

“In the beginning I call about the first beginning from whom all illuminations descend as from the Father of Lights, from whom comes every good and every perfect gift.
**(That) he may enlighten the eyes of our soul
to guide our feet in the way of that peace
which surpasses all understanding.**

... Following the example of our most blessed father Francis,
I was seeking that peace with a panting spirit –“

**–“A Soul’s Journey into God.”
– St. Bonaventure**



Making my way home from my sister’s in Maryland after New Year’s, winding my way through Pennsylvania into New York State, I received a call from **Joe Kotula, ofm**. He warned me, with a steady, caring voice, that the electricity was out for three of our prayer cabins. I have been living in one of them, St. Joe’s in the Pines now sitting in our open meadow, for almost four years. On a dark, cold highway this message sounded like I was in for a dark and cold night on the Mountain! All of this had me begin to remember our beginnings for Mt. Irenaeus. *Rustic then and with more buildings and comfort all sorts of challenges can arise when you live in the woods.*

Our first years on the Mountain I enjoyed living in a tent through the summer time. In the fall I moved into our first home for the winter. As we built cabins and before we moved into our “House of Peace” (built in 1995) I was offered the opportunity to enjoy Juniper hermitage up on our Mountain Road. When the “House of Peace” was completed we then - the four friars of the Mountain - moved into this new large, welcoming timber framed home.

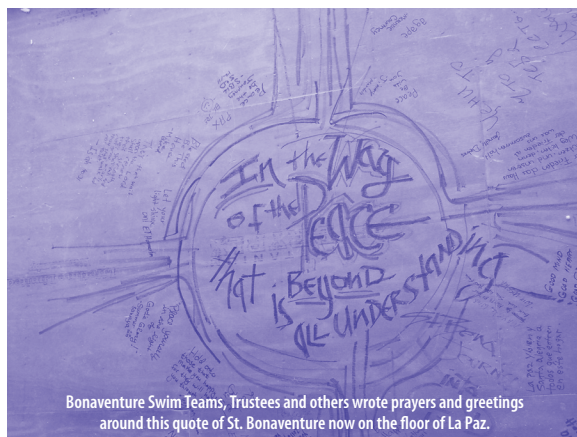
When we first renovated our original house (now called “The Other House”) and enlisted the help of young lay ministers for St. Bonaventure University I was given the opportunity and found myself living in the quiet furthest room there, which offered me a place to grow in prayer. When **Kevin Kriso** joined us four years ago, I moved again – then to St. Joe’s – from where I now write you this reflection. Here above the pond, relishing life with chickadees, fox, deer, and even a bear ... *I am amazed at what one might see from these different vantage points.*

The Mountain Board of Trustees and community determined over 7 years ago that an additional hermitage should be built to express our mission for solitude and the future inclusion of others in our life as well. As this building matures, and our mission does as well, I am awaiting the completion of this new little home or hermitage, called “La Paz,” and the privilege to move further into silence and solitude.

Each step along the way, each climb of the Mountain, I have continued to “pant after peace!” I have been blessed to find it here, at the Mountain.

So ... As I turn the bends through Pennsylvania, traveling Rt. 15 through another State’s mountains, onto I-86, I was wondering ...

But, no electricity means no running water in the cabins!



Bonaventure Swim Teams, Trustees and others wrote prayers and greetings around this quote of St. Bonaventure now on the floor of La Paz.

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... With the rest of the world strained, trying to find water so critical for life, I am embarrassed to say my own concerns were whether I would be able to brush my teeth, etc.. I was hoping I might wake in the morning for a shower and a cup of coffee. Each event in our own lives invites us to be open to the joys and sufferings of others. Little did I know that would be true of this particular night. Knowing others have more lasting issues and embarrassed to share mine with you, none-the-less they felt very real on a trip home on a cold January night in a car buffeted by the wind from Pennsylvania to West Clarksville, New York. Would I sleep in our House of Peace as Joe suggested I might or find my way to any other bed in one of our other houses which still had electricity? – Or – wander through the wind and cold and campout in St. Joe's.



