

What does it mean to “join with Jesus Christ to make all things new?”

The other morning – and then again at evening – each time in its own way, light flooded the trees in the valley and the hills that roll southeast from here. **I marveled.** The clear, pure, green beauty, its brand-newness of bright limbs and the lit moment of the leaves said new... new ... **fresh and alive and new!**

Now some of the trees are 40 to 60 years old, at least, and maybe a few are over 80 years! They have been standing where they are, season after season – fall to spring – and each day in between, nonetheless they at least appear new.

What is new then, and how could this be that something that old would appear to be brand-new? When we say in our Mission Statement, “We join with Jesus Christ to make all things new!” We know it is not about a coat of paint or a new winter coat.

It is about us, ourselves, each other, and all creatures, all creation somehow totally transformed. We believe in Jesus Christ, one in the spirit of new life, and with the Creator Father who has formed and shaped each of us and continues to shape us.

“You are the work of God await at the hand of the artist who does all things in due season. Let your clay be moist lest you grow hard and lose the imprint of God’s fingers.” ~ St. Irenaeus

This is true even for the 60-year-old trees and 80-year-old persons who might be reading this now.

We are – as we are – transformed, born again by water and the Holy Spirit. Springs of living water feed our very roots and we branch out beyond who we have been to reach out beyond ourselves to reach out to



A promising start to tomato season. Pass the salt!

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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others. The reign of God rises up in this newness of life and is both ancient and new in the very same moment; newer than newborns.

“The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth” ~ Proverbs 8:22, 25

Our world, the strain and pain of our nation and its structures can feel like a house of cards ready to fall down. We feel that and are afraid because the old things seem not to be working. The fall and decline and hopelessness is real as well as the reason, the Christ who is our hope for the new day. In fact Christ is more real than all of these other fears and that which may have already fallen down, for he has risen and he lifts us up with himself. There is a new way to live with one another and we find it even as we suffer our way through very difficult times.

This living together, this fraternitas, relational living, the commitment to care for more than ourselves, our new clothes and our new cars, is the heart of the Gospel, the proclamation of the reign of God when we believe it and live it. It is the fire in our hearts that consumes the old and transforms us to the new.

Courageous, being renewed ourselves, transformed and the resurrection from the dead, we can put to rest fear and discouragement. We are to be the trumpet of a new day by the way we live this day.

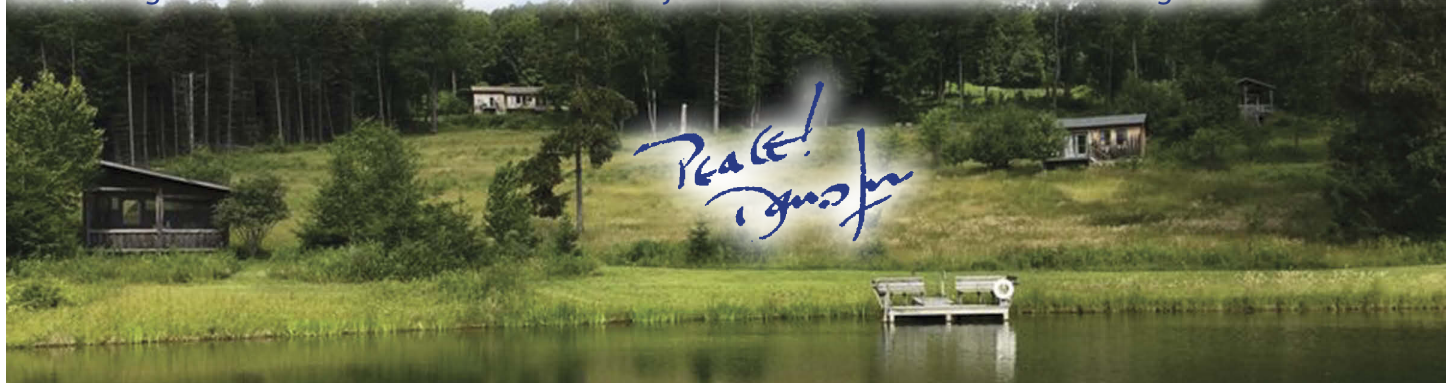
The Mountain, Mt. Irenaeus, is a playground and a practice place for this newness of life, the activity of bringing things up like trees, and green as can be! Our new ways are remembering the old and feeling the transformation of growing from the ancient as a re-expression and new expression of the eternal truth of love. All of this, everywhere and among us, is what we had been longing for and waiting for - it is what the new is! And so creating all things new can be, as all things can be, made new again.

And we do not only sit around and pray and say this – we are up and sent forth from here to where you and others are “showing the way” to attempt to live this new day. The worn-out, untrue and discouraging messages that sometimes pretend to be life are the broken branches that having fallen down will nourish the new trees and the old ones alike.

The sun is shining here, coming forth from the Risen Lord and we are all within this fresh new day, transformed to say love has found a new way, a way for all of us to a new day. This is what it means when we have strength in our hearts and souls to do it – to join with Jesus Christ to make all things new!



The new McGinley-Carney Center for Franciscan Ministry, our new home on the SBU campus.



NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Many of us witness and enjoy the wonderful qualities of care that Fr. Dan has carried through his life. Those that have worked closely with him on various projects or on our Board of Trustees also know what a tremendous entrepreneurial leader he is. The Mountain would never have gotten off the ground without these gifts! I have

certainly experienced these attributes while on the Board, and now in my role as Executive Director. One of his greatest qualities in this respect is keeping us mission focused. I've worked for several larger corporations over the years, and I've not seen a leader as disciplined as Fr. Dan in regularly visiting and reflecting on the mission as well as other key fundamental documents to help guide decisions and strategy.

So when we agreed to focus on our Mission Statement for this newsletter, reflecting on what it means to "Join with Jesus Christ in making all things new," it turned out to be an exercise I am quite familiar with. This assignment is an example of how we bring our Mission Statement to life. We are continuously reflecting on the life we live on the Mountain and for those who visit. Personally reflecting on this allows me to accept that I make mistakes, and that there is always the opportunity to work on being a better person. God loves me no matter how often I screw up. We consider or define the Mountain in many different ways, one of them is as a place of renewal, a place of "peaceful re-creation." It is what has drawn me back to this place and this deeper involvement I now have that has been building for almost 30 years.

As Executive Director of the Mountain, I see that the mission clearly challenges us to change. We need to invite others into this life in a deeper way. Our life is wonderful, but we cannot remain in this current state forever. We have begun openly inviting new people to our community, to consider an extended period of time living on our land. We have had others live with us in community for a year or more at a time, and we are now formally moving forward with a program known as Mountain Companion Ministry. **(Check out the brochure we included!)** We know we want to invite other friars on to this land, to try this way of life of contemplation, to become a "fully-formed friar" as one of our friends has recently described the Mountain life. And while we bring new people to live amongst us, we need to ensure our facilities are accommodating for others, as well as leaving plenty of space for our overnight guests.

While these efforts to make all things new may seem daunting, through God's Grace we can steadily work to these goals through our simple practice of hospitality. Every time we invite a new person into our growing circle it changes the dynamic of who we are. The best part of my job is speaking to others who want to become more deeply engaged with the Mountain. This usually leads to their further involvement, other people helping to work towards meeting our goals. I feel both privilege and responsibility to work with them to gain that deeper relationship. It may seem small but it's critical for us to thrive in the coming years. When we come together, drawn to the gifts that we receive from the Mountain, we all are part of making All Things New.

~ Mike Fenn

As our Mt. Irenaeus community – yours and ours! – continues to be transformed, we wish to respond to God's call, hearing that call through you and others.

Take time with us to read and pray over sections of our "Gospel Manner of Life and Ministry" included below.

Our Gospel Manner of Life and Ministry:

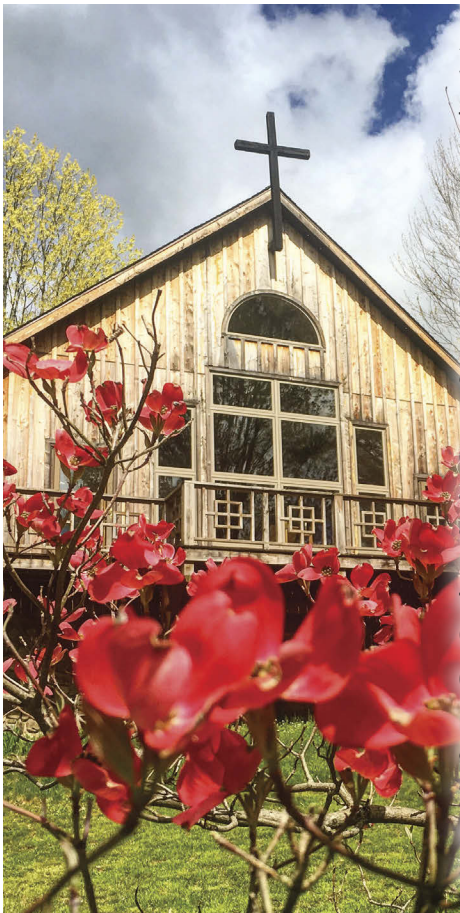
What does it mean to join with Jesus Christ to "make all things new"?

