



“Go out to all the Earth, and proclaim the Good News!”

(Mk. 16:15)

We live in a country that is trying to rediscover its very core and common heart for what it means to be an American. We share in the life of a University, its purpose, its journey and its rediscovering, in this age, what it means to be Franciscan. As we approach and soon enter the Easter season, we think of the light and life that the risen Christ has offered all of us and the message He gives us to “go out to all the world and bring Good News.” Within this message is where the Spirit of the Lord God, in God’s “Holy operations” and the Holy Spirit, forms and renews the Church. Bringing the Good News often happens on a local level and in small groups so that they may form Mountain external communities and live the life of the Gospel, thus acting like “leaven for the bread” that is the community of the Earth today, the very Earth which calls out for the Good News.

For 35 years the Mountain has shared this journey with many at St. Bonaventure University. This shared service and commitment is an exciting journey of rediscovering the meaning of the Franciscan person and our place in the larger purpose of transforming, not only ourselves, but the world around us.

Dr. Dennis DePerro, who recently passed, came among us with this commitment and was so committed to transformation. I believe he lives now in the fullness of what that means and in the completion of God’s life for us which goes on forever in Christ and the Holy Spirit in Heaven with the Father.

We would like to dedicate this newsletter to both **Dennis DePerro** and **Ray Dee**. Ray was a good friend, former Chair of the Board of Trustees at St. Bonaventure and a benefactor to Mt.



Our pond is ready for the warmer days of Spring.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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Irenaeus as well as my classmate. We also want to dedicate it to their wives **Sherry DePerro** and **Maureen Dee** and their families as they exemplify the call to “go out to all the Earth and bring the Good News.”

Dennis, with all his wonderful gifts, came and stirred a university into a new sense of self giving and care for others, a new hope and a new sense of direction and, indeed, with his humor, a new sense of joy. **Ray Dee** was a dear friend of mine from our college years. He worked hard for Bona’s for decades, some of which are not always noted. I believe even before he was on the Alumni Board he was regularly in communication with people who sought out his help, support and administrative interests and concerns. He loved Bona’s so deeply that he was regularly on our campus. As a Board of Trustees member, and then as Chair of the Board, he worked so closely with the Administration and others that he was almost wedded to the place – almost more than Maureen, except that she was here too fulfilling her own sense of care for Bona’s and Ray at the same time.

Both of these men, Ray and Dennis, were larger than life in form, in

personality, and in a strong sense of purpose. They had the capacity to draw others in both by their questions and also by their enthusiasm and intentional direction.

With the DePerro and Dee families we share their sorrow and offer our prayers for healing. We commend both of these exceptional men to their place in Heaven, but also in the Church as role models for us. They are also role models in our Country and in ways of learning and educating, of asking each of us - not only the young among us - to be truly transformed and to enter into a new time so that we indeed might join each other in “making all things new in Jesus Christ.”

This is the core and direction of the Gospel. Alive in my memory is an afternoon, possibly 25 years ago, when a few students burst into my office on campus in what was then the Merton Ministry Center. We had realized together, as we were sharing ministry and giving retreats at the Mountain, that students had great energy and desire and were forming a group that was called the “Students for the Mountain” (now named Mountain Community Leaders). They did not have a written document

nor a Mission Statement. A group of five or eight sat down for a while in our Ministry Center and worked for the better part of an afternoon on shaping language, images and insights, paralleling the Mountain’s overall Mission Statement and commitment.

While I was getting up from my desk one of the students came to my open door and proclaimed, “We have written it! We have found our Mission too! We think we have it here, come over and let us read it to you!” So, I walked over and sat down at the table and listened to what they had formed, shaped, and, indeed, to what they had committed.

Mountain Community Leaders Mission Statement

The Mission of the Mountain Community Leaders is to **“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole creation.”** (Mk.16: 15)

Rooted in the Catholic Franciscan tradition, the Mountain Community Leaders serve as ministers primarily to the Mt. Irenaeus and the St. Bonaventure communities. It is through the Gospel values of faith, peace, hope and love that we seek to



Ray Dee, Father Dan, Pete Sullivan and Maureen Dee at the Mountain during a reunion weekend.



Mike Muffoletto, Dennis DePerro and Amy Moritz at their first board meeting after becoming Mountain Trustees.

offer opportunities for the presence of God to surface in everyday life. Joined as a family we are committed to one another for spiritual, emotional, physical and mental support on our journey of discipleship. Through our leadership and ministry we hope to better exemplify the love of God in Jesus. This love empowers us to "go into all the world and proclaim the Good News" of God's reign, and to stretch our community to include all peoples in the way of Jesus.