Participants were welcomed "on the land," in the desert and by the Rio Grande by Bill Plotkin at a conference "Nature and the Human Soul" led by Richard Rohr, ofm and Plotkin in Albuquerque, New Mexico in January 2012.

My tent our first summers was set up in the field below what would become our Chapel site. From there I found my way, with Joe's help, and for a few more summers in a lovely spot under old apple trees below our first pond. I loved tenting during all of our early years, drinking in the goodness of the quiet and finding solitude a real "sister." Usually alone, but sometimes sharing my tent with students or alums, I enjoyed the illusion that I was truly "out in the wild!" Often I would hear or see a raccoon, a fox, an owl and one night a bear.

The Mountain has always been a sort of colony of care. With the solitude and comfort of an enclosed tent I felt secure on the wooded edge of our wonderful life. There were times when I would climb out of a tent, even on a rainy summer night, and look up for stars, grateful for and enjoying the enclosure of the clouds with glimpses of a moon. Whether it was sunny or rainy I relished and continued to give thanks for the solitude of tent living.

Now, the car was taking me through the hills and the mountains as I wondered where I would rest my head ... *I remembered ... the gas stove in St. Joe's was connected to an electrostatic thermostat! ... Even without electric power it would ignite when the thermostat called for heat!* Ahh, I thought – I have a snug place after all! I decided I would pass through the House of Peace, brushing my teeth and once again step further into the dark woods and the bright light of quiet in the warmth and stillness of St. Joe's.

Our opening quote here is from St. Bonaventure's "Itinerarium Mentis In Deum," which is Bonaventure's own soul's "itinerancy," to the healing peace of solitude, his journey into God. He felt and was tired already with the burdens of leadership and the need to reconcile a somewhat rag tag group of Franciscans in turmoil. Mt. La Verna was the mountain Bonaventure climbed and where he penned the opening quote, his prologue. St. Francis of Assisi made his way there before him with his own heartfelt reflections and the burdens of crusades, his longings to be united in the One who is love, the suffering love of Christ poured out for all creation. Mt. LaVerna, this mountain north of Assisi, Italy and in the Province of Tuscany was and continues to be treasured as a remote place helping early Franciscans and contemporary sisters and brothers sense, learn and know the journey of one's soul to God from "the marketplace to the mountain and the mountain to the marketplace" – as we say at Mt. Irenaeus. Cold at times, as mountains can be, the warm breath of God brought new life into Bonaventure, Francis and many others after them. For four years we took students from St. Bonaventure University on a pilgrimage to Italy and to Mt. LaVerna, thanks to the goodness of **Frank and Barbara Keery**.



St. Joseph's "In The Pine" is now actually above the pond and in the meadow!

All this came to mind and a heart full of gratitude and awe ... my similar longings for the peace of God's breath ... all of this drew me home to the Mountain on this cold January night and in a dark car I delighted in the possibilities of entering fully into the dark peace.

When I was a child I would jump into a row boat and quietly put oars into the water, packing my water colors and pad, journeying out into a lake. I would sneak away from a family gathering and row out into the middle of Canisius Lake, leaving the rest of my family on the shore while they enjoyed my grandparent's cottage. This and other Finger Lakes would grow to be a home and a place of peace for me even on dark nights and dark days. Barely into my teens and feeling a bit guilty, none-the-less I was free enough to take some time away, parting from beachside



excitement, panting after peace even then. The lapping waves would invite me to listen as I rested my oars. My eyes and heart rose to the hillsides around the lake, enfolding me in my green dreams.

