

“Back to School” is Back to Life

“May God give you a spirit of *wisdom* and revelation resulting in *knowledge* of him. May the eyes of your hearts be *enlightened*, that you may *know* what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe.”

(Ephesians 1:17-19)

It was late August when I began writing this reflection, almost already “back to school time!”

I was with my family by a lake and “school” was mentioned daily with great expectation. But, I also realized that we were in the midst of school – I saw, with my family and their children, deep learning and taking turns in real life roles as teachers and students and having lots of fun!

I spent more days, this August, than other years with my family; my nieces and nephews and their children along with my siblings. Most of our time was around beautiful lakes and places that were familiar to us, either Keuka Lake or Rock Haven Lake in Maine.

We were near the woods and out on the water in boats and rafts. In many ways all of this warming us up for “back to school.” We were all deep into the adventures of education – “*educio*” – leading each other into the new.

These were everyone’s last few weeks before the young ones would be heading “to school.” A couple were going to be going to preschool – one I believe was making her way to kindergarten. I was blessed with a special joy as an uncle and great uncle to hear what they were excited about and watch them as if all of us were in preschool! All of us were in the great activity of new beginnings of learning and growing with each other during the summer by the lake.

I would be going back as well, to begin a new year at St. Bonaventure University. We learn through instruction and conversation and other modes of pedagogy. Yet we, many of us for years, in educational institutions, occasionally feel confined. You may have been part of this experience as a student or an educator. You may feel it happening for you now, or for your children. There is a shift in education, a sense of learning, of ways of learning; “pedagogies” that take us outside the confines of the “classic classroom” and what we have typically called “school.”

I am more and more delighted with the amazing ways that young and older folks teach and learn from each other each day. The



Celebrating “All Our Relations” Mass at the Mountain with family and friends.

Mt. IRENAEUS
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Mountain continues to grow and expand as a place for that sort of exploration and integration. "Each moment, each day, is a classroom."

There are many pedagogies, ways of "walking into understanding" to interpret the Greek word, "pedagogy." We walk with each other into "understanding;" we unfold wisdom and knowledge as teachers for one another, students with each other, often through play. This was how Jesus taught, some of his parables are humorous. This was the life "on the road" with St. Francis.

With contemplation we have the God given gift – each of us – to seek and find the whole, to always be amazed by the activity of integrating – enduring the pains of separation so we can work at coming again to the joy of unity and community. In fact without being conscious of it in a self-conscious or overly rational way, lots of things are being learned and integrated; becoming one within ourselves and each other as we play. Exploration and discovery are the fruits of reflection and are companions to our natural inclination to integrate, to bring things together within us and with each other. I am thinking now, as I write this, of the un-namable joys and encounters that are obvious and yet mysterious in the simple practices of living a day with families around a lake!

All of these truly are fruits of wisdom. They stand out especially for me as I watched young children getting ready to go to school, teaching each other how to play well and share, how to accomplish some things they had not before – jumping off docks, swimming 10 to 15 feet, getting up on boogie boards – and yes, even the five-year-olds, going waterskiing!

Experiences are the condition of true encounter and encouragement that entices us to learn more deeply what life is about, what we are about in living life, and they are our fundamental "classrooms." Our experiences, personal and shared, invite the sort of reflective process that is wisdom's activity within us, conversation, conversion and assimilation is such a wonderful though challenging series of activities. This has been true since the beginning of humankind - and possibly even prior to language - that we had to point to, lead each other to, find ways of educating each other, which is to say leading each other toward something that is beneficial and helps others around us.

This is so much of what the Mountain is about.

In the very beginning we knew we were companioning, among others, St. Bonaventure University as a great institution of what we call "Higher Education." The intellectual life and the pursuit of reason and reasonable answers to questions, the importance of laboratories and learning from practice all are present there and much of that is present here. But it looks a little different and the Mountain goes about this "educio" ... leading into learning differently, or we might say "multi-facetedly" as a companion to this and other "institutions of learning."

St. Paul, one of the great teachers of our Christian faith, came by his faith on a road, not in a classroom. He received it and learned it through a major and very dramatic personal epiphany and then conversion. This was sustained in him over a period of time. He went away to a desert, probably in Syria, for reflection and contemplation. A bright man and well educated Jew, his whole being was rocked by an experience of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ, the very one who whose followers he was persecuting. He was somehow caught in an encounter with the Risen Lord. Riveted by this, Paul fiercely said, "I know Christ and him Crucified." It was not book learning that brought him around, it was the bold, bright, troubling, and ultimately converting encounter with Christ that changed Paul's heart forever.

He saw the immediate implications of Christ's being one with us; "One body, though many members." Paul is such an important figure for all of us, personally an important figure for me as his is my middle name as a friar. His fiery approach to life and his determination to be one with "all Creation groaning" is totally linked with his hope and belief in the risen Lord. This came first not by what we call, "head knowledge," but by some sort of profound experience that drove him for the rest of his life to bring



Sharing a Sign of Peace during the Celebration Mass.



Fr. Dan greets family and friends at Mass under the tent.

this experience alive for others learning, believing and living through daily contact, daily life. Though he was a great teacher and preacher he is one of the first examples of one who shows us that this school for life and love is our daily living.

Sts. Francis and Clare and all spiritual teachers and seekers have had within them a longing to learn and to grow that rose up from living their own lives. A metanoia; the change of heart, mind and action, we see in Paul and we see in others too. A great yearning was in them – and in many of us - to move from a place of darkness or a felt sense of loneliness or distance to a place of being one with others. With this we also need to know how to wash the dishes and take out the garbage. We learn from families and family time the deepest and brightest things about everyday life and about eternal everlasting life.

There are fundamental, practical things about life as well as accounting, science and wonderful practices of technology and new careers yet to be named as we come to learn new things about making a new life for ourselves and others on this planet.

Thomas Merton and others help us to understand this singular and simple passage of spiritual learning, that it is not only in service of our own growth and relationship with God, but it is our way of learning, practicing, praying so we are capable of being friends, brothers, sisters, a benefit, a help, becoming participants, collaborators in the world's community and the creation of a new world order.

St. Francis, near the end of his life, was heard by Br. Leo praying, "God, who are you and who am I?" Francis was forever "the student" longing to learn, to know, from his Lord and Teacher as well as with his brothers and sisters, Clare especially was his significant confidant and teacher, as well as Br. Leo. We turn to people not just before us, but people beside us to learn.

St. Francis kept on going back to school, longing to open to the deepest truths of life through experiences; being with the Sultan in Egypt, being on the road with his brothers to preach, finding and kissing a leper, wandering in fields and forests, reconciling households and villages, coming into piazzas, understanding and not understanding people's lives.

The wonder today of what we call perennial wisdom is waking up a conversation between people of all creeds and traditions and those who have trailed away from religious practice. Those who wish to listen and learn and live well with one another are conscious that there must be some sort of common consciousness. Some depth of being here that is perennial has always been and is lasting beyond us. Without leaving or losing any of what we believe, we have the opportunity to learn in our encounter with others what their deep meanings of life are, their journey and path to compassion and care for one another. **A deep humble walk in the world today invites us to be people who want to learn from one another and this is the wisdom path.**

As I finish writing this you and I possibly have gone back to school!

Will we still take a walk in the woods because the Fall is warm this year?

Will I visit the Mountain and climb a trail by myself or with another and enjoy the silence and let it take us beyond the words we have so that as we return in conversation there is a new depth, a perennial understanding rising between us?

Will there be times, possibly this Fall to Winter that the color of the leaves, trees and land will dazzle me and I will stop – I will know something is tugging at my heart to see it new and differently – to learn, to love and to live – to **"Be Still And Know!"**

Peace!
Ignacio



Friends and family proceed to Mass under the tent at the "All Our Relations" celebration.

"Oneness of being" in which all opposites are reconciled, is the supreme insight of the perennial philosophy. It cannot be known by reason, but where the heart is opened in faith to the Supreme Reality, it is known with intellectual clarity. And I would say with freedom and joy.

~"Second Simplicity" by Bruno Barnhart (Pg. 16)

Fr. Bruno Barnhart, OSB, Cam. died last winter. He was an exceptional monk with a deep call to prayer and wondering about wisdom. He helped many of us come to deeper understanding while also – as he did with me – telling us to return to the house of Franciscan wisdom and explore it and share it with others.



MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

"Our life is educative." As someone who truly loves learning, it has been a lifelong practice for me to seek new ideas, new insights, new perspectives, and new levels of understanding through a variety of ways, including Higher Education, reading, and challenging career development opportunities. I am grateful for all of these experiences, yet they pale in comparison to what my time and relationship with Mt. Irenaeus has taught me about the true essence of this phrase. On the Mountain, I have learned the subtle yet profound difference between seeking wisdom rather than knowledge and answers. It has helped me realize that wisdom is what is most needed in my life to become the person God created me to be.

The world in which we live will always try to convince us that the answers we seek are outside of us. Yet the Mountain experience – spending time on the land soaking in God's beauty and abundance, being in community with people of all backgrounds, ages, and experiences; faith-filled conversations in the Chapel; quiet meditation spent in stillness with our loving God – teaches us that the truth we seek must be found within. Returning to ancient traditions of pausing, noticing, and reflecting has helped me become better at "receiving well" the gift that can be found in any moment. This often brings me to a sense of peace that does indeed surpass all understanding.

After being on the Mountain (or in regional "on the Road" gatherings), my soul is nourished and fed. I am able to return to the "real world" with a deeper capacity to live my life in a more authentic and faith-filled fashion. I believe that the best way I can bear witness as a Catholic is to live my life in a joyful, generous, and trusting fashion. This requires practice and a commitment made anew with each and every day. This wisdom has arisen during my time on the Mountain, and is something that cannot be taught in any book or classroom. It must simply be lived.

~ Maura Parda



Over the years, I have made the journey from my home in Boston to Mt. Irenaeus many times. Almost always, I traveled in search of Wisdom, carrying in my heart a question (or two!) that needed an answer. The noise of life "in the valley" has sometimes made it difficult for me to hear her. More often, it has been the "noise" of my own ego that has overpowered the quieter voice of Wisdom. Wisdom, I think, speaks with a soft voice.

At the Mountain, Wisdom makes herself known in so many wonderful and beautiful ways. You might find her waiting for you along one of the trails that wander through the hills. Her laughter is sometimes heard around the table in the main house where strangers become friends and friends and families grow deeper in love and gratitude for one another. Often her voice arrives late at night when the stars over the Mountain shine bright and clear. She speaks with special tenderness in Holy Peace Chapel.

Mt. Irenaeus is a home for Wisdom.

I have learned at the Mountain that Wisdom prefers not to be reduced to the impersonal language of "answers" and "solutions." Rather, she seeks relationship. Wisdom offers herself as a friend and companion and, once she arrives, she is in no hurry to leave. Too often I have been satisfied to take her answers with me and return home, foolishly leaving her friendship behind. In recent years I have tried to make the rhythm of daily life at the Mountain into a pattern for my life in Boston. I, too, am trying to make a home for Wisdom. I see that the more faithful I am in living the Mountain life – praying often, practicing humility, welcoming others, seeking joy – my friendship with Wisdom grows stronger. Among the many gifts I have received from the Mountain that, I think, is the one I cherish most.

~ Paul Kline



If you will, imagine walking into a room. In the room people are holding keys; small keys, large keys, strange keys, common ones. Outside the room, keys hang from trees, rest on rocks, dangle from plants and sometimes small animals. You wander around and someone you don't even know hands you a key. Other times, an old friend passes you one so casually you don't even realize it is in the palm of your hand until you glance down and see it there.

What do those keys open? Bits of you, bits of others, places in the world, feelings, thoughts, experiences, relationships, truth and wonder. They open rusty old locked away parts of yourself you either forgot, or never knew. They throw open to the sunlight dusty places in your heart that sing when freed. They are both a way in and a way out.

