



If you want your dream to be Build it slow and surely.

Small beginnings, greater end Heartfelt work grows purely.

Day by day Stone by stone, Build your secret slowly.

Day by day You'll grow too You'll know heaven's glory.

~ Stone by Stone (Donovan)

And it did come slowly. It took us time, a good deal of reflection and the searching of our own hearts and others to confirm our mission, and through the many hillsides of this area to find what we now call "the Mountain." You might remember those days and, indeed, were a part of them, as you would have participated with your own gifts and your own dreams. We remembered all of our early and recent friends who have helped build up the Mountain on our "*Build with Living Stones*" weekend, May 3-5, 2019. Once the Mountain got rolling, it was "On the Road" for sure!

It was at a Mass before we purchased the land, here in October of 1984 that we heard from the Prophet Isaiah who promised this; "*On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy rich food and pure choice wines. On this mountain, God will destroy the veil that veils all people, the web that is woven all over all nations. He will destroy death forever.*" (Isaiah 25:6-8)

From the very beginning, the Mountain was to be "a place," but not only "a place," a "living community" somewhere in the hills near St. Bonaventure University. It would be a refuge and a getaway, a place of healing, reconciliation, joy, enjoyment and, again, good meals! Franciscan language, from our earliest years, would speak of "riteros" or "recesses," places for rest and reflection to, as we would say today, "catch your breath" and begin again. The Mountain is grounded in the Gospel and a simple way of living a life that renews us daily, welcomes people of all traditions and calls us



The "Living Stones" plaques that now welcome guests to experience the labyrinth.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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into communion with one another and the Earth. Its informal setting allows people to move from solitude and silence into conversation and comfortable family style communion.

Fr. Alban McGuire, one of our founders and Provincial of Holy Name Province at the time we began, helped us with the simple phrase, "The Mountain is a place for prayer and peaceful re-creation." I remember when he first said this and smiled to himself and I could see he was delighted that he had thought of a way of expressing our name with the two key dynamics that were our mission; "peace, paz, pax, salaam, shalom" and the many other language expressions of peace carved in the beams of our house, and the deep transformational activity of peace in the renewal of person and world.

Later, we would use a phrase from the Book of Revelation as our single sentence mission statement, "To join with Jesus Christ in making all things new."

This sense of "a new creation" and being re-created is a wonderful conjoining of this notion of rest and peace, not only for ourselves, but also for making all things new for Sister Earth. We seek and find the grace and energy, the wisdom, the faith and the love to form relationships and go forth from here.

Our first summers were exciting. The energy that came from the off-campus house the University loaned us in Allegany flowed back on campus and filled the local area and eventually brought us to the hillside and woods of West Clarksville, New York.

Early this year **Mike Fenn** suggested we needed to celebrate you and others! Along with a wonderful

workgroup of women and men, he shaped and formed what became this exceptional weekend for all of us. The "**Build with Living Stones**" weekend had within it the opportunity to tell stories, to gather again with people we knew from some time ago, to meet people we had heard about and knew had been part of the Mountain life, possibly at another time.

Friends of ours who had not been able to be here for some time and others who come more frequently arrived to participate in this weekend full of prayer, storytelling and a homecoming for all of us. It was a surprise, I think, to each person and those of us close to the planning. It became such a naturally delightful time when we realized that St. Francis tells us; "we are of one family." The days were filled with laughter and some wonderful tears as well as exceptionally fine meals (Thanks **Mike Sullivan** and team!).

Summer

From 1 Peter 2:4-5, "**Come to him, a living stone, rejected by humans but chosen and precious in the sight of God. And**

like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house." We understand ourselves as being women and men called to renew life in the world and help rebuild the church as Francis did and, thus, are called "living stones, timbers for a new church."

With the lead of Mike and others, we created a permanent way and place by our labyrinth, a wooded sanctuary, with plaques to "name" all of our benefactors. Those people who have shared our life, and worked beside us, those who pray along with us and those who have benefited us with the gifts that they could give us to build up our life and sustain it.

With friends like you, from Living Stones like yourselves, the Mountain is alive and growing!



Sunday morning Mass celebrated at the Mountain with a shared Homily.



Tony and Adriana LaMarca along with Marv and Donna Stocker share reflections in the Chapel.

Beginning as one small home, we now have numerous hermitages and a very large and beautiful House of Peace that some people call a lodge. With initial apprehension about building a Chapel, we none-the-less designed and created an exceptionally beautiful one that people say is one of the most treasured sacred spaces they have been in all of their lives. It seems to immediately welcome anybody of any path or those who have yet to find their spiritual way.

