

**“... See how the farmer waits for
precious fruit of the earth,
being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.
You too must be patient.**

**Make your hearts firm, because the
coming of the Lord is at hand!”**

~ James 5:7-10 – Third Sunday of Advent

A wonderful warm fire burns beside me, indeed within me, as I write our Christmas greeting to you. I am blessed to be sitting on the porch of a friend's home in Wisconsin where their outside fireplace blazes on a brisk late November day.

Looking off from this porch, from this scenic place, and beyond the warmth of this fire flaming, humming, I can see fields that took a hard frost already, a frost though not as hard as the one that seems to have hit our world. Hopefully, our hearts are revived through this season from any hardness that has happened to us. A firm heart is not a hard heart!

Even as we take a season of rest we know we have work to do, now and in the coming year. Hopefully, the tender but strong love of God, God's heart, falls for us as "early and late rain" and brings forth life for the face of the Earth. Our own hearts thirst for this. This forms us "as the deer longs for streams of water, my soul longs for you, O God." (Psalm 42:1) We are longing, already "ready" for spring! ... And for the "Springs of Living Water," aren't we? We are fed well during this season of celebration and in this feeding and this food we learn to hunger in hope for others.

We have been talking about family, here in Wisconsin, since I arrived. In fact, this family has stirred my feelings so much in their home that you are at home with us at this very time of year in this place, this **Thanksgiving**.

My friend, this newsletter is about giving you thanks.

We await our coming God, the Lord who has come among us with "rich and choice foods" for all of us. As with little children, this teaches us again, "to share!"

You are in our prayers in deep gratitude as the flames reach up here, licking a new log that helps me stay warm, in this cold Wisconsin, thinking of your warm care for us. **I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and the hearts of many, who continue to enjoy the Gospel life and ministry of Mt. Irenaeus because of your goodness to us.**

Each person who has joined us at the Mountain for a workday, pitched in to can vegetables or fruit, made phone calls out to others, has responded to our appeals with what they might offer us this year. Each of you and all of you have helped to "build up the Mountain" in service for others. Faces, voices of Bonaventure students and others echo through this place and will be found on these pages. Faces will shine out to you, possibly yours as well.



Our "Mountain on the Road" team to Denver and Chicago (L to R: Julie Smithson, Caitlin Veri, Christopher Baker, Joe Flanagan, Joe Kotula, ofm, Chaz James) stand beside a Rocky Mountain Pasture.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

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





Students from St. Bonaventure University, Terry Moran's class, stand in our Kitchen preparing food and possibly dessert (!) with Kevin Kriso, ofm.

Now ... back at the Mountain to complete this reflection and remembering my many trips out among our friends, I give thanks for all of you who have made a home for me as we continue here to make a home for you on the Mountain. May all of our homes be blessed through this Holy Season. May these coming reflections nourish and warm your hearts and stir us to a new fire of love for one another and all those who need our love, not only through Christmas, but throughout this coming year. *Deep blessings of great joy as we celebrate the love of God poured out for us in Jesus Christ in "whose light there is no darkness at all."*

The Christ, the *Messiah and LORD*, Jesus of Nazareth born of Mary, fathered by Joseph, blazed upon the Earth, upon the people, laid low by politicized religious practices. He came to "set fire upon the Earth," a

new fire, the radical renewing of "the Father's love for us." This is the same love we pray for that is the Holy Spirit, sent to us by Jesus Christ, when we ask him to "send forth the fire of his Spirit into our hearts and renew the face of the Earth."

Even today our hearts might feel a tremor, we might be shaken in our institutions. Jesus the Christ came not to accuse, but to set us free, all of us, each of us right now.

The story of Zacchaeus, the defrauding tax collector, the small man who climbed a high tree to see Jesus (read Luke 19:1-10!) has echoed through our churches, our Chapel here and prayer groups throughout this fall. At least twice the Church asked us to listen to this miracle story, Zacchaeus, a rich man would make it through "the eye of a needle." Religious leaders in his time would have trouble seeing his freedom happening as God's coming in Jesus for him and for them, right before them.

Who among us is "up a tree" in our world? Who is willing to come down from their "tree"... walking now with Jesus who wants to be at home with us?

Christmas is the celebration of our hearts formed in the heart of God, enfleshed for us to see in one "like us." John Henri Neuman named "Blessed this fall, tells us that 'Christianity is a history supernatural, and **almost scenic**:' it tells us what its author is, by telling us what 'HE' has done." It is a landscape of love poured out as a portrait of our God. He continues, "They know and follow Christ upon his loving them ..."

