

**All the Christian faithful are invited to follow  
the example of the Saint of Assisi,  
becoming models of holiness of life  
and constant witnesses of peace.**

Thanks to a recent proclamation from our first American Pope, the life of a poor man from medieval central Italy, will continue to be a source of inspiration at the highest levels of our Church. This influence began thirteen years ago when the first Jesuit became the first Pope to take the name Francis and then went on to produce several encyclicals themed after the life of this beloved saint, most notably Laudato Si. Pope Leo has recently proclaimed 2026, the 800th anniversary of St. Francis's passing, as a "jubilee year" honoring his life.

At the Mountain we have started talking about how this pronouncement impacts our ministry. One opinion was, "Well we should keep doing what we have been doing," which is true enough. From a personal perspective, this has me contemplatively considering this Jubilee year, and the impact St. Francis has had on me.

I thought about my life's journey, and the decades of knowing, and now living and working among those who have taken religious vows. I consider myself a Franciscan, and while un vowed, I like to think that I am "Franciscan hearted." I also believe it speaks to so many of you who receive this, the thousands of people who are part of the Mountain community, as well as those all over the world who have been drawn to follow the life of Francis..



Karen Pulaski gets help preparing dinner from members of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) Club at an evening away.

**Mt. IRENAEUS**

**FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY**

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So, what does it mean, and how does one become Franciscan hearted? Every journey is different, and mine naturally starts at the Mountain. I think back to my first summer as a companion. I was heading into my last year at SBU , and still didn't have a real sense of who Francis was, beyond being a lover of peace and nature. I remember Fr. Dan Riley giving myself and **Jason Free**, the other companion, a book titled ***God's Fool: The Life and Times of St. Francis of Assisi***, by **Julien Green**. It was an easy-to-read biography that told Francis' story in small vignettes – a perfect introduction. What I recall from my first read was that Francis enjoyed a party and throwing his father's money around to entertain his friends. He went off to war and came back defeated and ultimately began shifting to a life caring for lepers, and embracing a life of poverty, culminating in a moment when he renounced his father and his wealth, to commit his entire life to God. Those were the moments that struck a 20-year-old kid with a whole lot of questions about what's next.

As I have gotten older, I am drawn to other stories of Francis' life. Some of you may be familiar with Francis' involvement around the crusades, and his desire to visit the Sultan, a Muslim leader of the Ottoman Empire. Francis' impulse was initially that of conversion but, after much dialogue, ultimately resolved to a place of mutual understanding with the Muslim leader. This episode resonates a great deal for me and many others here at the Mountain. We live in a time where we lack places of dialogue and understanding of other perspectives. You will continue to see efforts in our ministry to create circles to allow for dialogue among those who have different points of view. The Mountain has always been a place of belonging for all, and we want to expand this into being a place of dialogue, welcoming all perspectives.

If you were around Fr. Dan Riley enough, you would have heard the term "metanoia" – which means a conversion, or a complete change of heart. Francis seemed constantly to be of this mindset. To truly be Franciscan hearted, I need to be in this place of constantly seeking a greater understanding of how I can live a manner of life that reflects the Gospel's teachings. I think this is why Fr. Dan loved the Revelations line within our mission statement, to join with Jesus in making "All things new." In gratitude to Pope Leo, I pray this year of Jubilee continues to be a time of conversion of my heart, and that this year may be a time of renewal across the world.

~ Mike Fenn



## Pope Leo XIV proclaims Franciscan Jubilee Year for the 800th anniversary of the Death of St. Francis of Assisi

Recently an announcement came from the Vatican. Pope Leo proclaimed a year of jubilee in remembrance of the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. The proclamation is what we would call "a press release" but is also an encouragement for Franciscans and all people who work to continue St. Francis' mission to people, peace and the planet. Those of us who live at the Mountain were happy to see St. Francis singled out in this way but also took the Pope's encouragement to heart. We need to keep opening our hearts tirelessly, creatively and hopefully to what we have been called to do. In this decree Pope Leo writes,

*"It is with joy that we announce the promulgation of the Decree establishing a special Jubilee Year in commemoration of the Eighth Centenary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi." ... "All the Christian faithful are invited to follow the example of the Saint of Assisi, becoming models of holiness of life and constant witnesses of peace."*

May the shining example of St. Francis, who knew how to make himself poor and humble, inspire our hearts to live with authentic Christian charity towards our neighbor and with sincere longings for concord and peace among peoples. Following in the footsteps of the Poverello of Assisi, let us transform the hope that made us pilgrims during the Holy Year into fervor and zeal of effective charity.

What great words, we are pilgrims following in the footsteps of Christ. We must never forget the holy task that has been given to us. If you, dear readers, have not heard, Franciscans around the world have also been celebrating a series of 800th anniversaries in recent years. This year is the culmination of these anniversaries.

*The approval of the Rule of St. Francis in November 1223;*

*The first Nativity that took place at Greccio in December 1223;*

*Francis receiving the Stigmata or wounds of Christ at Mt. La Verna in September 1224;*

*Laudato Si Canticle of the Creatures 1225;*

*And finally, this year, the death of Francis in October of 1226.*

These last few years have been a very rich time for the Franciscan world. Thank you, Holy Father! We appreciate your invitation and reminder for all to join the movement started by Francis of Assisi to be a constant witness to peace and charity, in ever widening circles. Dear brothers and sisters, please pray for us at the Mountain that we can be worthy of the task given to us by Jesus Christ and through St. Francis of Assisi. Come visit if you can!

~ Br. Kevin

### SAVE THE DATE!

As you make your summer plans, please prayerfully consider joining us for our annual summer adult retreat weekends hosted by the Council for Spirit and Life - a time when we create a space at the Mountain where you might slow down, spend time on the land, share a meal, stories and prayer with others. This is a time for reflection and renewal through a Mountain experience. These retreats also provide an opportunity halfway through the year to step back, reflect and gain a sense of how we all are walking through the world. We offer the same retreat experience on two different weekends. This year, our retreat weekends will be offered on:

**June 26-28 OR July 24-26**

More information about our summer retreats will be made available in the coming months. Space is limited. Please reach out to Karen Pulaski at [kpulaski5204@aol.com](mailto:kpulaski5204@aol.com) to register or with any questions you might have! We look forward to seeing you - peace and all good!

## ***In Commemoration: Sharing A Major Franciscan Celebration!***

In celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Transitus (or passing) of St. Francis, Richard Danielpour was commissioned to create a major artistic work called *The Francis Oratorio* to mark and honor this significant event. This 70-minute oratorio (large-scale musical composition) featuring eight scenes, will highlight pivotal moments in Francis's life—his love of nature, reverence for other faiths, advocacy for the poor, and call to peace—while honoring the role of women in his vision of authentic Christian life. With libretto by Margaret Carney OSF and staging and performances led by distinguished UCLA artists supported by the Buffalo Symphony orchestra, the premiere will take place in Buffalo on October 10-11, 2026, with subsequent performances planned in Los Angeles and Assisi. Dedicated to the memory of Pope Francis, the work is envisioned as a gift to the world, using art to inspire justice, peace, and care for creation across religious and civic communities.

The Franciscan Federation, in partnership with the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities, is planning a special Franciscan Day in Buffalo on October 10, 2026; a day of retreat, reflection, and gathering for Franciscans from across the family. This event also aims to involve students and young adults from Franciscan colleges and high schools, engaging them in the living spirit of our tradition.

To bring this vision to life, several members of the Mt Irenaeus community have joined with other local Franciscan groups to help plan this Franciscan Day. The planning group will work collaboratively to help shape the day by discerning a theme, identifying speakers, selecting a location, and designing a meaningful program that includes Franciscans and Franciscan hearted people of all ages.

We encourage you to mark your calendars - we would love to have you join us for any or all of this much anticipated celebration whether you are local or not! We look forward to being part of the experience of creating a Franciscan Day that we hope will be an experience rich in prayer, reflection, and Franciscan joy. Come and see – and be with us!

~ Karen Pulaski



A serene scene from our Silent Contemplative Overnight.



Preparing "Breakfast for Dinner" at our very successful "Play in the Snow" Overnight.