Our manner of life and ministry opens the "eye of our hearts" to see that we have been formed in the image and likeness of Christ. St. Irenaeus says, "The glory of God is a human person fully alive. Our primary work is to contemplatively consider and compassionately live and work at this revealed reality and relationship between ourselves, one another and our God who is "all in all".

Our Partners in Life and Ministry learn and teach this manner of life informed by the Gospel and model of Jesus Christ exemplified in the early Franciscan tradition of places for renewal and re-creation, often near cities and places of education. These fraternities that tended to include many in their life offered "peace and prayerful re-creation" between "the mountain" and the "marketplace". An outgoing or "apostolic model of contemplation" was lived through the dynamic elements of silence, simplicity, solitude and service.

Our prayerful and contemplative lifestyle celebrates and proclaims an active awareness of God's presence with and care for all creatures. We learn, pass on and participate in this awareness by actively caring for ourselves, one another, our earth and sharing in this mutual care as a larger community. "Going out to all the world."

Please feel free to reach Dan Riley, ofm or our Executive Director, Mike Fenn, at any time as you consider with us our call to be "made new."



MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

For me this journey toward Christ started by a long and windy road to understand how to see Christ with new eyes.

Wounding ways and simplistic views, grounded in sorting habits and judgmental worldviews, often encountered at the doorstep of many churches deterred me from doing just this. Mt. Irenaeus offered a welcoming and healing haven and was instrumental in helping me to find Christ anew and renewed, as well as embrace a community of like-minded un-kosher Catholics. The Mountain community welcomed, listened, never judged, and believed in gathering around a table with excellent food and hospitality. This appealed to my hybridized European identity, as well as provided me with a link to history and mystical ancient paths. The Mountain friars opened the door to depth, fearless of treading through murky spots alongside the seeker, allowing for transformation in Christ in simplicity and authenticity.

Seeing Christ with new eyes is just a first step, then comes opening up and pulling away from ruttled preconceptions forged from unhappy stories or past resentments too long clung to. Christ within flows deeply through heart and gut releasing sacred longings. Christ's Grace liberates our souls from behind the cobwebs torn asunder, Christ swabs our window panes to release the light that must bathe us and which in turn we must give to all. . . Christ helps us to stand on our head and elevate the heart above the thinking mind (Fr. Dan). Christ shoves away usual ways of being, Christ forges a third way from the habitual unimaginative dualistic mind through love and joy.

Christ is and always shall be – Praise be.

~ Anne-Claire Fisher
Secular Franciscan Candidate

“What does it mean
to join
with Jesus Christ
in making
all things new?”

To be at Mt. Irenaeus for the second summer, as both an accounting intern and companion is such a unique and eye opening opportunity. Being able to learn and work with, and for, a place I love has opened me up to so much. To marry accounting and spirituality, numbers and nature, was not my “plan” when I first came to Bona’s, but I could not be more delighted to be doing exactly that.

I write this while sitting somewhere on Francis trail, thankful for the opportunity to be so close to God and God's Works, even if (and when) it starts to rain.

I knew this experience would be different than last summer, but for once, I was excited to grow as a person, a student, and in faith, knowledge and relationship with others, myself, and God. Having been a Companion already, I'm looking at this summer with different eyes than last, creating relationships and learning all I can. Placing my roots in God, I know the experiences I gain this summer both in the office and in my tent will be with me for years to come.

~ Natalie Wasek
Summer Companion



Perhaps, you have wondered, as I have, what that Mountain phrase, “making all things new” means? I'm sure that it means more than just one thing, but when rolling those words around in our minds we can hear echoes of various religious and philosophical traditions. For some, it's a literal reflection of the Book of Revelations, for others it recalls the Zen tradition of the “beginner's mind,” a practice which encourages all of us to approach each moment with curiosity and fresh eyes. When I try to understand it, I form a picture in my mind of the way the world looks after a storm, everything fresh and sparkling, washed clean and full of possibility.

“Making all things new” calls us to face the world in a stance of optimism and open-heartedness. This unusual way of approaching life is so counter-intuitive that it requires determination and strength to do so regularly. “Making all” is a call to action. It is not a passive observation. It is a choice we make daily to believe in others, and in the possible, in order to deny past hurts and disappointments, the power to reduce our expectations of one another and of the wider world. Making all things new asks us to seek relationships that challenge us to let down our guards and let others in; not expecting the same old pain, but expecting a new harmony, expecting the best in one another. It is a way of not giving up on the world, not seeing it for age-old patterns of discord, but facing it as full of potential, rejecting the idea that it is a lost cause.

What happens when we turn our hearts to seeing all things as new? We see all people as kin. We have fresh expectations that we can and will relate to one another peacefully. We see our Earth as if it were newly born; fascinating and precious, not battered and existing as something to take advantage of. We see the forgotten and dismissed people around us, the flawed people who have made mistakes as if they were children, brimming with potential, not yesterday's failures. We see ourselves as people who overcome, people who grow and change, people full of love's potential.

