St. Anthony Indian Mission

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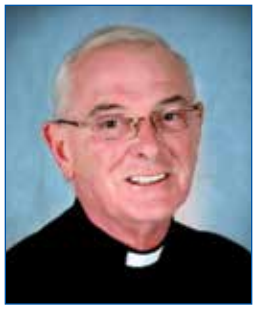
November 2026



From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Greetings once more from the very changeable High Desert. We are well into November, and the pendulum is swinging between unseasonable rains, freezing mornings and hot afternoons -- and still the leaves are clinging to the trees. It is almost as if Mother Nature is reluctant to move into winter. She might be hesitant, but our students are certainly not. Nothing can repress our youngsters in their enthusiasm for life and laughter.

The pace of life here never diminishes. Recently, we took a group of young students to the Southwest Catholic Youth Conference in Farmington. It is a joint effort between the Dioceses of Gallup and the Zuni Pueblo. With 55 on board the school bus, I believe we were the largest single group attending. Several Sisters joined us, including two young Missionaries of Charity. We departed Zuni at 5:00 am and returned around midnight. My main task was distributing snacks and drinks throughout the bus while en-route.



The day consisted of talks from enthusiastic faith-filled young people, interspersed with games and music. Bishop Berg from Pueblo, Colorado played a classical piece on the piano. He was superb, and I was amazed as several hundred young people watched enthralled during the recital.

The final event of the day was a trip to McDonald's for supper on the way home. I must say the staff were wonderful in serving so many people at one time. (They even remembered us from last year's visit!) I was delighted when the staff remarked on the good manners of our young people.

Hot on the heels of our Farmington trip was Halloween. We had our usual dress-up costume day and parade within the School. Honestly, the imagination of some of the students is astounding. One young man dressed up as a baseball bat! I did have to ask a couple of students who they were supposed to be, only to learn that I need to update my knowledge of cartoon characters beyond Mickey Mouse!



In a joint effort with senior students from Zuni High School (including some of our former students), we hosted a two day Haunted House in the gym basement. Even without decorations, the basement is fairly spooky. Anyway, the event turned out to be a "howling" success with over 400 visitors. I tried to film and photograph the interior, but the cameras were not cooperating. Someone suggested that the spooks were at work.

campus and asking questions. I hope it will encourage more enrollment in our wonderful little School.

My priest associate has gone on leave to India, so I am currently looking after the four parishes and School on my own. It does mean rushing between three churches on Sunday mornings. One plus is that the parishioners are enjoying short sermons! For Saturday vigil Mass, I drive along an access road that is not paved. With all our recent rains, the road is fairly rutted. Thankfully, I have managed to stay on the road thus far.

On the education front, I am pleased to report that two of our remote learners have returned to full time class participation. We do keep a watchful eye as they move around the School, but both are healing well and enjoying the companionship and camaraderie of their fellows. Happily, the experiment has gone well and both are up to date with their studies.

Another small innovation by our Principal is to encourage Native American dress for the All-School Mass once a month. We held the first Mass during November, and a few students dressed for the occasion. During Heritage Month, different events were staged such as “Rock your Mocs” (traditional foot wear), “Clan T-Shirt Day” (lineage heritage), and “Hair Bun and Headband Day”. All is geared to celebrate cultural identity and of course fellowship.



Due to sicknesses and such, we have had several people off of work recently. To compensate, it has been “all hands on deck”. Priority, of course, is for the classroom work. Thanks to pre-prepared lesson plans, substitutes have been able to seamlessly take over. However, I did find myself helping to serve meals in the cafeteria, much to the amusement of the students. To my relief, kitchen staff are now all back on board serving our ever-hungry kids.

With Thanksgiving on the horizon and school on vacation for that week, we cheated a little and anticipated Thanksgiving with both our All School Mass and Thanksgiving Lunch. For Mass, the students wrote down that for which they are thankful. These they presented at the offertory of the Mass. Next day before our Thanksgiving meal, we gathered outside the cafeteria and with prayer and ceremony we burned the papers. As the smoke rose to the skies a teacher intoned in Zuni: “for . . .” we give thanks, to which the whole school responded ‘E lah Kwa’ (Thank you). Although our students are always polite, I think it reminded them that saying “Thank You” is more than simply a formal expression. After this, we all enjoyed a wonderful traditional Thanksgiving meal. (The cooks were so proud of their work that they posted pictures of the meal on Facebook.)

With Halloween and Thanksgiving behind us, can Christmas be far behind? Onwards and upwards! Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire