

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

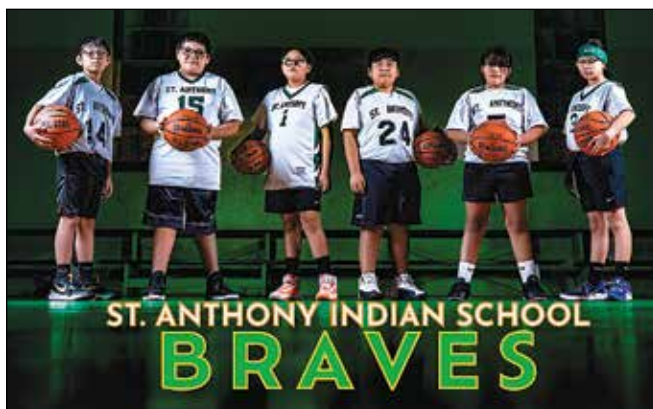
Greetings once more from all of us at St. Anthony's! My last two communications were hot on the heels of each other, so I thought I would delay writing a wee bit and let us all settle into 2026.

When last I wrote, school was breaking up for the Christmas vacation. After we cleaned up from the Christmas festivities, for the staff and myself the weeks seemed to pass as mere moments before we were once again preparing for the return of the students. Thanks to our tireless, dedicated staff, St. Anthony's was bright and shiny when the students returned.

In kicking off the new year, I always ask the students if they are happy to be back. Surprisingly, many reply that they are indeed glad to get back to school! It is always a heartwarming moment to know that the students truly enjoy being here at St. Anthony's.

For all of us now it is business as usual. We had originally scheduled a round of testing for early February, but after a faculty meeting we decided to move this up to January in order to have concrete results to discuss at our Parent/Teacher conferences. This turned out to be a wise decision.

The test results showed a marked improvement in student performance across the board, and in particular in reading skills. The improvement was highly significant, and at the following faculty meeting we explored the results. The general consensus from our teachers was that the students were more attentive in class, listening closely to instruction, and absorbing the lessons. What more can one ask of them? It was a reassuring moment for me personally, and much deserved credit was given to the teachers for all their efforts. Their dedication is proving highly beneficial to the students. I can only be thankful for their generosity of spirit.



As we embarked on the new year, basketball practice and competitions soon got underway. One of our school board members, Melanie, has taken up coaching our teams. Three days each week, they faithfully meet for practice and coaching. Our kids are amazingly dynamic and have "held their own" in every game. (I get exhausted just watching them!) I happen to know the coach of another team whom we play. She confided to me that the sportsmanship of our students is something she would

love to see in her own players. Melanie told me how proud she was of our students; indeed, we strive to form true ladies and gentlemen at St. Anthony's.

Of course we don't stop with sports when it comes to our students' social life. A few of our students are learning basic carpentry skills on the weekends under the guidance of Mr. Kuhn. (For safety reasons, the use of power tools is limited, as is the class size.) For their current project, they are working on building a new storage shed at the School. I look forward to showing you the finished construction. It is already very impressive and certainly beyond my capabilities!

The month of January, of course, included Catholic Schools Week. We decided to change the format of the Week, that in years past concluded with a poster exhibition featuring the students' biographies of individual saints. Instead, we decided to focus more on individual students presenting their findings to peer groups, rather than in the form of displays. It's fascinating what the students absorb through studying the lives of the saints. Naturally, we also held dress-up and dress-down days, a school bingo day, and a movie day. It's all about having fun and celebrating our School identity.

This year, I wanted to introduce a distinctly Catholic element to the Week, and so we held a trivia quiz during the lunch hours. It had some surprising results. I divided the students into small groups within grades. One question was: "Which Old Testament hero had his strength in his hair?". Two groups answered: Samsung! They had confused a mobile phone manufacturer with a religious hero! That's the age we live in! To be honest, there was only tepid interest in the quizzes until I began handing out prizes. When the others saw gifts of religious medals, small crucifixes, and massive bars of candy, looks of regret appeared on more than a few faces.

We had our regular all-school Mass during Catholic Schools Week, at the end of which we presented student recognition awards. Some weeks previously, I had had a serious talk with one of our students about misbehavior. (I personally hate those talks.) Imagine how I felt when I presented that very student with our Citizen of the Month Award! I had to restrain myself from being too enthused as I presented the certificate, but I could only say, "thank you Lord for leading him to listen!" Moments like that are priceless.



Our 8th graders are preparing for a trip to Notre Dame University. This will be the second "pilgrimage" as they call it from our School. It is designed to encourage students to aim for a college education. During the visit, they experience campus life and meet current students and graduates from the University. They take part in webinar presentations prior to the trip which are aimed toward appreciating and treasuring their cultural identity while moving into adult life in wider society. Notre Dame covers most of the costs except travel. So students and parents are busy fundraising -- truly putting "heart and soul" into their efforts.

One somewhat difficult task that I have is to write recommendation letters for students applying to high schools outside of our small pueblo. There is a great deal of competition for such placements. It is difficult since I recognize that they will be leaving our little family very soon. But then that is why we exist -- to equip our students to go forward in life with a strong educational foundation, a firm moral compass, and a thirst for learning. With this foundation intact, it is hoped that they can build a good life both for themselves and for their community. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Pat". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Patrick McGuire