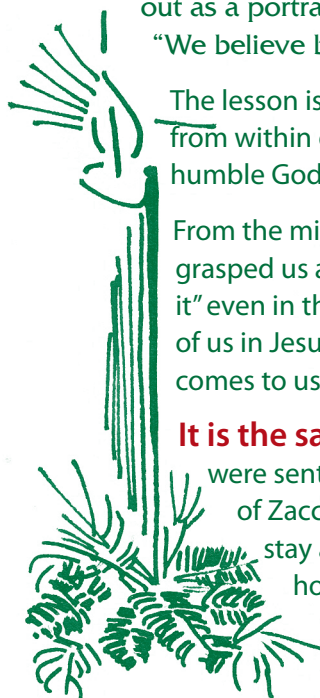
"We believe because we love." Others believe, we know, because they have been loved by us.

The lesson is here again for us this year. Our God has come to us – reaches out to us, holds us dear from within each of us. Christ Jesus leads us by the hand of our hesitant humanity to the heights of our humble God.

From the midst of a hungry and oppressed people, and born in a manger, the Son of God has seen and grasped us and won't ever let us go. This is the landscape of our life. It is scenic and we are called to "see it" even in the darkness of our own heart and of our own day. Our God has bent low to take tender hold of us in Jesus Christ. Not waiting any longer for us to jump up or even lift up our head or hand, our God comes to us with outstretched arms for us.

It is the same Gospel, Luke's, that tells us of the poor and dirty shepherds who saw the star and were sent to "find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger." Later, Luke tells us of Zacchaeus and Jesus who "looked up and said, 'Zacchaeus come down quickly for today I must stay at your house.'" God wants to stay in our house, doesn't God? ... God wants to stay in our home!

So with the One who comes as our peace held out in human holy hands, Jesus, the "root of Jesse," springs up as a living tree within our very human lives. Jesus is the heart of human



life ... laid out as the landscape of God's love for all of us, the "scenic," the revealed truth unfolding even now over hills and valleys and into our homes.

There is an important waiting, an open-hearted longing and expectation that is ours as a gift and a practice. It comes to us from our ancient ancestors who wandered, longing for God, who always longed for God to come among them. This is the God "who comes" now and always, even before our timid beckoning.

The here and now of the coming of the Anointed is an anointing. This anointing is almost as prized as grandmother's poppy seed cake which has been generously drizzled and drenched with rum sauce. We are anointed until the "oil runs down onto our faces and robes, flowing out into the world!"

This is the oil of gladness, the real "sauce" of the season of the Incarnation and we are to sit in, soak in, in quiet, patient waiting, soaking up hope so that the flame of loving presence will enflame our cold world ... be "well oiled" .. with this power of love this season. This oil doesn't rub off, this love never goes away ... it is what "lasting" means.

Consider this "scenic" Christmas greeting, this reflection on our anointing by the Anointed One who came as a mere baby to "be in our house today" ...

"When the shepherds **saw this**, they **made known** the message that had **been told** them about this child ... all who **heard** were **amazed** by what was told them by the shepherds."

~ Luke 2:15-20

Drinking in, chewing on this passage, placing yourself in the scene or one of the other passages found below ...

You might take a simple practice now of sitting ... quietly .. on the edge of your bed, in a chair or in your car parked before you drive from one place to another.

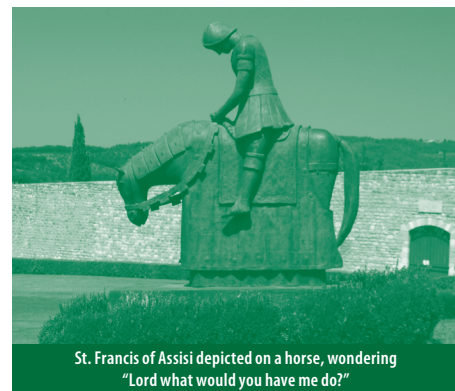
Let your heart find food in the passage.

Allow the Scripture passage that your heart has taken in with a deep breath, fill you with a deep stillness and quiet awe ... Be Still and Know That I Am God ... ahh ... oil overflowing ... oil of gladness on my head and in my heart! ... A quiet flame warming alive in me ... Now!

Allow the peace that is yours right now to fill your heart and hold you quietly where you are and all that is with you.