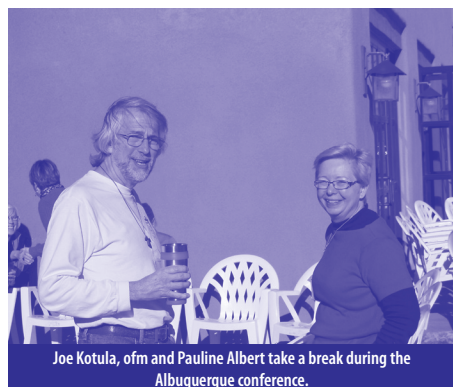
I would paint the longings that I had in my heart, I would attempt to "picture peace." Then and now I sense within myself that this is the peace "beyond all understanding," lifted up in poetry, prayer and painting yet surpassing every ability we have to hold it to ourselves... it is among us, for all of us.

This peace, in Spanish, is "La Paz." It is "beyond all understanding" and yet always at hand. It is nestled now in our hearts and awakens there as we hope for peace for others as well. And so ... on this night's journey, I traveled back, hoping soon to climb the Mountain further to the peace beyond all understanding already emerging in the quiet and safe space of La Paz hermitage.

Harry Monaco, ofm, one of our dearest brothers died before Christmas. We hold his family in our prayers. Harry longed for and enjoyed peace with us here on the Mountain, helping to shape community here with others. Our first summer or two, when I traveled away, Harry took over the tent that I enjoyed. It became his own space. He dug out a little fire hole before the tent, in the field and would sit there in the quiet of the night, under the stars, watching the fire dance, finding and feeling peace. Harry knew and radiated this peace that truly surpasses all words, pictures and understandings. Harry bore it to others in classrooms and clinics, on the paths of St. Bonaventure University and on hiking trails with Joe Kotula, ofm and others.

Harry was with us when we first explored this land. It was here that he first told me he hoped to be a friar.

Early on the first students who joined us here told us that "we go to the Mountain to go back to the valley." They also suggested that we would "leave at the bottom of the hill our masks and find ourselves with each other as we climbed the Mountain." This is my heartfelt journey as I continue to climb a bit further up our Mountain road to what now is under construction, La Paz, "the peace," a new hermitage, a small home on our mountainside not far from our Chapel, "Holy Peace."



Joe Kotula, ofm and Pauline Albert take a break during the Albuquerque conference.

When it is completed, and if it is still the will of my Province and the Mountain's community, I will be able to live in La Paz for a time. I have no illusion that it will be for a long time, but I will live there longing for others that they may too find peace and that others one day will live in this little home and will be infused with, will follow after and eventually find the peace that is beyond all understanding, going from this small "home" to bring peace to others in other homes and other places in our world.

Each structure here, each path and space and place helps us with this longing for peace that arises in all of our hearts and all the earth. This is the fire of God's love, the lively peaceful fire that comforts us and keeps us alive even when the electric goes out!

I offer special thanks to our many benefactors who have supplied what we have needed to create "La Paz." I am particularly grateful for **Rick Mikolajczyk and Tom Blazjewski's** careful and thoughtful work and **Grant Scott's** design as well as our Board of Trustees who trust this venture and have encouraged others to support us with our many needs. As with all of our buildings this new hermitage will be a home for future residents on the Mountain. It is to continue to open up our hearts in care for others.

May our longings be lifted up from this hill in Allegany County, New York to wherever our cars and feet might take us. May our panting go beyond this mountain top. May our hopes for, longing for and work for peace trail off from here and down into cities, marketplaces and into the hearts of others. Surpassing our own longings and our understandings, this, indeed, is the gift of peace given us in Jesus Christ. This gift is lasting and surpassing all other gifts, abiding now and always ... Paz, Pax, Shalom, Salam, Peace. Amen. Amen!



SBU Health Care Students gathered at the Mountain for an evening of peace and relaxation.



John Coughlin, OFM visits with some of the above students who shared with us the richness of their various spiritual traditions.



*Easter
Light and Peace!
Dan ofm*

"WE COME TO SHARE OUR STORY..."

It's a song often heard at Mt. Irenaeus and in places of worship around the world. It's also the root of the fundamental, radical communications change in today's world.