And that is the Mountain. It is a place of keys; they are abundant. No one tells you that you must use them, or when to use them, or how. You learn by seeing, trying, experiencing. The Mountain is a place where curiosity is warmly welcomed, where all who are open-hearted are both students and teachers.

~ Dianne Kuzia Hills

From the time I first stepped foot into the House of Peace, I felt a tranquility and a deep understanding. I was disconnected from the world. My phone was screaming that it had zero bars. I was in shock that the internet was no longer at my fingertips. Yet contrary to all that I was thinking, I felt at peace; I felt like I arrived home.

Working in the world of medicine has been an eye opening experience. There is always new knowledge to chase, and always more information to know. There is never a moment of complacency, and you find you learn as much from your patients as they learn from you. I was attuned to my patients after a lesson I learned many years ago sitting in Holy Peace Chapel. As I heard the stories of my fellow students, I realized that the world that surrounds me is alive and constantly speaking. It proved every person has a life and a story that is filled with as many intricacies as my own. I no longer think that the happiness, joy, and fear that I have come to experience is exclusive to myself, but something that everyone experiences. It is this "something" that is meant to be shared. It is this lesson, learned on the cushioned mat, that I carry with me to each and every patient's room. It taught me to understand my patient's pain, confusion, and frustration and taught me how simply being present and listening can help alleviate some of their burdens.

As a medical student, I am taught by the attending physicians and residents how to diagnose and treat both debilitating and curable illnesses. As a student on the Mountain, I was taught how to listen and simply "be" in the presence of another. I carry the latter lesson with me on a daily basis. In those precious few moments it takes to earn a patient's trust, I think about what made me so comfortable on the Mountain. I think about the judgment free zone, the friendly faces, and the acceptance of who I was. I now try to emulate that aura and make each patient room a place to listen; a place to learn and grow.

As I look fondly back on my time at St. Bonaventure I always think about those first steps into the House of Peace. As a student from NYC/LI, on my own for the first time in a world that was very different than I was used to, I finally felt at home on the Mountain. The lost cell phone reception and lack of internet taught me about what made the world go around long before my time. I saw how we rely on each other for our strength. We are all connected with each and every relationship making the world a little brighter. And our home at the Mountain will remain our strong beacon home.

~ Rijo Maracheril



MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS (Continued)

When I think of the Mountain, I am immediately transported to the Chapel. My mind calms, my heart rests. It is there I feel whole.

As a student at Bonaventure, it was not unusual to be introduced to visitors on an evening away or Sunday Mass. It was in meeting others, who with no connection to the University, traveled near and far to be at the Mountain. Immediately, I recognized that there is a much deeper, shared yearning for the peace and community that the Mountain provides. It is the same call that St. Francis heard to leave all that he knew to travel to La Verna. It is the same shared wanting that Clare felt following the early friars, denying her assumed female role, to seek Jesus and start her Order.

As I traveled with Fr. Dan and Br. Joe on many Mountain on the Roads, I was quickly aware of an innate human connection. Again, that same desire to be loved and share love, to seek this love in God, whether recognizing that call or not, was ever present among the many who would join with us.

The Mountain, though hours away, continues to frame my life. It is the pedestal with which I stand, or so easily fall back upon. My desire to spread joy and love, without fear, stems from the openness I have felt for years spent up in those cabins in the woods. I need not explicitly state that it is God calling me and guiding me to find that human connection, but as I left Bonaventure, I could not ignore feeling lost in a life without the Mountain nearby.

And simple enough, I discovered it is I who carries the Mountain close. I cannot help myself but to share about the glory of this Holy place. It has allowed me to listen to the stories of others, to lose the fear of going too deep. I am more alive than ever and more willing to dive in with God.

When I think of the Mountain, my mind calms. My heart rests. I am home.

~ Lilly Whelan

"Our life is educative" is a maxim that I have heard Fr. Dan use many times over the years, especially as I have gotten deeper into the life here as an adult, first as a member of the Board, and now in my new role, helping ensure that the Mountain thrives for many years to come. As I transition from the business world to a 2nd career, I am learning a ton every day, listening intently to all who I interact with, trying to soak up all that's shared like a sponge! While there are similarities to the management of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, I have learned a great deal over the past 6 months, and I know I have so much yet to learn.