Take time to acknowledge that God is present right here and you have nothing else to do, for God is "like a sauce" soaking into you, anointing you again this the oil of gladness.

As you might take a moment, a minute or three or four, just as St. Romuald would invite us – "sit in your room as in paradise ... realize above all that you are in God's presence, ... empty yourself completely and sit waiting, content with the grace of God," ... in our hearts "as in paradise," in a garden with "early and late rains" of God's love falling upon us.



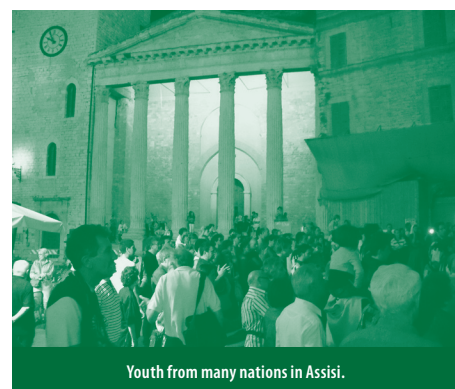
St. Francis of Assisi depicted on a horse, wondering "Lord what would you have me do?"



The church in Assisi where Francis disrobed proclaiming and stepping into the freedom of knowing, "I have one Father who is in heaven."



The Basilica of St. Francis.



Youth from many nations in Assisi.



Colleen and Darren Hartigan, who invited Dan Riley, ofm (center) to visit them in Switzerland and Italy.



Rachel Kotula with her son Joseph as he prepares to renew his vows as a Franciscan.



The above five pictures were taken on the day the community of Mt. Irenaeus celebrated Joseph Kotula, ofm 25 years as a Franciscan friar.

Now, wherever you have taken this rest-full moment, on your bedside, in a chair or a car in a parking lot ... allow a prayer of gratitude, the Lord's Prayer, a Glory Be, gentle naming of your mantra ... let these words of gladness anoint you for the day as you move into it. Arise and go forth!

MERRY CHRISTMAS
The LIGHT of GOD
THROUGH out the year
fill your Days.

"Now" **breaks in the radiant light of Christmas offering us new insight a new "scenic" hearing of the story now told again.** Let its primal truth erupt new and deep within you. Arise and go forth into the New Year.

Daniel Riley ofm

BELOW ARE SCRIPTURES TO BE CHEWED UPON IN THE QUIET OF YOUR HEART.

"Welcome one another then as Christ welcomed you for the glory of God."

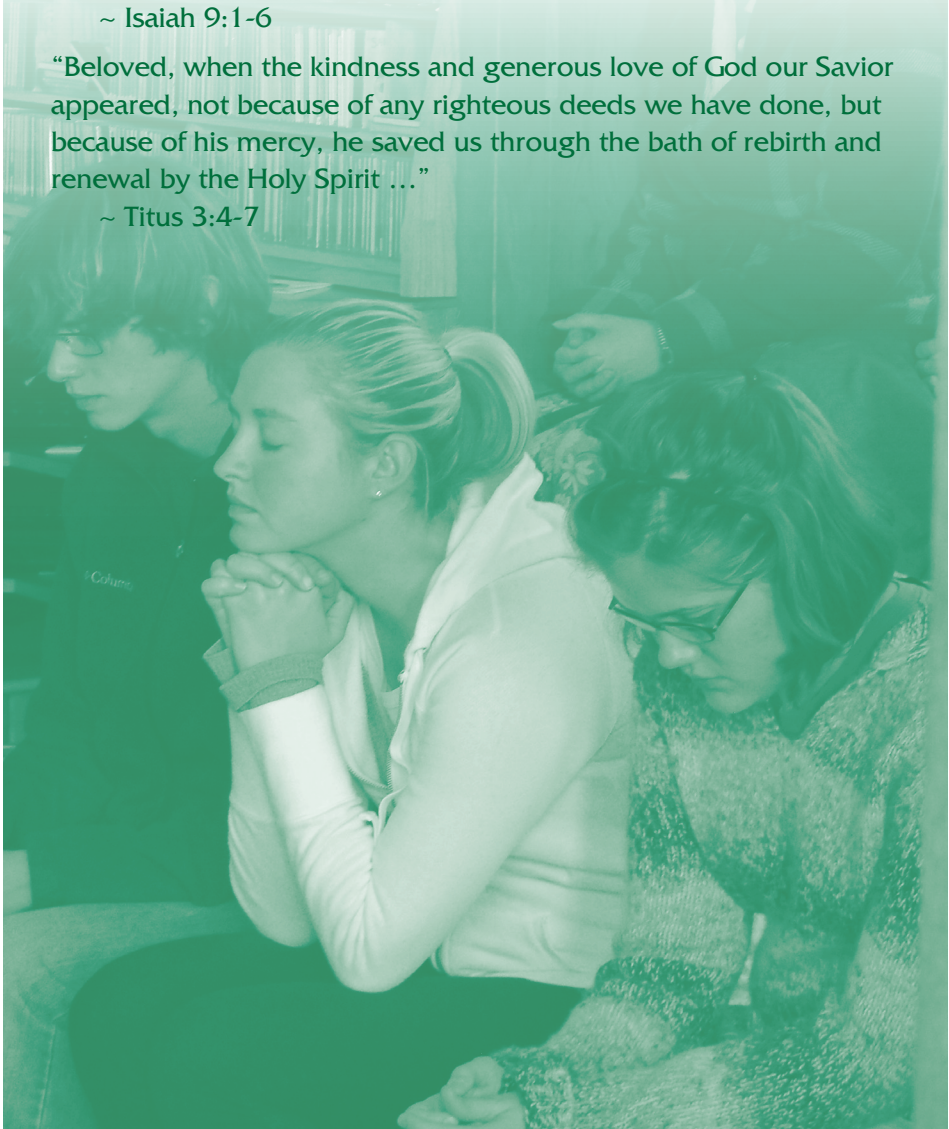
~ Romans 15:4-9

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwell in the land of gloom a light has shown."

~ Isaiah 9:1-6

"Beloved, when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we have done, but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit ..."

~ Titus 3:4-7



Students in prayer at Eucharist during our intercollegiate retreat, Fall 2010.

REFLECTIONS:

Hello friends,
I am writing this reflection to tell you of my experience this past summer living at the Mountain.

I lived and worked alongside 2 other men, as well as the Mountain Friars for 9 weeks. The entire experience was a huge blessing. To be invited into the relational living, and ministry aspect of Mt. Irenaeus was remarkable. I was given much time to spend in silence with God, but also in active service and community living. Meeting the many people who visit the Mountain was one of the most important things to me, having the opportunity to learn the stories of others. One thing I will carry with me always is the aspect of hospitality. The friars let each of us summer brothers know that we were wholly invited into their life and ministry. It was remarkable to be included in life at the Mountain, and through working alongside the brothers at the Mountain I realized just how all of the friends and benefactors of the Mountain are, along with all creation, cared for, and included in the thoughts and prayers of the community of Mt. Irenaeus. I want to let you know that even as you read this, you are part of the Mountain; invited in, welcomed to, and called to walk the walk of Christian love. To let you know that right now, as you are, you are loved as brothers and sisters by those who make the Mountain, just as you are one who helps make this place what it is.

May God grant you peace and Good, that you might carry it to others.

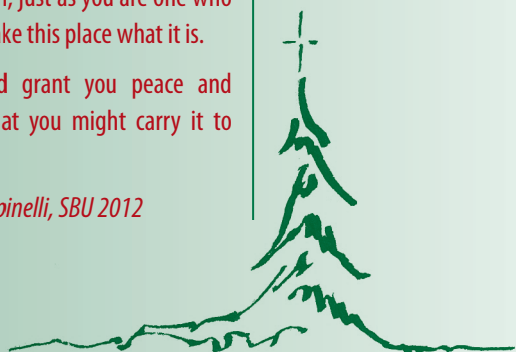
~ Sam Spinelli, SBU 2012

This past summer I was lucky enough to spend nine weeks living as a member of the Mountain Community. Going into the experience I had vague expectations of personal growth over the course of the summer and knew I was in for a unique experience but what I experienced during my time at the Mountain far exceeded any of my preconceived expectations.

As a member of the Mountain Community I had the privilege of meeting alumni, current students at Bonaventure, and countless other generous people from all different walks of life who each brought something unique to share. While my fellow interns and I, along with the friars, were often thanked by those who came to spend time at the Mountain for helping to contribute to the hospitality experienced there, I also felt and still feel a debt of thanks is owed by me to all those who came to the Mountain for what they contributed to my own personal and spiritual growth.

I would like to thank the friars, my fellow interns, all those who spent time at the Mountain this past summer, and all those who support the Mountain for helping to make possible an experience I am sure I will carry with me and draw upon for the rest of my life.