It is wonderful to know that throughout all of this, God and friends, God through friends, have helped us design, guide and build this beautiful place. Beauty is a particular note of Franciscan spirituality and a way of our living. Indeed, it was especially important to St. Bonaventure. As Franciscans we understand from our early teachers that beauty draws us, attracts us and also works. It delights and it draws out in us our desire to form and make new things to join in the process of creation.

Also, St. Bonaventure remarks that a definition of justice is, "The returning to its original beauty that which has been deformed." This really tells the inner story of many who have come to our Mountain either tired or feeling out of sorts or twisted by the world, that they would return to their original beauty – that they would be seen and see themselves as beautiful once again, and so a beautiful space and place that would reflect that and help us look into the mirror of God's own beauty.

"All Are Welcome, All Are Welcome" is a song we often sing in our very contemporary Chapel, which has ancient echoes of earlier places of prayer, both in our Catholic tradition and other religious traditions as well.

Our friends have contributed their dreams, their efforts, and their resources. As we gave thanks that weekend I wish to do so now with great emphasis and some tears. So many people have given so much to make the Mountain the "so much" that it is for young and old. At times I have thought, and we have said to each other, how wonderful it is just to see one young face turn from sadness or depression into the sense of possibility – the possibilities to live more, the possibility to be happy, be happier and see, hear and get up and set up the table for others, clean out so others will find a home here and in the world.

You and others have given us so much by the beautiful relationships you have with us, your own wonderful humanity manifest in your desire to shape and form the Mountain. Hopefully, we have received well the gifts you have given us so well and generously. ***If we have not given out enough thanks to you, I thank you now.*** If we ever seemed ungrateful, please know now that we have been very grateful and are right now. Your generosity has formed a place and a way of life that we hope and pray will endure long enough to continue to renew both young and older hearts so that through it we will slowly build a new house, build new dreams, build a new place, because you and I, and all of us, are those stones and those rocks, the new stones for a new church, the living stones for a church and world that wants to come alive for others. We are Living Stones, joining with women and men of all paths and traditions, stepping beyond our fears into a new place of trust and as the preface of Christ the King tells us each year when we pray it, "To live in the Kingdom of justice, love and peace."

Peace!
Ignacio



John and Anita Dutcher presented all with a hand made Tau Cross necklace.



A joyful celebration as we gather around our table to bless the food.

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Living Stones, an example for us all:

As this special weekend began to take form, one simple question continued to nudge at me: Should we really be doing this? Should we really be honoring people in this tangible and outward way? Do not get me wrong – we are incredibly grateful for every name that is now welcoming guests to experience our labyrinth. Every person noted in these two arbors has had a significant impact in the life of the Mountain.

Many of these names are friends who were with Fr. Dan Riley and Fr. Dan Hurley from the very beginning, before there was a Mountain! Fr. Dan Riley shared his initial vision, and others added their own gifts to help enhance and bring the vision to fruition. Then there are those who have given of their treasure in a way that has helped us accomplish so much over the course of these 35 plus years.

The crux of the issue was the idea of spotlighting a specific group of people. One of the values of the Mountain has been collaboration – nothing is done by one person. Thank God, there have been so many who would get behind our mission, literally thousands and thousands of people have been involved in bringing the Mountain to where it is today. Clearly, fractions of those are being noted as Living Stones.

Yet, as soon as the weekend began, it was clear we had made the right decision. What took place that weekend really was no different from what takes place most weekends at the Mountain. Old relationships were renewed; people met each other for the first time and have likely made new friendships. Stories were shared, there was a great deal of laughter, there were tears, and there was remembrance of those who are no longer with us, but still deep in our hearts. In addition, there was prayer, there was time on the land, there was silence, there was gratitude, and there was beautiful music (thank you **Glenn McClure!**). Yes, it had all the elements of a Mountain gathering.

Yet it was special, this circle of people would never have gathered without the Living Stones weekend. While every attendee would say their name being recognized is unnecessary, it is critical that we tell our story, because if the Mountain is anything, it is about telling our stories. It is about telling the stories of how this place came about, to hopefully inspire the next generation of Living Stones, to continue the legacy of the Mountain for generations to come.

As for the next Living Stones weekend... we are still deciding if this is a gathering that will take place annually or every other year... What we know for sure is that there are other Living Stones in our midst, helping sustain the Mountain by sharing their time, their talent, and their treasure. May God help us to continue inviting others into our way of life, so that we can continue the special gift that is the Mountain for years and years to come.

~ **Mike Fenn**



Mike Sullivan blessed us with his special cooking talents to prepare food for the weekend events.



Friends, new and old, gathered at the Living Stones celebration.

MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

Before Mt. Irenaeus found its home in West Clarksville, it was an idea in the heart of Fr. Dan Riley.

It started before the summer of 1985 when he moved up to the land with Fr. Dan Hurley.

It started before he led his first off-campus retreat in 1971 at St. Bonaventure.

"I have classmates of mine from Bonas, who tell me, 'You know you were thinking about the Mountain when we were students at St. Bonaventure,'" Fr. Dan recalled.

However, for the thought to become a reality, there needed help from many hands and hearts. The true essence of Mt. Irenaeus is graced inspiration, a vision of Fr. Dan Riley's that he shared from its starting point as a collaborative effort that welcomed the ideas and dreams and experiences of an entire community.

That collaboration was celebrated the first weekend of May 2019 as the Mountain hosted its first Living Stones Weekend, honoring those who gave their time, talent, and treasure to create and sustain our way of life in West Clarksville.

About 50 people attended parts of the weekend, which honored more than 100 people with commemorative plaques at the entrances to the labyrinth. It was a time to share stories, to laugh, to pray, and to dream.

"We wouldn't be here today if so many of you did not give of yourself, or what you have, for us," Fr. Dan said. "This place is about imagination, the ability to dream and feel and sense a movement."

~ Amy Moritz

Our Build With Living Stones weekend was a joy, especially getting reacquainted with some of the people who made the Mountain possible in the past and are keeping it possible for the future. We also re-read early documents of the Mountain's foundation - some of those documents were written over a decade before the Mountain land was even purchased! It's amazing that the themes from the beginning are still very much alive in the present - each of us are "Living Stones" in the Church - the ecclesia or gathering. We work toward the vision of the Kingdom of God where all things are new and divisions are mended. We value both community and time for silence and solitude to be able to listen to what God is speaking to us and all of the lessons we are learning as we make our way. And then there were the stories. Stories of risk and amazement, stories of fun and mishaps, stories of people who are still with us and stories of people who have already gone home to God. We also looked at new stories. So many good things are still going on. Take a look at the Mountain website www.mountainonline.org. There are some wonderful pictures that capture the spirit of the weekend and pictures of the wonders that are ongoing.

God bless you all.

~ Kevin Kriso, ofm

The turn from paved road to hard packed dirt road. Watching for the two right hand turns as the car winds its way into deeper green and more quiet, each one making us more excited to reach the top. Making our way past the old house and new house, and then up the hill to the Chapel parking lot. Stillness. Birds chirping. Then a whisper of wind through the trees as we view the labyrinth and continue our journey to the Chapel. Opening the door to the Chapel and seeing so many faces from the past. What a homecoming!

Going home. What does that conjure for you? For us, at the Mountain, it is feeling comfortable in a place we love because of its beauty and calm in God's presence, as well as the joy of being welcomed by so many we haven't seen in so many years. Getting back in touch with ourselves and the peace we know we feel at the moment and will walk away with again as we take the trek back down the Mountain.

We are so grateful for being given the opportunity to be welcomed back for the Living Stones celebration... not that we have ever completely left... and look forward to many more visits "home!" Being back also gave us time to look forward to where we are headed in our own spiritual life as well as where the Mountain is headed in the future. We pray you are able to make the journey "home" to the Mountain to feel the same peace and gratitude.

~ Sue and Steve Besecker





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Save The Date! October 12th - Fall Community Service & Reflection Day At The Mountain.

FROM YOUR GENEROUS HEARTS... MOUNTAIN FUND ONCE AGAIN SURPASSES GOAL!

Your caring support makes a difference! As we close out this year's annual campaign, your generosity has once again allowed us to reach and surpass our Mountain Fund goal. On behalf of the Mountain Friars and staff, thank you for joining 700 Mountain supporters to raise \$250,000.

Your generous gifts provide needed dollars to meet the Mountain's \$500,000 annual operating budget allowing us to share our daily mission — "joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new," with students, visitors and friends of the Mountain throughout the country.

A great big thank you to our Mountain Fund Chair, **Marv Stocker** for providing enthusiastic leadership again this year, as well as our wonderful Phonathon volunteers who helped make our goal a reality.

As benefactors, your sustained kindness of treasure, time and talent allows us to continue to serve and reach thousands each year---making a difference by bringing the Mountain's message to so many people's lives.

We would love for you to visit us at the Mountain or participate in a Mountain on the Road experience to see first-hand the impact of your generosity.

As we begin our efforts for this coming year's Mountain Fund, we thank you in advance for your continued support.

Pax et Bonum.

~ **Jacqueline Lanzillo**

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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). Just click the donate button on the top right.

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Contact Mary Schlosser at
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