When we see all things as new, we turn to one another for the strength and encouragement needed to be continually guided by optimism that we can and should do better. When exhaustion threatens to hijack our openness, we find companions to remind us that the world and all it contains is new each day. Seeing all things as new requires community to hold the ideal of the new because inevitably we falter and require others to hold it for us until our strength is renewed. But that need works both ways, our communities need us too. They need us to expect better, to believe in grace, to believe that each and every one of us has merit, is deserving of love, and deserves the right to hope.

When we see all things as new, we peel back the flawed habits of restraint, cynicism and dismissiveness to expose the fresh uncompromising hope that reveals the face of God in our world and in one another.

~ Dianne Kuzia Hills
Mt. Irenaeus Board of Trustees Chair



MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

How do I understand joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new?

I guess it requires looking at the Gospels to understand how Jesus "made things new" in his own day.

Jesus' message to, and action with, the people of his day was about hope, healing and life. He sought out the broken and suffering people and at the same time they sought him. He gave them the ability to understand that they were loved by God and even "blessed" in contradistinction to the messages they heard that they were "sinners" and "unclean." Sure we all sin but there is much more to each of us than the worst thing we have done. So maybe instead of seeing ourselves as "sinners" we can see ourselves as people who sometimes sin.

It is a lot easier to imagine yourself as being able to do better when you realize that sin and badness is not the whole of who you are. Jesus gave people forgiveness but maybe more importantly gave them acceptance and love which then healed their sin and their damaged psyches.

Don Quixote did the same thing. He kept calling a beaten down barmaid "Dulcinea" (sweet one) rather than her common name "Aldonza" (dirty rag) until she began to believe that she was a sweet person and not a dirty thing. He opened the eyes of her heart and saw herself as "new" and began to behave in a more dignified manner.

~ Br. Kevin Kriso



"Let us build the city of God..."

Those were some of the first lyrics a group of us heard in the city of Assisi 20 years ago on an unforgettable pilgrimage as part of the Mountain community. That journey still lives within our hearts and minds, as many of us recalled together during a weekend this summer.

We gathered together filled with a deep sense of renewal to build the city of God, wherever that city is now in our lives.

Sure, we remembered our time together, such as at the Carceri, Greccio, San Damiano, the Porziuncula and the piazzas, but we also looked forward. How do we make the spirit of Assisi a reality in our lives now as we go about the world as parents, friends, lovers and strangers? Our footprints remain in Assisi, but our impressions on people can make all the difference in today's noisy and nefarious world.

Br. Joe observed that our journey to Assisi and our time together this summer weekend were one -- they are in union.

Yes, the journey to Assisi happened 20 years ago, but the sounds of saints, silence, studying and even silliness remind my heart to build the city of God today and to make all things new.

~ **Greg Licamele**
Board of Trustees Member

UPCOMING DATES:

September 12

Mountain in Your Home in the Rochester area - call or email Michelle for details mmarc@sbu.edu or 716-375-2096.

September 23

SBU Family Weekend Open House at the Mountain from 11-3 with prayer services at 1 and 3 at the Mountain.

Sundays at the Mountain

Mass every Sunday at 11 with a dish-to-pass brunch immediately following.



A beautiful day by the pond.

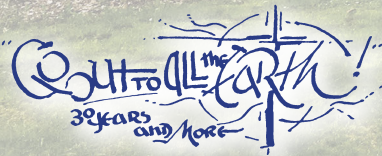


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Help us as you can, join us when we come to where you are.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR MOUNTAIN FUND!

Your gifts make a difference! Thank you to all who donated to our annual 2016-17 Mountain Fund. Through your support we have once again surpassed our goal and raised more than \$230,000 providing needed funds to meet the Mountain's yearly operating budget which is over \$500,000.

Our success wouldn't be possible without the enthusiasm, leadership, and countless hours of support from our Mountain Fund Chair, Marv Stocker, as well as our hard working phonathon volunteers and generous benefactors. Your support to our annual giving campaign will help continue the Mountain's mission--- to create and nourish a community that transcends a particular place, open to all peoples, ages and cultures.

Efforts are already underway for this year's Mountain Fund. We thank you in advance for your continued support!

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Mary Schlosser
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"There is a Greek proverb that states, **"Society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."** Mt. Irenaeus is one of those trees. My gift to the Mountain is multiplied in the ministry of the friars, to students of St. Bonaventure University, and the innumerable other visitors to Mt. Irenaeus whose lives are transformed by the enduring touch of this manner of ministry whether at the Mountain or on the road."

~ **Don Watkins, Order of Franciscan Seculars at Mt. Irenaeus**