

St. Anthony Indian Mission

P.O. Box 486

Zuni, New Mexico 87327-0486

Toll Free Phone: (866) 832-8816

Website: www.stanthonyzuni.org

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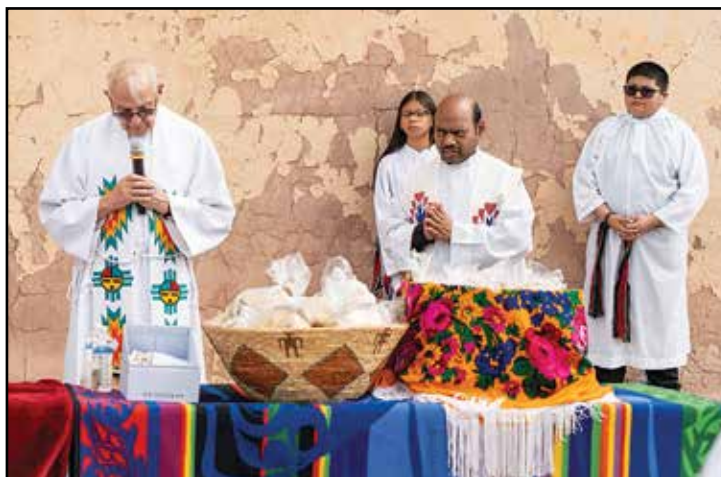


From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once again from a very hot, dry and dusty Zuni Pueblo. Although we are well into the summer vacation here at St. Anthony's, life is as busy as ever around our campus.

We wrapped up the school year with the graduation of our 8th Graders. That is always a time of mixed emotions for me. Some of our graduates I have known since they were but "wee ones" -- all the way back to pre-K and Kindergarten. To launch them out into the big wide world is an anxious time, but a joyful one as well, as we send them off, full of potential and enthusiasm to take their next steps forward in life. As always, we held the traditional Graduate Breakfast served by the 7th graders looking forward to their turn.

I was happy to meet up with several alumni who attended the graduation proceedings, and several who dropped by at the School the following week. That gave me the opportunity of finding out how they were progressing. Three of our alumni are attending the prestigious Santa Fe Indian School, and they shared with me inspiring academic reports regarding their progress. Two of this year's graduates will be joining them next fall. In addition, many of our other 2026 graduates have been accepted for select high schools in the area. This is a solid validation of the way we prepare our students.



Hot on the heels of summer closure, our friends from Wichita arrived to host our Art Camp. Seven wonderful women came ready to teach music, art and theatre to our students, as well as several of their friends who do not attend our School. The camp ended with the parents being invited for lunch, while every student received a small pack with art supplies. I have noticed that these summer camps are a wonderful way for our students to bond outside of the regular academic year. They have such a wonderful zest for life!

After Art Camp, we have a week's break before the first of two Bible Camps is scheduled -- conducted by a group of young people from Alabama. While there is definitely a religious element to these camps, they are also full of fun and games. One year they took "Saints as Heroes" as the main theme and the leaders arrived dressed as Superman and a host of cartoon characters. I wonder what will transpire this time around! Following this, we will host a second camp in July, this time with a group from Colorado. They have been to St. Anthony's many times and have always been a delight, helping around the campus as well as inspiring and entertaining the students. More excitement on the way!

I regret to report that our recently appointed principal is no longer with us. With the expiry of the preliminary contract at the end of May, there



was mutual agreement that it should not be renewed. Unfortunately, these things happen and we renew our search for a suitable principal for our School. I am happy to say that we have several prospective applicants, and our school board has already had a very positive interview with one of them. I hope to have some more definitive news in my next letter.

Returning to happier subjects, as June arrived we realized that the feast day of St. Anthony was fast approaching, and it had been many years since we had hosted a formal celebration of our patron. Talking with the school board, parish council and PTO, I seem to have kindled a fire of enthusiasm. We decided to revive the form of celebration that took place decades ago. The arrangements were hastily put together, and several people were tireless in their efforts to make it all happen. Even as we were preparing, folks were talking about plans for next year!

To begin, we loaded the statue of St. Anthony from the church onto a litter -- a litter I had actually made ten years ago! Ladies decorated it with bundles of flowers and Zuni shawls. They also baked small loaves of Zuni bread, and I prepared small prayer cards to be given away. We then gathered at the 17th century Old Mission in town where we blessed the statue, and a little girl placed a garland around its neck. I also blessed some St. Anthony bread (a custom dating back to 1263!), after which we processed through the town to the St. Anthony campus. En route, we distributed the bread and prayer cards to all whom we met. We then celebrated Holy Mass in our church and proceeded to fun and games for the rest of the day.

The games included a "Pueblo Throw" -- something I had not experienced before. Several people donated gifts for the event, and from the front of the rectory a team actually threw the gifts to the crowd. All the gifts consisted of practical household items. I smiled as rolls of toilet tissue went flying across the yard to eager hands waiting to catch them! Some of our students carried small baskets filled with goodies to the older people so that everyone could participate. It was gratifying to hear several senior citizens remark that this was what they experienced when they were young.



Finally, at 9:00pm we reassembled in the church for a torchlight procession winding around the School and the campus. We sang as we pointed our candles to the sky, praying: "Here we are Lord, we are still trying hard for our children, come and bless us."

These last few weeks have had their ups and downs -- thankfully the ups far outweighed the downs. We celebrated our achievements, rejoiced in our unique identity, and had the opportunity to recognize the gift that we are for our each other -- and especially for our students. Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire