

A view from above, the construction of "House of Peace" after our great day of raising the beams and praying around the frame. 1994

The universe is not made up of atoms, but of stories

~Albert Einstein

Already, seeds that were planted have pushed their way through the soil and last week **Kevin Kriso, ofm** and I took time, opened the soil and rows and planted a second seed for additional harvests of beets, spinach and kale. The garden has been tilled and prepared by students and others who joined us for a service day of community and reflection over three weeks ago. *The earth and all it supports is coming alive here*, rising up from its winter slumber and long spring rains, ready to bear fruits for our table and to share with our guests.

Each garden row, almost with each seed Kevin and I had stories to tell each other. Recent guests, dear friends who have helped us, have filled our lives with gratitude as we watch the earth come alive. We spoke of our hope to have you and others with us throughout this summer season. We spoke of the excitement for life as it shows itself now in many places, springing up from our own hearts as well as from the earth!

"The universe is not made up of atoms, but of stories." This quote from Albert Einstein is one I often share for it suggests the *heart of our Mountain culture*, the awareness that sacred Scriptures are holy stories. Some are being written now, they are foundational to everything, they are part of everyone's life.

Enjoy the stories told here, the reflections of members of our Mountain family. Each of us might be inspired by them to live "the Mountain way!" - as **Maddie Gionet** says in her remarks. **Ron Pecci, ofm** informs us of our early vision and the "Mountain model" of relationships and our organizational desire to lend something to the world. His comments lend a notion of the expansiveness of those who have come here to enjoy the Mountain.

Once again **Joseph Kotula, ofm** offers his voice helping us hear that what we began before we came here, began in the hearts of others. We are a way of life and ministry lived here, on the road, and in your home, lived as a counterculture, or we might say a reconciling culture of re-creation. We find our model as well as our teacher in the Gospels. Jesus Christ is the heart of the Good News for us and is the one who lends his relationship with the Father to us and to all of creation. Therefore, **"the Mountain is not only on the Mountain."** We might then say that we began celebrating 30 years



Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

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of Mountain life when we heard the call many years ago to live this life. That was long ago now! Francis and Clare before us and the sisters and brothers of the desert experience from around 300 (Christian era), people who knew in their hearts that they wished to live and love and transform life around them are our forebearers. *From different religions and traditions they always rise up when the church wishes to renew itself, when Gospel life again emerges as the core of Christian life.*

Enjoy the stories here and let each moment of your life “write your own story.”

Please join us as we renew our mission in various locations, gathering with people to remember and re-member Mountain life. Take time at the various events noted here and look for notices, e-mails and reminders of the next year and a half’s unfolding events. We soon hope to tell you of times when we wish to join you in various regions to bring the Mountain to where you are so that you might welcome your friends to join in our life, renewing it and extending it out to all the earth.

*Peace!
ignacio*

MT. IRENAEUS REFLECTIONS:

This summer, I will be close to six hours away from the Mountain. While I’ve been this far away from the Mountain every summer, the more I grow, the more I realize how vital the Mountain, its mission and the friars are to my life, my well-being and my spiritual growth. So, this summer, it seems even more “devastating” to be so far away from a place I hold so dear in my heart. I think we all sometimes can take for granted how close we are to such a peaceful retreat.

This week, as I’ve started my internship in downtown Saratoga, which only grows busier and more crowded as track season gets closer, I’ve been thinking about how I can bring the Mountain peace into my crazy life. At first, I felt that I needed the friars, the House of Peace and my friends to make the experience and to keep the Mountain alive in my heart. As much as that does make it better, I’ve come to find that my years at St. Bonaventure and my time at the Mountain has been preparation for that moment when I have to step out into the real world and find a way to keep the Mountain with me.

The more I’ve thought about it, the more I’ve come to find that the Mountain is a way of life - a way we can all apply to our lives. We might not all have land to grow a huge garden that can sustain us through the

year, we might not all have a chapel in the backyard we can walk to, but we all have experienced the kindness and hospitality of the Mountain friars, we have all listened to stories and reflections and we’ve all built a community with people who were once strangers. We can do these things anywhere we go - we can take our kindness, hospitality, ability to listen and build community out into the world. While the Mountain is definitely a place and experience, I’ve come to learn that it’s just as much a lifestyle and a frame of mind as it is a place. Why should we deny that mindset and lifestyle to those who cannot travel to the Mountain or those who have never heard of it before? We aren’t a gated, invite-only community - we welcome others to join in our journey and community, and it is our role as Mountain community members to spread the Good News.

As I begin my summer adventures, I plan to keep the “Mountain way” in mind - warmly greeting friends and strangers alike, listening to the stories, triumphs and trials of those who need an ear to listen and keeping the peace and tranquility of the Mountain within my heart at all times.

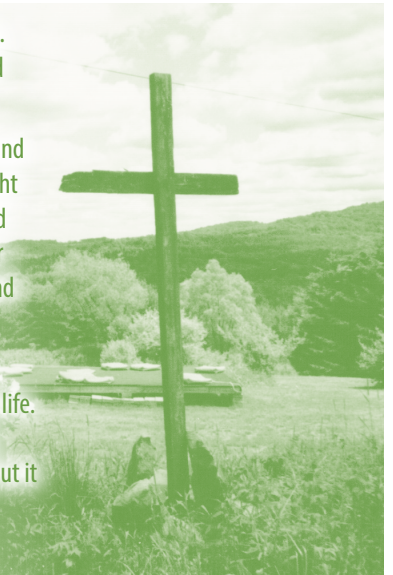
~ Maddie Gionet

I became familiar with Mt. Irenaeus in the earliest days but it was in 1986 that I joined the Board of Trustees. At the time I thought that it would be an opportunity to help out and to learn about Board membership and leadership. It turned out to be a graduate level education in Franciscan life!

The Mountain Board was circular not hierarchical, it was first of all relational; in relationship with students and others who came to the Mountain, other Board members, the resident friars and the land. I was being taught about leadership not management (which has its place). The shared prayer time, meals, reflective walks and recreation were as much a part of a Board meeting as deliberations on the budget. They enabled us to enter into relationship which caused me to act differently towards all those people and things. They were alive and integral not just to be used.

Because I believe in the Mountain I have personally brought scores of people to Mt. Irenaeus over the years; parishioners, youth group members, young adults, parish council members, men in formation to Franciscan life. All of them were moved by an experience of God. Like so many graced things in life it cannot be completely explained in words it must be experienced. One can attempt to describe a beautiful vista or a grand forest but it is only in experiencing it that we come to know it. The Mountain teaches us God’s ways.

~ Ron Pecci, ofm



MT. IRENAEUS REFLECTIONS:

I have lived at the Mountain since 1989 and in those 25 years I have experienced the wonders of God. We live a life that welcomes everyone; to witness the effect that it has on people is a gift. You might ask, what is the secret? I would say prayerful hospitality that creates a safe place for those who visit. We invite people to experience a Gospel Manner of Life and Ministry and the key word is experience. The Mountain model is relational; when we relate to each other and creation we grow to know that we are all connected. I would say that is contemplative or mystical and I strongly believe that when one has that experience they will only grow closer to God. We work very hard at building the core community and when others experience our life they are grateful and often want to become involved in the Mountain.

There are four principles that we try to live by, silence, simplicity, solitude and service. I have experienced the whole Mountain community in many ways and I would say that we all are living a life of service with a desire to be simple and find silence and solitude.

When I reflect upon the many years since first coming to the Mountain, so many wonderful memories come to mind. My introduction to the Mountain was in conjunction with a very special trip accompanying a very close friend who was terminally ill and wanting to re-connect with his God through the Mountain and Fr. Dan Riley. We three were classmates at Bona's and were reacquainted while attending a class reunion just a few months prior. We had such a strong sense of God's presence throughout that wonderful weekend. Introducing me to the Mountain in this way was a gift from my friend who passed away just a few months later. He is always in my thoughts and prayers especially whenever I spend time at the Mountain.

Travelling to Assisi with a Mountain group of students taught me many things especially that the Mountain is just not a place, but a way of living in community with others. We brought the Mountain with us. I will never forget these Mountain sponsored Assisi pilgrimages and the impact that it had on me personally and on those young students. Once again, the Mountain changed us all forever.

When I see the chaos and pain that is all around us today in the USA and throughout the world, I sometimes find myself feeling overwhelmed with grief and despair. Wars, famines, political dysfunction, unthinkable acts of inhumanity, greed and the list goes on and on. How can any one person begin to play a part in changing all of this? For me, one of the few answers that make any sense is prayer and preparing our youth to take on this challenge. The Mountain has always been (and I pray will always be) a place of formation for all of the youth who are touched by the Mountain's experience. The power of community. The calling to serve others. The importance of personal spirituality and developing a personal relationship with one's God. How many leaders and change agents has the Mountain sent into the world? How many more will pass through in the future? What wonderful impact have they had in their homes, communities, churches and work places? As I look around me, I have not found a place more impactful to bring about the change that this world so urgently needs than through the Mountain and its role in formation of our youth.

I pray that God will continue to bless the Mountain and those who serve there.

~ Frank Keery

The Board of Trustees, Board committees, Secular Franciscans, Mountain Community Leaders, Sojourners, Mountain on the Road and Mountain in Your Home, core community, and all of our benefactors want to support this way of life. When folks come to the Mountain they say they leave all their problems at the bottom of the hill. I always find that amazing and I wonder what is it about the Mountain that people are able to do that. In reflecting on that, it seems to me to be one of the results of prayerful hospitality. The Mountain is celebrating thirty years and for it to celebrate another thirty years we need to continue to remind ourselves that it is very simple to live a life of love. On the other hand it takes a lot of work because it is so counter cultural. We are not a retreat center we are a community made up of many constituents and those who live at the Mountain try to live a life of prayer, love, and trust which I believe creates an environment that people feel when they visit the Mountain and it opens their hearts so God can speak to them.

I would like to conclude this reflection with a line from scripture. "God is love and those who live in love live in God."

Pax Et Bonum,
~ Br. Joseph Kotula, ofm



MT. IRENAEUS REFLECTIONS:

I know there are many people with wonderful stories of Mt. Irenaeus through the past 30 years and many will be told during this celebration year. My story is of the journey from my first introduction to the Mountain to being professed as a Secular Franciscan.

In 1985 our son and daughter went to Mt. Irenaeus for a Confirmation retreat. They came home very enthused, telling us "You have to check it out." Anytime teenagers are enthused after a retreat it certainly merits "checking out." Their enthusiasm led me on a journey of growth in my faith and the joy of discovering the Franciscan way of life.

In the early years those of us who were fortunate to be at the Mountain on a regular basis often met men and women who were professed Secular Franciscans. Their commitment to following the way of St. Francis and St. Clare and the message of the Gospels in their family life, careers, friendships and concern for others was an inspiration. Several of us expressed the hope that one day there would be a Fraternity at Mt. Irenaeus. Not an easy process as it would take many years to meet the steps for canonical establishment, including the requirement for 5 professed Secular Franciscans to even begin. We had none. However, with the ongoing encouragement of the friars and the years of patience and guidance of Fr. Lou we persevered. In 1995 through the hospitality of St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Allegany, one person was professed. Then, with the support of St. Francis Fraternity in Buffalo, two more and soon two more. Five professed members – we were on our way.

When the fraternity was finally near reality we discussed many possible names until someone stated the obvious, "We should be St. Irenaeus Fraternity." It was unanimous, "Of course we should." And we are. In June 2006 St. Irenaeus Secular Franciscan Fraternity became a reality. A blessed occasion, a dream realized. Since then we have had 17 professed members. Some have moved from our area, some have gone to the Lord, but we continue to grow with two now in formation. I am so grateful and blessed to have been part of the journey of the Mountain and the fraternity all these years.

My fraternity brothers and sisters and I, with great enthusiasm, congratulate the Mt. Irenaeus family on the 30th Anniversary of this wonderful, holy place. And to those who may have an interest, do "check out" life as a Secular Franciscan.

~ Agnes Brush, ofs



On the day that the beam work went up for our House of Peace over 300 people gathered and entered so they might "sign in" with their name, blessing and greeting. This circle bears within it Bonaventure's quote, "God is like a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is infinite!" Students from various countries - as well as other guests - wrote greetings in various languages and traditions. This circle is centered under our dining table in the great room of the House of Peace.

Breathe.

I wonder how many times in the course of a day or a week I remind myself to breathe. I often find myself reminding others to do the same. "Breathe," I'll text a nervous colleague. "Breathe," I'll sign off on an e-mail. "Breathe," I'll console a friend. "Breathe," darn it!" I'll laugh when someone's story spills out faster than my mind can sort it out. Breathe. I may not be able to compute how often I find myself saying it, but I do know where I learned its importance, oh-so-many years ago. Where but the Mountain: the place that is so easy to love, so hard to describe, and has sustained the faith-life of so many of us for decades now.

As I write on my laptop at a coffee shop on a noisy city street today, I am instantly transported back to the Chapel, to the sounds of stillness broken only by momentary urging from Fr. Dan, or Br. Joe, or all our other friar-friends and ministers to "be still." "Breathe. . . ." This simple mantra is as essential to my life as, well . . . air. The mantra of the Mountain continues to nurture those of us who grew up there, always. Even when we are physically distant, the Mountain remains close, inspiring us, teaching us, calming us, uplifting us. When we breathe.

~ Ann Flynn McCarthy



SUMMER EVENINGS OF RE-CREATION AT MT. IRENAEUS

Celebrating the Mountain's Thirty Years of Responding to the call of Jesus to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

Wednesday Evenings: July 9, 16, 23, 30

5:15 P.M. Evening Prayer
Followed by Quiet Time on the Land

6:30 P.M. Dish to Pass Supper

7:30 P.M. Eucharist with Discussion of Theme

Theme: Movements in the Spiritual Life

July 9: The Spiritual Movement of Wonder

July 16: The Spiritual Movement of Giving Thanks

July 23: The Spiritual Movement of Praise

July 30: The Spiritual Movement of Inspired Action

Feel free to come to all or part of any evening
and to come early to spend time on the land.

A SUMMER WEEKEND OF FORMATION AND RENEWAL, AUGUST 1 - 3, 2014

"Await the hand of the artist ..."



Join us for this weekend retreat of personal growth, transformation and leadership formation for those of us - and others - involved in our "On the Road" and "In Your Home" ministries.

A core circle of leaders hunger to learn, rest and reflect on how we might "renew the face of the earth." Together we will grow and further grow the Mountain's mission to go "out to all the world." This is an important and exciting opportunity to spend time with others from different parts of our country finding their way in Mountain life.

For more information please look on our website, www.mounti.com or contact Michelle Marcellin (mmarc@sbu.edu or 716-375-2096).



We began our day of construction for Holy Peace Chapel (1988) with morning prayer with our large chapel beams still on the ground and a few hundred people circled who would become teams assembled to paint the exterior of our first house, do yard work and plant flowers. "New Energy Works," those who made our beams, gathered some of us around our chapel site to instruct us how to help them "raise high" the bent work. In late afternoon everyone from different work sites came to the chapel for evening prayer as a cross was raised and placed on the peak of our chapel. A great cookout followed with food and beverages donated for the day to feed the hundreds who had participated.



MOUNTAIN

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Friday, August 1st to Sunday, August 3rd "Await the Hand of the Artist"

A summer retreat of personal growth, transformation and leadership formation. (Further information inside.)

WE RAISED OVER \$177,000 WITH OUR MOUNTAIN FUND!

Thank you to all our supporters who helped us exceed this year's Mountain Fund goal. Special thanks to our Mountain Fund Chairperson, **Marv Stocker**. Through his dedicated and tireless effort we exceeded our goal by over 12%. Thank you too for our many Phonathon Volunteers for their continued time and effort in assuring our success. Last but not least, thank you to an Anonymous Donor who contributed \$10,000 to match all new, increased, and renewed Givers. We could not have achieved such wonderful success without each and every one of you!

With a new fiscal year beginning June 1st we are already busy working on this year's Mountain Fund Goal of \$187,000. We have enclosed a donation envelope for your convenience if you are able to consider making a gift at this time. Gifts can also be made online at www.mounti.com/give-support. Many thanks for all of your continued support!

Mary Schlosser, Coordinator of Development and Volunteers
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