

Prayers, Donations Urgently Needed

Indian Mission Director Pleads for Help

Special to The Catholic Courier

THOREAU, NM -

"Lord, when did I see you hungry and feed you?"

"When you did it for one of the least of my people, you did it for me." - Matt 25:40

As Catholics around the globe prepare to celebrate the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas, the director, priest, sisters, lay missionaries and staff of a New Mexico Mission school are concerned about urgently-needed help. They work daily to make quality Catholic education a reality for American Indian children in their care.

These children "do without" as a way of life ... will you help them? For many of our students, the school at St. Bonaventure Mission is their "last hope."

Trusting in God, everyone at the Mission prays for help to pay our month to month bills.

St. Bonaventure Mission

started a school more than a decade ago when the founder realized the Indian children in the Mission's CCD classes didn't have even the most basic reading and writing skills. Today over 300 children, most of them Native American, join in prayer to keep their school from closing. Mission staff believe education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

The Indian boys and girls attending St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School live with the following realities:

- 55% of the Navajo population cannot read or write;
- McKinley County (where the Mission is located) has the highest poverty rate (43%) in the state;
- The suicide rate among Navajo teenagers is ten times higher than for their age group in the U.S. population at large.

• McKinley County has the highest alcoholism rate in the United States.

Thirty dedicated lay missionaries teach and carry out the other work of the Mission. This "other work" includes maintaining the buses and vans which travel the remote mesas to bring the children to school; preparing two nourishing meals daily for the children; and bringing both food and water to aging Navajos living in poverty in remote areas of the barren Reservation.

New lay missionaries often ask, "Can this be America?"

They've experienced failure in other schools or inability to get to school from great distances.

Will you help?

Gifts made to St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School are tax-deductible. The school also qualifies for "Matching Gifts."



The shining eyes of these three Navajo "angels," part of last year's preschool pageant, reflect the hope of all at St. Bonaventure - to keep the school open ... to give 300 children the skills they will need to break the cycle of poverty and to live a Spirit-filled life.

Dear Catholic Courier Readers,

I'm turning to you for help. My concern is for the children and elders served by St. Bonaventure Indian Mission. Without caring friends like you we can't exist. Please help make quality education a reality for needy Navajo children.

Also, with early cold weather this year, families need warm clothing, blankets, heating fuel and repairs to their homes. Your generosity and love will bring love and hope into struggling lives.

In this special season of gratitude and giving, I want to be sure each child receives at least one gift at Christmas, and that elders in need will have good food for a holiday meal.

I can't meet these needs without your help. Please become part of this life-giving work! I don't want to have to say "no" to even one child or one elder who needs help. Will you join in our love for these First Americans who live in such difficult circumstances?

In Christ's Love,

Bob O'Connell

Bob O'Connell, Director
St. Bonaventure Indian Mission & School

P.S. Please be generous. Give hope to these Navajo children!

St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School

*Boyan I have been here since preschool
My mom said I have to come here
because she heard it was a good school
I've liked this school from the very
beginning. All my friends have been here
since second or third grade. At school
I'm challenged to be a compassionate
person. So I'm trying to do this. What
I like best about school are my
friends. If I didn't have this school
to go to I would miss my friends.
The fun I have everyday and the teachers.*

Clip and Mail Today

Here's my sacrificial gift of love of \$ _____

Please pray for my special intentions _____

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- () Please check here if you would like to receive a beautiful rosary hand-strung with reconstituted turquoise nuggets and silver-plated beads as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$100 or more.
- () Please check here if you would like to receive a sterling silver cross, set with turquoise, made by our local Indian artisans, as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$35 or more. It is a unique piece of jewelry you will wear—or give—with pride.
- () Please check here if you would like to receive a paperback copy of Tony Hillerman's book, **Sacred Clowns**, which is dedicated to the lay missionaries serving at St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School, as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$15 or more.



Send to: **Help from Catholic Courier Readers**
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Eastern Navajo Reservation, P.O. Box 610, Thoreau, NM 87323-0610

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