their daily studies. Patience and perseverance are clearly the hallmark of our faculty.

The administration of the School has many elements that are seldom in public view, yet are strictly required -- while some are actual legal necessities. I found one such requirement that really challenged me this month. The "Breakfast and Lunch" national program that assists in providing meals for students was due for triennial review. The auditors asked us to provide a copy of our "Health and Wellness" policy. This was a completely new area of expertise for me. Valerie and I unearthed the existing policy (32 pages long); it encompasses not only the food served (as one might expect) but also physical activity for students, breaks during the day, class parties, community awareness and myriad other issues. I am grateful to the auditors for their advice and guidance in reformulating the policy into a concise document. The task completed, we formed a required "Wellness Committee" to regularly oversee the objectives and goals that we set ourselves.

Despite mapping out long and short term plans for the School, from day to day I never really know what new tasks will be presented. Thankfully, through the assistance of our wonderful faculty and staff, we effectively keep St. Anthony's moving forward for the growth and formation of our young charges. Next on the calendar, we look forward to our various Christmas programs and celebrations. Our lives go forward at an astounding joy-filled pace. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.

Sincerely,

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

Fr. Patrick McGuire