~Anthony Zambito, SBU 2012



UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE MOUNTAIN:

Upcoming retreat dates and high points of the spring time.

- **“The Mountain in the Sun!” – January 28-30, 2011**
Don Pedro Island, Florida
Gathering in God’s glory, we rediscover our glory! – on a small island off the Florida coast near Sarasota and Fort Myers the Mt. Irenaeus Community and Dan Riley, ofm, are preparing a time of renewal! The fuller invitation and further information can be found at www.mounti.com.

You can join us for an evening, a day, an overnight or the whole weekend. We will be accepting 20-24 reservations on a “first-come first-served” basis through Michelle at 716-375-2096. Questions and suggestions are welcome.
“The glory of God is a human person fully alive.” ~ St. Irenaeus
- **Sojourner’s Retreat – April 1-3, 2010**
This time is open to everyone . . . share your personal faith hunger and journey from your cities, communities, and church experience. From different locales, we gather to grow at the Mountain, our spiritual home. Contact Michelle at 716-375-2096 for reservations as well as to speak with one of our sojourners.
- **Next Mountain Work Day – April 8-9, 2011**
We want to share with you not only our work, but the “Gospel manner of life and ministry” of the Mountain . . . so come for our Friday overnight of meals, prayers and community, if you wish, and please join us Saturday as we take on indoor and outdoor projects open to students and all members of the Mountain Community. For more information see www.mounti.com.

The House of Peace

The road along the southern tier is long and straight

Nothing much has changed

It seems as though these years have gone by
in a single moment

Calm washes over me as my eye catches a glimpse of the first rolling
hill along my journey

My heart is happy

John Denver sings to me about these country roads

Eight hours into my drive the roads are no longer paved

Snow covered

They beckon me, draw me closer

The truck pushes my car up the final incline

The traction I have longed for; Here; Coming to my aid

The silence welcomes me

The snow, the trees, the birds, the mountain air

They all welcome me

Through the window I see the fire

It burns bright and warm

I am close; The moment I have longed for is almost here

The alluring scent of Blueberry Betty greets me at the door

A Dan Hurley specialty

I breathe it in; Knowing it was made just for this occasion

Then it comes - I hear it - I hear it before I see it!

The boom of a belly laugh

So deep; So sincere

It surrounds me as securely as the embrace yet to come

It is in this moment, as I am surrounded by the warmth and the love

It is in this moment, that I know I have arrived

Arrived at this place where I found my center

Arrived at this House of Peace

Arrived at this place that still exists

Arrived at this place that is still

My Home – Away - From Home

~ Patti Grip





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OURS ARE ALL SEASONS AND ALL TIME



Our 10th Annual Auction was a wonderful evening full of great joy and generosity. We remembered again Dan Hurley, ofm. We gave special thanks to Margaret Bryner, the initiator and Chair of our Auction and its vibrant committee. She and her committee hosted us for a rich spiritual evening, especially this year. A community of friends who gathered from near and far to benefit the Mountain. We thank you Margaret and all your committee members and each person who gave gifts for the evening and you who were able to gather with us.

Next year's Auction will be: **November 5, 2011!**

BUILDING THE MOUNTAIN — IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS...

As I grow in my position of Coordinator of Development & Volunteers at the Mountain, I am slowing "getting" the message that the friars have been teaching me along the way... "it is all about relationships". As we reach out to you for your time, talent and treasure, we are also reaching out to you to walk with us, learn with us about our life and mission at the Mountain. It is our hope that by this relationship of "giving and receiving" that the mission of the Mountain finds a place within you and grows deeper and stronger with each experience you have at the Mountain, "On the Road", and with your visits to our website and Facebook page. It is an exciting journey and it is our hope that it will both sustain and nurture the Mountain as well as the "Mountain within you."

We have kicked off our annual Mountain Fund which sponsors many programs from evenings away at the Mountain with students and friends; to the purchase of a much needed tractor. Please know that your gifts are a blessing to all here at the Mountain. I would love to hear from you if you would like more information about opportunities to share your time, talent or treasure to the **Mountain Fund**, special projects or planned giving. Peace, Mary Schlosser, mschloss@sbu.edu, 716-375-2081.

HOLIDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas 2010

December 24, 2010

9:00 p.m.

Christmas Mass at Night

December 25, 2010

11:00 a.m.

Mass for Christmas Day

New Years

December 31, 2010

11:00 p.m.

New Year's Eve Prayer Service

January 1, 2011

11:00 a.m.

Mass

