

“Christ,” our peace, our Way.

“The Mountain;” our Franciscan place for prayer and “peaceful re-creation” continues to offer each of us hospitality – a home as each of us are on our way, our journey home to God.

El Camino, “the way” has recently caught the imagination of many - the spiritual hunger of people finding, longing for, a deeper journey, an encounter and companionship with our mysterious Creator and the beauty of creation.

The number of men and women, young and old, that I know who have made some or all of this healing passage through the valleys and mountains of France and Spain, from other parts of Europe to St. James Compostela in recent years is particularly striking.

This, an ancient spiritual passage way; this journey now speaks to us again. In some ways the Mountain, and other places, find companionship with this journey. It is deeper than any one place.

The Mountain and related places are not so much alternative sites as *echoes of all the ancient passages* that people have found and have sought, seek anew.

Mt. Irenaeus is a contemporary expression of an ancient “Franciscan way of life.” We and others are still discovering this journey.



Accounting and Finance students spend time during Advent reflecting on how their careers can benefit others.

As people of different religious traditions we are coming upon and delighting in the earliest of our common roots, our grounding in life itself and the power of the Word, in which all of this began.

The dance and the “journey song” preceded what we usually call language ... language did, and still does move up from our body. It is the movement of our very bodies in cadence and expression of our lives and we become an expression of God’s word! For Australian aborigines language was and is “rhythm-ed events;” dreams and stories located in specific places as networks of rhymes that rise up as sacred paths, sacred songs. They are linked with their life’s paths as song.

We then, even now, can feel how sacred “The Way” is and how, for people before us and for ourselves now, it is about our body’s journey, our dances and our songs for ourselves as Christians – rediscovering the Incarnation itself; the Christ event.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

Visit Mt. Irenaeus online at www.mounti.com or email us at mountain@sbu.edu



On different continents and among other peoples we have looked for life's passage, our growth in relationships, found and formed in ways and holy places. We wish to grow as humans and sensing, somehow the transcendent that calls us deeper, calls us further, calls us each on our journey. It invites us here to become the community and family of Mt. Irenaeus.

Mt. Irenaeus, almost four hundred acres of hilltop land, has over ten miles of trails, ponds and thick woods as well as clearings. People often wander away from our buildings and take time – sometimes truly as well as metaphorically getting “lost in the woods!” ... And then re-finding themselves on “the path,” making their way back among us. Places, like the Mountain, have always been part of the healing and health of the human person, places where we literally and very early on “found our voice.” There is wonderful research that helps us understand how, as human persons, we came to sounds and sights and ways of signaling to each other. Voice emerged in the matrix of many movements, rising up from our journey, literally our walking with one another, with others and finding our way on the face of this earth with other creatures.

With a smile, I mention the story of Celtic monks from Ireland and the Isles who passed through Italy's Umbrian Valley on their journey with songs and stories. They are legendary, early pilgrims. Francis's hometown above this valley, as well as the valley floor, are spotted with small places that carry some of the names of these wayfaring holy persons, their songs and poetry. Their own metanoia, renewal of heart, is felt in wayside chapels still standing where these pilgrims made their path onto Rome and the Holy Land.

Now to name other roots ... Syria – to say the name is to admit the pain of incredible suffering there now among the Syrian people who have fled their own home country where great monuments, former places of worship, have been demolished. And yet, early on and now, this is a land of people of deep faith expressed in many ways. Our Christian faith grew, in Syria, in the earliest years after Christ, finding forms of journeying, that we are still rediscovering as pilgrims bearing the “Good News” to others. Syrian itinerant preachers there are considered now to be precursors of Francis and his brothers and sisters in that they did not evolve from a formal religious formation – **but they were formed by the Word and the Earth and life with one another. We count on them for their blessing today for they are forbearers of our way of life.**

As with Lent into Easter and onto our lives' paths, we journey with “metanoia,” the purifying and tendering of our hearts from stone to flesh. The passage is the core of our human journey from fear to love, from anxiety to hope.

Before Christians our Hebrew sisters and brothers were migratory people, painfully exiled and yet finding their way with a God who called them forth and stayed with them as they journeyed. Their sacred stories we humbly received as ours, those of us who are Christian often show the sacredness of all paths to mountains, to deserts, through valleys, by seas. With the great forms of the earth and its creatures they found their way into our Psalms, into our hearts and call each of us on our El Camino, on our way, on our own “exodus.”

