

BROKEN ARROW

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SYMBOL OF
PEACE

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CATHOLIC
INDIAN MISSION

Standing Rock
Reservation

Fort Yates,
North Dakota
58538

Baptism, Suicide, and “Salvation Education”

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



Father Basil Atwell, OSB

Within these few pages, you will no doubt come to view the Catholic Indian Mission, with its fine mission grade school, as a bearer of light in the midst of a good deal of darkness. For the few moments you peruse these pages, you will see photos of smiling faces of students who look forward to getting out of bed to come to school, faculty who care about the children they instruct, elders who long for a better life for their grandchildren—better than they were able

to give their own children, and staff (or should I say, “ministers”) who tirelessly work to make it all happen.

Enjoy these pages. For within this edition of the “Broken Arrow” you will read about this wonderful mission that you have helped to create and sustain by your fidelity to God’s work and by your generous financial support given to the Catholic Indian Mission. And, while I do write these lines of this opening page with a good deal of gratitude, I also write with a bit of a heavy heart. I will explain.

It goes without saying that there are few things in life which one can imagine to be more devastating than losing a young teenage son or daughter to suicide. For a priest, however, there is something even more heart wrenching than this; for standing in prayer over the gurney of a deceased teen not long ago—one of the many victims of suicide in this place, and in the midst of the chaos (the family members crowding in, the screams of disbelief, the horror of final realiza-

tion, the darkness surrounding everyone) in that well-lit emergency room—I felt someone pulling hard and relentlessly at my sleeve; it was a grandmother screaming at me through her tears: “Father! Can you baptize her?”

I was stunned by her agonized plea! In utter disbelief she couldn’t bring herself to think that this action would be impossible at that point. Whatever happens to this poor soul now, only God knows! What comfort is there in life without baptism, or living without knowledge of God, without learning about His love and coming to know His divine plan for each of us—each and every one of His children—here below? What could I have said to her? I took her hand and I remained silent. I stood with her and I prayed with her. It was all I could do. Such unimaginable grief and inconsolable sorrow!

Why do I share all this with you? I will tell you: Not long ago, I wrote to my brother priests asking them to make a financial contribution to help to keep our school open. I had written that letter to them with a rather heavy heart, for I had recently buried two young men in St. Peter’s parish cemetery here in Fort Yates, both victims of suicide.

I will tell you what I told them. In one victim’s funeral homily I commented that, “...it does not matter how many suicide prevention programs, support networks, or telephone hotlines we set up. If our children are not taught to know God our Father and his only Son Jesus Christ, the sacraments of the Church and the mercy and hope these sacraments afford souls, then nothing will ever change here and our children will continue to despair!” Strong words are often necessary.

By God’s grace, St. Bernard’s Mission School has graduated many thousands of children. Throughout the 100 years of its history there has not been a single report of a graduate from St. Bernard’s committing suicide as a teenager or young adult. NONE. Not one attempt or a completion! Schools around our country are rife with “gangsta-wannabees,” drugs, alcohol abuse, and unsolicited sexual pressures which lead to

self-destructive behaviors and even suicide. Secular schools in this area are no different.

What is more, after the students leave each afternoon, many of our elementary students witness the same horrible things kids from other schools witness. You and I know, however, the difference between a child who learns in a safe environment where God is held in highest esteem and a child who learns in a secular environment which teaches nothing about God nor the importance of godly values. Children from these educational environments often suffer spiritual deprivation, believing at times that their lives have no higher purpose, believing that tomorrow’s miseries will be just the same, if not worse, than those of today; and some will even despair of any transcendent life to come.

My point is this: ST. BERNARD MISSION SCHOOL IS VITAL TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE ON STANDING ROCK! The people need this school because it is a beacon of hope for many. Catholic education provides that transcendent hope which is desperately needed here!

Having read my letter, my brother priests responded generously. Thanks be to God! I want to thank them and I thank you, too, for your financial contributions which have kept our school going, and which ensure that future generations of the Lakota Indians living on Standing Rock will accept baptism and come to know God and the heavenly hope that comes from faithfully serving His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enjoy these pages and celebrate with us the accomplishments of St. Bernard Mission School students. And as a favor to me, please pray that some good-hearted philanthropic multi-millionaire will come to know about this vitally important elementary school and financially “adopt” the Catholic Indian Mission. After all, I would much rather my time be consumed by baptismal preparation classes and all things sacramental than to worry over finances. God bless you all!