Today, we are empowered to share our stories in ways unimaginable just a handful of years ago. Today we literally have the ability to communicate with anyone in real time around the world. Today, anyone with a cell phone is a publisher and consumer of information. Today, we have networks -- or circles -- that can connect us, inspire us, help us and create meaningful dialogue and prayer with one another simply by using online communications tools.

As Franciscans, we have always been challenged to go out into the world and preach the Good News. As Mountain people, we use the wagon wheel as a powerful symbol of our connectedness. We use it to remind ourselves that we are not alone. "Christ is the center, the hub, and axle around which and from which we, 'though many are one'"

"Digital ministry" is a key way we can all express ourselves and share our stories (or reflect upon other people's stories). The Mountain enjoys presences on social media sites such as Facebook ([facebook.com/mtirenaeus](https://www.facebook.com/mtirenaeus)), Twitter ([@mtirenaeus](https://twitter.com/mtirenaeus)) and YouTube ([youtube.com/mountirenaeus](https://www.youtube.com/mountirenaeus)). In 2012 and beyond, we are looking at new ways to more fully minister, more fully listen and more fully connect ourselves with each other through social media and other tools, both online and offline. A small group of us have formed a communications committee to guide, discuss and reflect over where we've been and where we need to go. This newsletter is one way to stay connected, but we really want to establish a deeper, richer connectedness with you. We hope you will join us on our collective, Mountain digital journey as we explore new ways to connect our community far and wide -- from the mountains to the valleys. Visit our website mounti.com or follow us on Facebook or Twitter for updates this year. If you have ideas, we'd love to hear them, too, on Facebook, Twitter or email mountain@sbu.edu.

~Greg Licamele

NEWS FROM FR. LOU:

The Mountain is currently in need of gently used, upholstered furniture. If you have a couch, loveseat or chair that you would be willing to donate to the Mountain, please contact Fr. Lou at 585-973-2470.



A CIRCLE FOR ANIMATION:

Start with a simple truth: The Mountain inspires us. It inspires us to seek a closer relationship with God, to seek the quiet and simplicity of a world free of the distractions that seem to dominate our lives and to find the simple joy of peace as we walk with those we love. For many, the inspiration is reciprocal -- we feel a need to help assure that others can share these blessings and to assure the Mountain can sustain its mission.

Enter a diverse group of Bonaventure alums, connected by friendship with Fr. Dan and inspired to make a greater contribution toward sustaining the Mountain. In October, that group, a "Circle for Animation" came together at the Mountain for the first time, to share the Mountain experience and to explore ways to act on the mutual desire to be a larger part of the community that sustains and enriches the Mountain. The members of the Circle met over three days and nights, sharing the Eucharist, prayer, meals (and yes some wine), ideas, laughter and the communal benefits of shared creativity and wisdom.

For some, the greatest challenge was to adapt to the "Mountain way" of approaching a problem. For those accustomed to top-down, linear organization charts, narrowly defined tasks and calendar driven objectives, working in the Mountain way required some adjustment. At the Mountain, the process by which a decision is made is as important as the decision itself. Through an open, collaborative process, better decisions are made while strengthening the Mountain community by allowing broader participation and giving individuals the opportunity to transcend roles that might otherwise limit their contribution.



A CIRCLE FOR ANIMATION: *(continued)*

The shared experience yielded five lively ideas on how the Circle for Animation could act to bring and sustain greater life to the Mountain with others. The Circle for Animation believes that, to grow and sustain the Mountain Community:

- Help establish an outreach and communications plan that reaches undergraduates, alumni and others. These are natural relationships to be re-found and renewed.
- Produce a professional video that explains the Mountain, its mission and the opportunities that exist for others to share in the gospel lifestyle that exists there.
- Work with Fr. Dan on books explaining his vision for the Mountain and his uniquely accessible understanding of Christ's love for God's children.
- Assist the Mountain in creating a process that allows greater access to the community that supports its mission.
- Develop and implement a program that provides direction to persons who express a desire to become involved with the Mountain.