Mt. Irenaeus is a humble recipient of these ancient people and their practices. We feel so blessed to learn of the “perennial wisdom” manifest among many others.

Possibly it is now becoming obvious that Mt. Irenaeus and its mission did not first emerge in the 70's and the 80's only. This is why we call it “a new expression of early Franciscan life.” Irenaeus, the ancient word we bear as our name, calls out for “peace as the way,” acknowledging that there is not now, nor never was there, any other way to peace, but peace itself – we would say “Christ” is our peace, is our Way.

It is with our human heart that we would look and find our way with one another. As we teach and learn from one another habits of forgiveness and reconciliation which heal us we acknowledge here and always our forbearers, wise teachers of practice, for finding life's path to wholeness and to holiness – Tao, that which is most natural to all of us – “The Way.”



The faithful dish crew taking a momentary break from their heavy duties.



Three of the many fine members of the freshman class at St. Bonaventure this year.

So when we have said Mt. Irenaeus, "the Mountain family is 30 years and more old," you and I can smile a bit for we realize we are only beginning to imagine, to emerge on a path that has long been before us. You can see here how, in one form or another, not only the Mountain but well beyond here, we join a journey that trails on into the future for humankind with all of creation.

In the life of Holy Name Province, Order of Friars Minor, our mother Order and the one in which I was formed and sought the obedience of this Franciscan way of life; "journey" became a practice for me with other brothers and sisters. I watched my older brothers follow their passion to find new ways of life. Their expressions have influenced what the Mountain calls its "Gospel manner of life ministry." The 1960s and into the 70s were particularly rich with a variety of expressions of what we called "alternative models" of Franciscan life. Some of us lived among the poor and in places of painful racial divide. We were blessed with many lay partners and movements that continue to enrich many of our journeys today. Without a list of names here of friars and others, let us pray for courageous women and men who struck out then and now to find their way, a way for us and others to follow Christ. Some who have affiliated with Mt. Irenaeus have chosen "Franciscan Sojourners!"

In all of this, and as I have been part of different communities, there has been a deep learning about our country and about our needs in educational settings, in homes and in neighborhoods. As Franciscans we continue to seek to learn more about learning itself, how we and others can be transformed and live a life that will be transformative of our world. Francis and others would have us reflect on our daily path, the way that you and I are walking now.

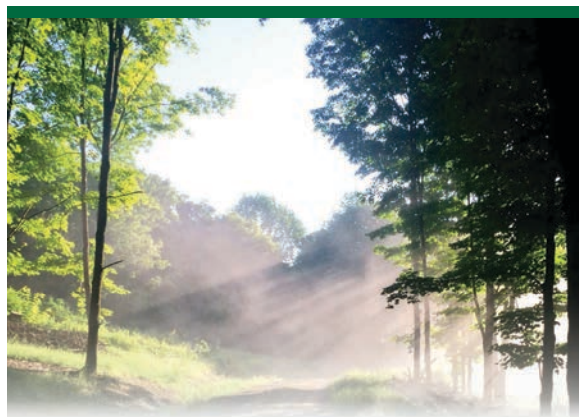
We need not be in the mountains of France or Spain or even on Mt. Irenaeus - we do need to be with others where our feet and heart are planted and move to create places of conversion, change of heart and immense hope for others.

We learned as Franciscans and continue to learn with others how to rejoice and celebrate the goodness of life, how to truly dance and sing ... be on our way! As we find each other on the journey we call life, we give thanks at Mt. Irenaeus for the grace that helps us be transformed and find a new way ... the new El Camino, the new and eternal journey that is our path with one another and with one another and all creation to "make all things new!"

Peace!
Lou



Fr. Lou and students relaxing and practicing their smiles!



MT. IRENAEUS SPRING CONVOCATION AND ASSEMBLY APRIL 29 - MAY 1, 2016

Join us for the new springtime of our life.
We hope to:

- **Re-visit** our history and fundamental documents with our new dashboard to guide us.
- **Re-lect** through conversations and contemplation, personal small groups and communal times.
- **Re-vision** our primary goals and our initial dreams so as to dream anew in the Spirit of Christ.
- **Re-engage** new and early partners as we mature our models of collaboration.

People from different regions, cities and places, people from our Secular Franciscans and the local residential community with friars, Mountain Community Leaders, students from Bona's and other colleges, our Council for Spirit and Life, our Circle for Animation, will join us on the weekend's journey to help shape the Mountain's future way. With meals, prayers, relaxation, small and large group discussions, we hope to respond to God's Holy Spirit, which is so evident in our life and asks us to "**listen – trust – follow.**"

Reach us if you have any questions.
Register soon for some or all of this weekend.

mmarc@sbu.edu 716-375-2096

We will provide the space we can and suggest optional overnight space in the area.

MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

It's rather ironic how the calendar year – and the liturgical year – begins during the coldest, darkest and least inviting season. For those who live or have experienced winter in Western New York, and particularly those who've made the treacherous ascent up the road that leads to our home in West Clarksville, December through March (and maybe even later) can conjure up images of ice, flurries, freezing temperatures and limited daylight.

So when I was first asked to write a short reflection on "New Beginnings" my mind at first struggled to wrap around the subject. New Beginnings . . . In February? For the past few days, I've been turning things over in my head, searching for a way to broach a topic that seemed far removed from the way I've been operating, despite the fact that I'm transitioning into a role as a Mountain Companion after my graduation from St. Bonaventure this past December. True, I'm no longer a college student, and true I'm living full time at a place where I had previously visited mostly on weekends and evenings away. But my comfort level with the brothers at the Mountain and their incredibly warm way of receiving me into the community, along with the fact that I'm on campus for ministry and to cheer on the basketball teams, can sometimes make it feel like I haven't missed a beat from what I've been doing during the past four years. New Beginnings . . . But what's changed?

Last night, however, as I stepped out of the House of Peace on my way to my room in the Other House, I happened to glance at the sky and was struck by the beauty of the heavens. I'd been waiting for weeks for a cloudless night where I would be able to drink in the stunning view of an open and twinkling sky. And here it was, jaw-dropping in the simple and resonating sight. I realized that although it's a cold, dark time of the year and although I'm in a place I'm at this point rather familiar with, there's still a lot to be seen and experienced. There's still beauty to behold, still peace to be lapped up, still a deepening of prayer and a deepening of relationship with God that can happen. And not only that, but I need to take that into a world that thirsts for those things.

So perhaps "New Beginnings" doesn't necessarily mean radically different experiences or fresh faces or varying locale. Maybe it means going deeper and being cognizant of the fact that, at every point in our lives, we should be striving to "make all things new through Jesus Christ." I know that I still have a long way to go on my spiritual journey; I think we all do, regardless of where we are. Even at the Mountain. And yes, even in the cold winter months.

God bless all of you. If you can, take an evening or a weekend with us. Just be careful on that hill.

~ Jason Damon, Mountain Companion



Thomas of Celano, the friar who wrote the first and official biography of St. Francis in 1228 used the word "new" 120 times in his text when referring to St. Francis and his followers. Francis was a new type of saint, he was not royalty, a monk, bishop or martyr, he was an itinerant preacher, which was new for the Church and as we know now, just what the Church needed as it moved into the future. Similarly, St. Clare and her sisters were also a new expression of religious life in the Church, living without any property and also caring for lepers, the sick and pilgrims. It seems that throughout its history the Franciscan family has innovated with an eye toward the future; from the theology of St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus (centuries ahead of their time) and the Latin American Franciscan theologians of modern times, to popular devotions; the Christmas crib and Stations of the Cross that the Franciscans have popularized and gave expression to the piety of the new generations.

I have always found the Mountain to be a place where I could learn; how to be church, how to collaborate on projects from the garden to building the Chapel and Main house to the evening meal and our common prayer. Buildings have been added, people have come and gone, flowers have bloomed and withered, thousands of meals have been shared. The Mountain is always new and re-creating while still holding to Franciscan values of fraternity, minority, simplicity and prayer.

Those of us who were around in the early days of Mt. Irenaeus have seen the Mountain grow and expand over these past thirty years, always allowing lay people to express and share their faith in ways that were new and steadily increasing their role at the Mountain. The Mountain was born on the 'heels' of the Second Vatican Council which renewed the Church (sometimes called the Council of the Laity) and now we have a Pope who is constantly surprising us by new ways of understanding the Gospels and our life as Christians. Pope Francis is increasing the role of the laity on commissions and committees that are leading the Church and so it is a perfect time for the Mountain to do the same. In a few months a lay executive director will be hired to help lead the Mountain into the future; seemingly new but completely in the Franciscan tradition.