Star Quilts: Beautiful and Sacred

By Sister Ann Schoch,
SSND, Pastoral Minister

The Morning Star! A Star Quilt! For over 100 years Native American women have been creating colorful variations of the morning star in their quilts. One such woman is Darlene Medicine Horse. Under the guidance of her paternal grandmother, Agnes (Iron Road) Looking Horse, she began quilting at age 12. Eventually her mother, Annie (Brave Bull) Thunder Hawk, became her quilting partner!

While she is a proud Dakota of the Sioux tribe, Darlene claims another ancestry. Her maternal grandmother, Eva Kuntz, a German from Russia married her grandfather John Brave Bull, Sr., a full-blooded Sioux.

Darlene was born in Bismarck and lived there until their home was demolished to give way to today's Civic Center! Her family then moved to Los Angeles where she lived for ten years and where she trained as a Certified Nurse Aide. It is in this city that she met her husband, Don Medicine Horse, a Crow from the Crow Agency in Montana. Don and Darlene eventually moved to Fort Yates where they raised their three children.

On a recent visit to her home, Darlene was busy ironing strips of fabric of the nine different

colors needed to make her sunburst-designed quilt. Two distinctive qualities separate the Sioux quilt from any other quilt. The color choices of the women who instinctively blend colors to create breathtaking quilts are one quality.

A second is the diamond, used in every design, which in the Sioux culture represents the four directions.

Star Quilts are used in many sacred ceremonies. Within the next months, Darlene will make 20 quilts of various star patterns for a June Give-Away to honor her husband of 45 years. Don has 'sun-danced' 47 years and is now the Chief and organizer of the Sun Dance in Crow Agency. To the Dakota / Lakota Sioux, the Star Quilt represents the ultimate of gift-giving. To give a Star Quilt is to show the utmost respect, honor, and admiration to a person. Quilts have taken on a deep significance in the cultural practices of the people. It would be rare not to find a Star Quilt adorning the casket during a funeral service and burial. A person is often covered with a Star Quilt before the coffin is closed. Quilts are also given to relatives and very close friends who come to help them bury their dead, to newly married couples, to graduates, and at the time of a birth. Star Quilts are also used as decor in churches.

At one point during our visit, Darlene laughingly commented that she has days when she wishes she had never learned the art of quilting. It requires a lot of work and patience, particularly with the pain from her arthritic hands! But in the same breath she indicated that she would have it no other way! Like other quilt makers she is dedicated to the value of sharing her work and spreading her sense of love and friendship with every quilt she gives away. As she shared her album with the photos of the hundreds of stunningly



Starburst Quilt made by Darlene Medicine Horse.

beautiful quilts she has created she expressed the regret of not having tracked exactly how many she has made.

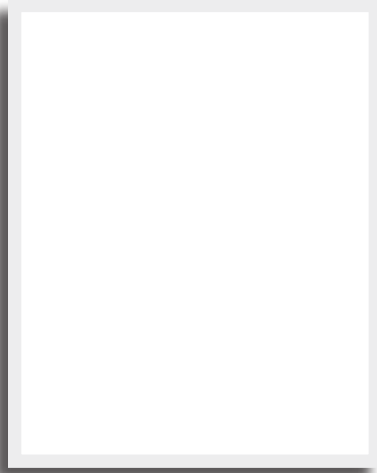
Darlene's talents are not limited to quilting. She also beads jewelry and sews jingle dresses for her grandchildren for PowWows. Her three children are all artists, creating dream catchers, beading, and painting. Daughter Donnette grew up watching her mother quilt and today, after Darlene has machine-stitched the star-designed cover, Donnette professionally completes the quilt by hand.

The pride of every Dakota home is the beautiful and sacred Star Quilt. It lies folded to wait as a gift. I have been enriched by yet another elder to whom I minister, Darlene Medicine Horse, who keeps alive the art of quilting and the art of gift-giving!



Granddaughter & Great Grandson display reglia worn at PowWows

Educational Leaders Work Together on Standing Rock Indian Reservation



Sister Richardé Marie Wolf, School Pricipal

Saint Bernard Mission School hosted the monthly area meeting for the educational leaders in January, 2011. Sunshine Carlow , Education Director for the Tribe, reported that

this was the first time the leaders of our area schools had gathered at Saint Bernard Catholic Indian Mission School. At this particular meeting local directors from several Fort Yates entities were also in attendance. A woman sitting next to me stated that she lived and worked in this community for years and had never visited our school. It was a wonderful day to welcome our partners in education and share our hospitality.

As leader of the Mission school I am privileged to be involved with the Standing Rock Education Consortium. The goals we established in April of 2010, for the current school year are:

- Attendance Goal-To increase

student attendance and graduation rate to meet AYP standards in all schools on Standing Rock using a variety of strategies by 2014.

- Parent/Community Involvement Goal-To create an environment of collaboration and communication to empower and energize our families, extended families and communities.

- Language and Culture Goal-To produce Lakota/Dakota/Nakota speaking Students, Staff and Parents using Culture and History.

Strategies have been developed, committees formed, area school boards meet semi-annually, and community meetings are open to the public to collaborate and enhance our educational goals. We have just

begun this intense commitment and see the value in expanding educational opportunities for the students.

Collaboration is crucial. How good it is to work together in private and public education programs and procedures! Empowering parents and guardians to work closely with education leaders, monitoring and addressing challenges of daily attendance practices of students in PK-12, and immersion into the native language and culture are what we as teachers, parents and administration collectively commit to those we minister to on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

Science Fair Success

By Mr. Steve Luger

It's been awhile since I have shared with you and I must say, the year has been going great so far. My classes have settled in and are moving along with their studies. Since I last wrote we have had visitors from the University of Mary and our annual science fair.

The students from the physical therapy department came down from the University of Mary and taught our students the importance of staying in shape, as well as teaching them how to play soccer. They played different games with all the grades, teaching them how to pass, receive and shoot goals.

In late November we held our annual school science fair. The kindergarten-1st grade did a

class project together. The 2nd-3rd grade divided into groups of 3 to do their science projects.

Each student in the 4th-7th grades created and present their own project, and I must say, some were quite impressive. Out of the four grades the top three winners in each grade were invited to go to the state science fair in Bismarck. Our school had a great showing with



50 percent of our students placing either second or third. Next year were hoping to earn a couple first place medals.

As I had stated in the beginning, it has been a great year so far and I can only see it getting better. I am looking forward to a successful and fulfilling second semester to my first year of teaching.



Welcome New Students

We are delighted to welcome these students to St. Bernard Mission School. They have joined our school community this last quarter. Assisting students in growing in faith, academic excellence, and the Lakota culture is a goal for our educational program. Our enrollment has increased by nine percent since the beginning of the school year.

Season of Giving and Receiving



Christmas was a great opportunity for the children to experience a time for giving and receiving. Our school community presented the beautiful Nativity story to their parents, guardians, grandparents, family members and friends in song, scripture readings, and the Christmas tableaux. Special thanks to Father Terry Wipf for sharing his musical talent with our students. In the spirit of giving the children presented to



their families a papal cross and a bottle of holy water. Having received these gifts from the Cathedral Parish our children were very happy to share these gifts with their family to be used in their homes. Grateful thanks to the Cathedral Parish for their assistance with this beautiful gift of giving and receiving.



Our Kindergarten and First grade students shared a special gift with their school family. On the last day before Christmas vacation they planned and participated in the school liturgy. They received a special gift of joy as they read the readings, presented the gifts, and carried the statutes to the Christmas crib. This was the first time the young students were involved in planning and participating in the liturgy.

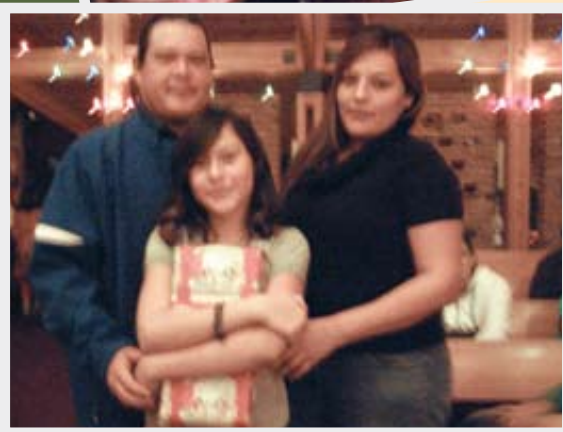




We wish to express our appreciation to all people who made efforts to gift the mission students and parents during the Christmas Season. As you see the joy in our children with their gifts from Cathedral Parish Angel Tree, and backpacks of love donated by Kay Powers 4th grade students and parents, the Parishioners of Corpus Christi who purchased the red school sweatshirts for the entire student body and staff, gifts from Ronald McDonald House, and Kathy Kopp Family and friends from Minot and Dickinson who made Christmas stockings and filled them with a variety of practical gifts. God bless those from near and far for supporting Catholic Indian Mission



The children were able to gift their parents with the goodness of Cathedral Parish as they purchased Papal crosses and holy water bottles to be placed in their homes.



St. Bernard Christmas Pagent



LEFT: By the glow of Christmas lights and votive candles, St. Bernard Mission School students presented a beautiful Christmas program, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

RIGHT: Kindergarteners and First Graders eagerly await their cue to sing the praises of the Christ Child with their fellow SBMS students.