Are you inspired to assist with any of these tasks? The Circle for Animation is not a closed one – your participation would be very welcome. If you have the time and desire, please contact Michelle Marcellin (mmarc@sbu.edu).

~ **Joel Serra**

We have an olive wood Nativity set that takes center stage in our chapel at Christmas. Br. Joe purchased it some years ago near the birthplace of Jesus from Palestinian Christian artisans. This year my Christmas meditation focused on “Who showed up at that first Christmas? Why did they come? What were they looking for? What did they find? Is what they found what they were expecting?” The figures in our nativity include poor and uneducated people- the shepherds- and wealthy, educated and exotic people- the wise men. I realized that all kinds of folks showed up

at the first Christmas. It did not take me long to make the transition to ponder the wide array of students who showed up at the Mountain this past semester. Why, I wondered, did they show up? What were they looking for?

Who showed up this semester? First, a lot of men and women athletes showed up- rugby, field hockey, cross country, and swimming. They report they were seeking to grow closer as teams and also to focus on the values of cooperation, help and service. Bona students who come from urban areas and have very limited experience in the woods also visited. For some, the Mountain is a place of amazement. For others who have seen one too many scary camping movies, it is hard to shake the fear. But almost all are happy to get closer to classmates and peers. Some Resident Assistants came with members of their residence halls. They all challenged themselves to be more inclusive and work out rather than dodge issues. Many professors brought up their classes. The professors were seeking to have students not only learn head knowledge in the classroom but to open their hearts to wonder. Many students who are involved in service work with freshmen on campus, being ambassadors to prospective students, and doing ministry on and outside of campus, thought about their roles as ministers who bring the “Good News” to others. Others came in small and large groups just for quiet and friendship. It was a rich semester and a lot of people showed up.

At the Mountain we offer people an experience of community but also a chance to slow down. When student groups come we do a wrap up session at the end of their time. We ask them to find its meaning. All of us, even shepherds and wise men, are looking for something- community, peace, insight, and direction. In other words, we are looking for a manifestation of God. All of us who are seeking can have an experience of God, a Christmas experience every day.

~ **Kevin Kriso, ofm**



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The Mountain continues to benefit and grow with the gifts of your time, talent and treasure:

TIME: Come experience the Mountain. Join us Saturday, April 21st and let us pray and work together. The Mountain needs out attention, reflection, and our labor! Our early brothers and sisters valued participating with one another in a "way of life." To best plan our work time, we ask that you register by contacting the Mountain office at 716-375-2096. If you would like to stay for the overnight, please also make reservations with Fr. Lou at the Mountain at 585-973-2470.

TALENT: Is there a particular skill or ability that you would like to share with the Mountain? We are in need of music ministers, landscapers, library organizers, and hospitality volunteers to mention a few.

TREASURE:

Our annual Mt. Fund appeal is in full swing. We have raised over \$110,000 of our \$147,000 goal to be reached by May 31, 2012. As you may know most of our annual operating budget comes from private donations. There are many ways to make your contribution. You can visit our website at www.mouti.com and click on Give & Support; contact Michelle Marcellin at mmarc@sbu.edu or 716-375-2096 to make a credit card gift, or mail a donation to Mt. Irenaeus, Mt. Fund, P.O. Box 100, West Clarksville, NY 14786.

For more information, please contact Mary Schlosser, Coordinator of Development & Volunteers at mschlosser@sbu.edu or 716-375-2081.

Holy Thursday

April 5, 2012

6:30 p.m. Dish to pass supper

8:00 p.m. Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

AGAD FRIDAY

April 6, 2012

Noontime Simple soup and salad lunch

1:00 p.m. Meditative walk in the woods

3:00 p.m. Liturgy of the Passion - Followed by silence on the land and in the Chapel

Holy Saturday

April 7, 2012

11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer by the pond

9:00 p.m. Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday

April 8, 2012

Sunrise service on the Knoll

11:00 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass -

Followed by dish-to-pass brunch