~ Ronald Pecci, ofm
Mt. Irenaeus Board of Trustees



Kevin Cooley (center with beard), the Minister in Residence in Rob Hall at St. Bonaventure University, brings some of his students on a Mountain experience.



Group of Mountain Community Leaders cooking a meal together for the first time – hoping to be the first of many.

HOLY WEEK MASS SCHEDULE

Holy Thursday

March 24, 2016

6:30 pm

Dish to pass supper

8:00 pm

Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday

March 25, 2016

Noontime

Simple soup and salad lunch

1:00 pm

Meditative walk in the woods

3:00 pm

Liturgy of the Passion – followed by silence on the land and in the Chapel

Holy Saturday

March 26, 2016

11:00 am

Morning Prayer by the pond

9:00 pm

Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday

March 27, 2016

11:00 am

Easter Sunday Mass – followed by dish to pass brunch.

SPRING COMMUNITY SERVICE AND REFLECTION DAY • SATURDAY APRIL 23, 2016

“Come try our way of life”... help us, work with us to “make all things new!”



Spring is a beautiful time at the Mountain and the quickening of life reveals God's glory to us. We are conscious of many things that need attention after a long winters rest. We need your help and the help of others to keep the Mountain a beautiful place for all to enjoy. Join us Saturday and Sunday and let us pray and work together. Depending on the weather that day we will be working on the following or similar projects:

- Prepare the vegetable garden beds and plant some vegetable seeds
- Remove debris from flower beds
- Split and move firewood • Burn some brush and trimmings • Wash windows & screens
- Remove brush along the trails • Deep clean cabins and the House of Peace
- Prepare the noon and evening meals.

Our day begins with a prayer at around 9:45AM on Saturday, followed by work groups. A mid day meal will be provided. Work concludes before 4PM. Closing reflection at 4:30PM. For those who wish to stay overnight: we will prepare supper together, have an evening prayer and have an outdoor fire (weather permitting). On Sunday we will conclude with Mass at 11 AM followed by brunch.

Please sign up with Mary Schlosser: mschloss@sbu.edu. Room reservations with Lou McCormick 585-973-2470.



Franciscan Mountain Retreat

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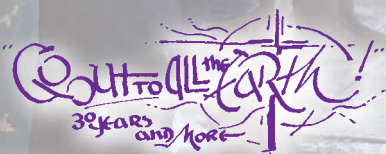
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Visit us online.

www.mounti.com



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

OUR MOUNTAIN FUND IS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY!

EXCITING NEWS: *The highlight of this year's annual Mountain Fund is a \$25,000 matching gift challenge.*

Through the generosity of **Mari Snyder '90, Hilary (Moran) '84 & Kevin Van Norstrand '84, and Rob Buckla '84**, we are offering a dollar-for-dollar match. This challenge will help us ensure the current and future success of the Mountain Fund. If you make a gift by May 31, 2016, your gift may be eligible for a dollar-for-dollar match until the \$25,000 challenge funds are exhausted.

Will you consider making a first time gift to the Mountain at a \$500, \$1,000, or higher level? If you are already a donor, would you consider increasing your gift by a \$500, \$1,000, or higher threshold?

All gifts to our Mountain Fund go towards our operating expenses which are approximately \$500,000 per year. Some of the things your gift supports are: overnights and evenings away for students, faculty, and staff; transportation to the Mountain from campus; food for our guests; utilities for the Mountain buildings (this includes the House of Peace, Chapel, and cabins); leadership formation for the Church; deepening people's spiritual lives.

We look forward to reaching out to you for your support. If you'd like to make a gift, please visit our website at www.mounti.com, or send your gift in the envelope included in this newsletter, or mail your gift to Mt. Irenaeus Mountain Fund, Box 100, West Clarksville NY 14786.

Please contact us if you would like further information ~ Peace!

Jackie Lanzillo

Development Committee Volunteer Chairperson,
Mountain Board Member
JLanzillo@Rochester.rr.com

Mary Schlosser

Coordinator of Development & Volunteers
mschlosser@sbu.edu
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***A renewed gift is a gift of \$500 or more given in the past - but not last year.**