To the fellow members of the Fort Yates Community:

We feel very fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to work with the Saint Bernard Mission School. It has been such a wonderful experience that we will be forever grateful. At Saint Mary's College of California one of our mottos is "enter to learn and leave to serve" and this is exactly what we feel we have started to do by coming to Fort Yates. We have been so touched by the wonderful people we have met and by the exquisite culture. This winter wonderland has truly given us a new experience of what North Dakota weather is like. One of the most memorable experiences for Gabi was seeing so much snow and for Jodie it was finding out that her true passion in life is to be a teacher. We both had so much fun getting to know the students and teaching them Spanish and Chinese songs. Working with them was so much fun and insightful to the educational field.

Apart from helping at the Saint Bernard Mission School we also had the opportunity to work at the local food pantry, where we got to see people who have encountered difficult life circumstances yet still have so much hope.

Sincerely,
Jodie and Gabi



Sixth & Seventh Grade Activities

By Valeria Noel Wax

The sixth and seventh grade students have been very busy. We were invited to attend the History Fair in Mankato, MN in October. We were accompanied by our teacher, Ms. Wax and our principal, Sr. Richarde' Marie Wolf, SSND. We met many kind people from Holy Rosary Parish in Mankato. They sponsored the trip and had activities organized for us. They had volunteers and escorted us wherever we needed to go.

We spent a day and a half at the fair. The boys learned about armor, and sword fighting. We saw displays about Native Americans and early pioneers. We helped launch pumpkins into the river from a trebuchet and rode down a zip line.

Later we went to Minneopa State park to view the double waterfalls. We walked to the bottom of the Lower Falls to see what it looked like behind the falls. We enjoyed the walk and took lots of pictures.

We were invited for a tour of Our Lady of Good Counsel Convent, the provincial house for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We were treated to a short organ concert when Sr. Elaine played the one hundred year-old pipe organ.

The trip was a trip of a lifetime for many of us. We learned geography and other information to help improve the educational value of our trip.

Another event in our classroom was a

visit by two social worker to teach us about domestic violence. We were made aware of how prevalent domestic violence is in North Dakota. We also learned about the some of the warning signs of domestic violence. We talked about how to help ourselves or our friends if it seems that a relationship might be destructive.

We started praying a decade of the rosary every day as a class project back in August. We have been fortunate to be able to keep this practice in place. We continue to pray for our benefactors and donors. This practice has continued

with the entire school praying the rosary for two weeks to pray 100 Hail Marys for our 100th Anniversary. This school-wide activity will include giving us an opportunity to lead a decade on the second day of our celebration.





Miss Indian Nations Visits Students at St. Bernard

Students were excited when Miss Indian Nations, Evereta Thinn, visited the school this past fall. She is the 18th Miss Indian Nations, but is the first Miss Indian Nations to visit the school. Evereta is from Arizona and is a member of the Navajo Indian Nation. She was crowned during the United Tribes International Powwow in Bismarck.

She sang and danced for the students explaining Navajo customs related to her dance. For example, she tried very hard not to drop anything while she danced. If anything happened to fall, she picked it up before her dance was done. She demonstrated some of her Navajo songs and brought along items that were familiar to her tribe. Several students were invited to dance with her. They were thrilled.

The students at St. Bernard's Mission School are learning Lakota and were very interested when she told them some common words in the Navajo language. As they became more interested, you could hear questions that all started with, "How do you say . . ." Without even thinking, one student asked her how to say Tonka in Navajo. Well, Tonka means buffalo, but she had no way to know the Lakota word for buffalo until someone explained.



The Miss Indian Nations Pageant Program is an educational/scholarship program that gives her the opportunity to share her rich traditions and cultural heritage. She serves as an ambassador for all Indian Nations. She emphasizes not only the importance of education but also the importance of cross-cultural education.

Evereta was a great example of Indian culture. Every girl in the audience could picture themselves as Miss Indian Nations someday.

MEMORIALS

The donors and the deceased are remembered at the altar each day.

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Mail to: **Catholic Indian Mission**
PO Box 639
Fort Yates, ND 58538-0639

Please send me Memorial forms:

_____ Book of 6

_____ Pad of 25

Knights of Virtue Give Mission Cemetery a Spruce Up

Forty Knights of Virtue from St. Mary's High School in Bismarck combed the cemetery and did work in and around St. Bernard Mission School. These good men removed debris, mowed and raked lawns and trimmed trees and shrubs. They also began the arduous task to repair grave markers and stones. This work is ongoing and other groups will also come to continue the upkeep.