I think the greatest distinction I am finding is that ours is not a transactional model, and we have been successful in spite of that fact! For 20 plus years I worked for companies who developed "stuff" that we hoped others would want. We would speak about developing relationships, but at the end of the day these relationships were the means to getting them to buy more stuff.

In contrast, here at the Mountain, life is remarkably different. I now live more closely amongst the friars, and am struck by how they empty themselves each day, giving to those that make it up the hill and to all they encounter on campus and in other places. They prayerfully give thanks and ask for blessings for you and all others that have generously given to help the Mountain mature over the past 30 years. This non-transactional model has shown that if you remain true to a mission that people hunger for, you will find others who want to be a part of this life and help support it. For 30 years, we have been able to do just that.

This educative way of life and ministry has never been a one way street. I won't ever forget the first time in liturgy at the Mountain, after a lively homily, Fr. Dan looking to the circle of us in the room, and asking, "What can we learn from each other?" Introducing the concept of a shared homily was such a refreshing moment after a lifetime of being "taught at" about my faith.

That small circle from over 25 years ago has grown considerably over time, as we recently celebrated 50 years of a life dedicated to community with Fr. Dan's Jubilee. Throughout the entire weekend we had well over 300 people join us, each in their own way sharing their faith, helping us all learn and grow. I know our circle goes well beyond those 300 people who joined us for the weekend, and I thank you for all the gifts and wisdom that's been shared over the years.

~ Mike Fenn, Executive Director



Prayer, food, fun and music come together at Fr. Dan's Jubilee Mass and "All Our Relations" celebration.

November 18, 2016 "MOUNTAIN IN THE VALLEY"

Please
Join
Us!

Friends of the Mountain - especially those of the Southern Tier! We have made the decision to let our annual live auction "rest a while," HOWEVER... we do want to continue the excitement and joy of our gatherings as The Mt. Irenaeus family in the Olean area.

We have celebrated in other regions of the country; enjoying evenings of prayer, food and fellowship. Join us for a "MOUNTAIN IN THE VALLEY" here!

We will begin on November 18th with a prayer service and reflection at 6:00 pm in the Doyle Chapel at St. Bonaventure University. Following this time there will be a buffet dinner in the Doyle Dining Room behind the Chapel.

The exceptional Auction Committee who served us for years, friars and friends look forward to you joining us for this "Mountain time!"

PLEASE RSVP NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 10th to Michelle Marcellin at 716-375-2096 or mmarc@sbu.edu.



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"MOUNTAIN IN THE VALLEY"
 November 18, 2016 - Join us at St. Bonaventure University! Details Inside.

THE DANIEL A. HURLEY, ofm LEGACY SOCIETY



We are happy to announce the creation of our new planned giving program, The Daniel A. Hurley, ofm Legacy Society.

You may have known Fr. Dan Hurley who gave us many laughs, but also "gardens full of wisdom." We remember him saying, "It is not the place, but what takes place here at the Mountain." By naming our Planned Giving

Society after Fr. Dan Hurley, we commemorate his and the Mountain's legacy "making all things new with Jesus Christ" for future generations.

So often we hear from friends who are interested in making a legacy gift to the Mountain through their estate plans. Friends of the Society give these gifts through a bequest in a will, trust, life insurance or charitable gift annuity to continue to assist with our mission and help ensure that the Mountain's legacy of "Making all things new!" will prosper for generations to come.

For more information about making a planned gift and joining the Daniel A. Hurley ofm Legacy Society, please call or email Mary Schlosser at mschlosser@sbu.edu / 716-375-2081.

HOLIDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Thanksgiving Day
November 24, 2016
 11:00 a.m. Mass

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2016
 9:00 p.m.
 Christmas Mass at Night

December 25, 2016
 11:00 a.m.
 Mass for Christmas Day

New Year's Eve
December 31, 2016
 11:00 p.m. New Year's Eve
 Prayer Service

January 1, 2017
 11:00 a.m. Mass

