

St. Anthony Indian Mission

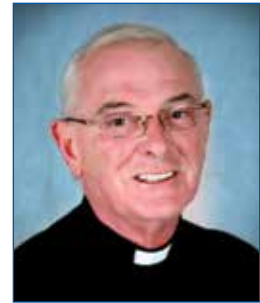
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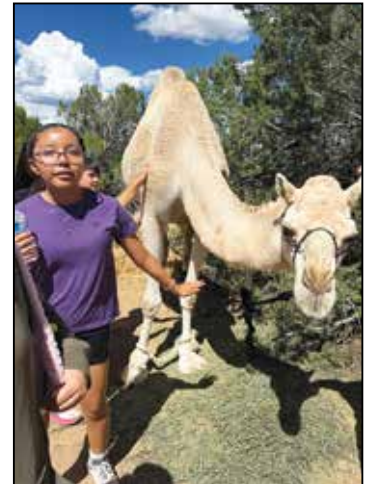
October 2026



From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once more from the high desert! We seem to be having several seasons at once with wind, rain and sunshine. The year moves on at a relentless pace.

As promised in my last letter, I attach our students' encounter with camels during the El Morro festival commemorating the US Camel Corp's passing through the area in 1857. Students' reactions varied from "what a smell!" to "do they always spit at you" to "can I get a ride?". They all had a great time, ending with a pizza party. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Kuhn and several adult helpers who took such great care of the youngsters and readily joined in the fun.



A novel event this year was Orange Tee-Shirt Day. While it commemorated the sad history of the Native American boarding schools, its focus was on the positive: that every child is a gift to be nurtured, preparing each for a rich, fulfilling life while celebrating their unique culture. Our students entered into the spirit of the day and the School was awash in bright orange as school uniforms were put aside for one day.

Of course if they are to achieve their potential, our students need to be attentive to their lessons and study diligently. So despite the additional fun -- their daily academic lessons continued unabated. I never cease to marvel at the creative ways in which our teachers impart their lessons, keeping the students fully engaged throughout the day.



Ms. Carol, our Principal, continues her scrutiny of every student's results. She is meeting on a weekly basis with groups of teachers to identify ways of assisting students who may be struggling. Her career has included many years as a special education teacher, equipping her to both identify students in need of help and provide suggestions on how that help can be given. What a boon for both students and teachers alike!

I mentioned in my previous letter that we have been using remote teaching to assist some of our students. One student has mobility issues and cannot move between classrooms. Another student is also undergoing mobility challenges. A third student continues to receive lessons while at home. Now yet another student has had a serious leg break and is confined to home. Because of our remote teaching lessons, none of these students are missing classes, and each is developing critical skills and perseverance while continuing their studies.

For larger institutions, such improvisations might be commonplace, but for our little School it is really quite an achievement. We learned a great

deal during the Covid disruption, and are putting those lessons to good use. I must also thank our ancillary staff who work hard to set up the computers, cameras, microphones and rooms to make the incorporation of the technology possible. They never know from day to day what I will ask of them next, but they take up each challenge with enthusiasm and skill. (I am planning to make a permanent area where remote learning can take place within the School for future use. We need to avoid distractions for "remote students" and still have them visible for teacher supervision.)

Once again, I must remark on the sheer goodness demonstrated by our students. I watch admiringly when students cater to the needs of their fellow classmates in the cafeteria, picking up and clearing dinner trays, and simply looking out for each other. They do not see the beauty that I see in their gentleness, kindness and generosity.

This month we hosted the annual "Zuni Fair". Not to be outdone, our students and PTO quickly assembled a float to take part in the Saturday Parade, prompting a great cheer from the crowd as they moved down the main street. (The mountains of candy tossed to the crowd may have had something to do with the enthusiastic applause. . . .)

The relentless march of time has brought us once again to St. Anthony's Native American Day. In some ways, I think it is one of the most important days in the calendar, a day that affirms the students in their own cultural identity.

For several weeks, gym classes became dance lessons. Each grade in turn practiced to the accompaniment of drums and native singers. The songs and vibrations of drums, amplified by the gym echoes, overwhelmed the quiet of my little study room.

The opening of the celebration included a brief welcome from our new Principal, followed by a prayer led by the whole student body: the "Our Father" recited in the Zuni language. "Miss Zuni" and her royal deputy joined us for the event and were quick to dive into the festivities.

I confess that my heart missed a beat as one of our "senior" ladies entered the gym. At 95 years-old, her walking is difficult, but she struggled out on the arm of her daughter, to watch with pride our young people demonstrate their love for their native culture. She, her daughter and grandchildren have all been students at St. Anthony's!

From my special seat I watched in awe as all of our students danced with grace and beauty. I paid particular attention to one of the students who was exceptional in his performance but whom I could not identify -- the fringe of his headdress totally obscuring his identity. As he was leaving, I glimpsed his face and congratulated him on his fine performance. He replied, "You should try dancing when you can't see where you are going!"



These last weeks have been exhausting, worthwhile and amazingly enjoyable. Thank you for making them all so wonderfully possible.

Sincerely,

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

Fr. Patrick McGuire