One of the most powerful experiences in my life was a long fast; 13 days with nothing but water (under direct medical supervision). As we enter Lent, I am reminded of this experience and reinvigorated to try fasting again. Most major religions incorporate fasting as a method of spiritual purification, and I was drawn towards it as a way of facilitating deep prayer. Inspired by Christ's 40 days in the desert, I thought I would give a modest 2 weeks a try.

After about 2 days of stomach-rumbling and irritation, I slowly stopped feeling hungry. As I went deeper into the fast, I became more patient, calm, and clear-headed than I had ever been. I realized I typically eat when I am bored, not hungry, and my reliance on food seemed to disappear. Without the typical indulgence of eating, I was free to enjoy what remained - prayer and conversation with people around me. These simple things fulfilled me in a way I had not felt before, and the fruits of the spirit naturally emerged inside and out.

In John's Gospel, Christ says He is the living bread and provides living water. Fasting can help us to develop a relationship with this true source of sustenance and life, by removing attachment to earthly things.

To be clear, food is good. Enjoying a meal is a great gift. But for those that are able, fasting is a practice of remembering to put the highest thing in its proper place, not valuing things of the world above that which is divine. The simple yet deeply fulfilling gift of fasting can be extended beyond food; this Lent, for example, I plan to deepen my practice by abstaining from technology as much as possible and allowing space for God's Love to be first in all things.

~ Declan Donahue, Mountain Companion

## SUMMER EVENINGS OF RE-CREATION AT MT. IRENAEUS

Our summer Evenings of Re-Creation will begin with Evening Prayer in the Chapel at 5:00 pm followed by time on the land and supper.

After supper, join us in the Chapel for Mass and "conversatio." The evening concludes around 9:00 pm.

Our Evenings of Re-Creation will take place on the following Wednesday evenings:

**July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**



## HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES

**HOLY THURSDAY**

7:00 pm

Mass of the Lord's Supper

**GOOD FRIDAY**

1:00 Stations of the Cross

3:00 pm - Liturgy of the Lord's Passion

**HOLY SATURDAY**

7:00 pm Easter Vigil

**EASTER SUNDAY**

11:00 am Mass & Dish To Pass Brunch





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## MT. IRENAEUS ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

After a winter that brought more than the usual share of arctic temperatures and layers of beautiful snowfall, Springtime is on the horizon at The Mountain!

As we anticipate this beautiful season of earth's reawakening, and the promise and hope of Easter joy, we give thanks for all the generous friends and benefactors who make our Mountain ministries possible.

Our annual online Mountain Auction last fall raised more than \$35,000, exceeding our goal and raising valuable revenue for our operations. Special thanks to our hard-working committee, including co-chairs **Karen Karaszewski** and **Kim Robinson**, and members **Alyson Amendola**, **Mike Fenn**, **Patty Finnerty**, **Mary Giardini** and **Jackie Lanzillo**. Planning is already underway for another exciting edition this fall.

We are also grateful for donations to our 2025-2026 Mountain Fund campaign, which continues until May 31, the conclusion of our fiscal year. This fund is our financial "heartbeat", covering essential costs such as food, transportation, and our digital outreach ministries.

More than 800 Bonaventure students have already visited the Mountain during this academic year, and hundreds of additional visitors have joined us for Mass, retreats, contemplative gatherings and spiritual getaways. Mountain on the Road and Mountain in the Home events continue across the country. We thank each and every donor – we could not do it without you.

There's still time to support this year's fund – by visiting us at [www.mountainonline.org](http://www.mountainonline.org), or contacting our office at 716-375-2096.

We hope to see you soon at the Mountain, at off-site outreach events, and on-line, as we continue "to join with Jesus Christ in making all things new!" We will share more information about this special celebration as details become available.

**Peace and Blessings,  
Jackie Lanzillo and Evan McElroy  
Advancement CoChairs  
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[emcelroy52@gmail.com](mailto:emcelroy52@gmail.com)**

We are a 501c3 that relies on private donations. It's now easy to make an annual, honor or memorial gift through our Mountain website ([www.mountainonline.org](http://www.mountainonline.org)). Just click the donate button.

**PLEASE CONSIDER  
JOINING**



**Daniel A. Hurley** of the  
*Legacy Society*

Contact Michelle Marcellin  
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