They had gone to the Gospels, opened the Scriptures and found exactly what it was that was inspiring them, what it was in their Franciscan and Bonaventure education that had them committed to the work that we were about then, and that was 30 years ago. Since then, our Church, our place of learning, Bona's, and in particular our Pope, Francis, and those just before him, have called us to a new time of evangelization. "The Hope of the Gospel" was followed by another encyclical, "Ite Nuntiate," and still another "Fratelli Tutti," which means, "Brothers and Sisters all."

We only had a few years with Dennis, yet we had a few wonderful conversations and almost 4 days of discussion here at the Mountain on Franciscan Heritage. Ray and I had multiple conversations as both of us grew up and grew into life – both of these men carry our prayers to God. They were deeply committed to lively, active and faith-filled missions that would make a difference in the world.



Each of them were wonderfully practical men, pragmatic in the way in which the Gospel speaks to us. Jesus talks about how important it is that we give ourselves and gift others. The example of that is in the largeness in which we offer ourselves, not in the largeness of the gift given, but the full capacity to give oneself over with the excitement of the new life that will evoke and offer others.

Ray especially enjoyed his time and work with **Todd Palmer** and some of the SBU students in the School of Business. Ray was a natural mentor and loved the opportunity to teach. I think we saw this in Dennis who really taught, and will continue to, by the manner in which he was living his life. His practice and habit of a servant leadership model was of great service to Bonaventure.

These were outgoing men offering unique gifts different from one another and yet championing relationships to help move Bonaventure into a new day. Kindness, wisdom and especially humor were part of each of these men, but manifested differently. Both were strong men who each had their own particular voice which could rise with a deep boom. Everyone knew them and people who knew them well, especially knew their tender heartedness.

The point of drawing this little reflection together about our heritage in these two men, is that in the sadness of losing both of them is an opportunity. In them we see for all of us the Good News they believed in and preached by their passion and practice, their habit of life and their attempt to live it well with those they loved and lived with along the way. The proclamation of the Good News that Jesus has asked us to take out, invites us to offer it in the way in which we each can uniquely give it. This asks us to be a player in the marketplace, places of learning, in homes and businesses, with people that we otherwise might not come



into contact. They will be people of other faiths, traditions and color who have a fullness about life themselves that will enrich us as well. And this too is core to the Good News. God shaped and formed all of us and continues to in-form us, form us within us and between us, with the deep insights of the goodness that is around us and before us.

I believe that this insight of the internal "Holy operations" of the Spirit among us is essential to our lives. Thomas Merton's simple prayer that calls us back to our "original unity" is especially healing for our time. This core of evangelism, the belief in the Good News, invites us to encounter again the Christ who remains in our midst as the Spirit who inflames our hearts to transform the world. It is this "Christ through word," the Eucharist and the community and experience of one another that helps us know we are one. Because we are one in Him and among each other, this One, the Son of God, helps us as sisters and brothers to call each other to the same union and communion to find our way with each other in this complex world.

As the Mountain intensifies and wishes to further realize its call to evangelize, we realize we have had these two friends and many others who felt and found the Mountain and the University authentic models of mission and bearing Good News.

Peace!
Ignacio

My first encounter with SBU President Dr. DePerro was before he became president. I was asked to be part of the interview process for the final three candidates at St. Bonaventure in 2016. Dennis was the first candidate we interviewed. As we began introducing ourselves, I shared a brief description of Mt. Irenaeus and our relationship to the University. To my surprise he not only knew about the Mountain, but had spent some time on our website and already had an appreciation. "The Mountain clearly is a real gem for St. Bonaventure," was how Dennis finished the exchange. It was so refreshing that a candidate would research and develop an appreciation of Mt. Irenaeus. As he moved into the office, it was very clear that he meant those words shared as a candidate for the position. Dennis expressed interest and was then elected onto the Mt. Irenaeus Board of Trustees in the fall of 2019.

When I was reflecting on Dennis in light of this piece, I kept thinking of him as a Franciscan leader. We have a friend of the Mountain, Pauline J. Albert, PhD who completed her dissertation on the leadership of Saints Francis and Clare, highlighted by five Tenets of Franciscan Leadership. They are all of importance and can be attributed to Dennis, but the one that struck me the most was the tenet of Gratefulness. Pauline defines this as "All we have is from God. I acknowledge my talents, and honor others' gifts, as we faithfully serve together in community." These words aptly describe my experiences with Dennis. I have been around officers of large corporations who enjoyed the prestige and power that comes from the office, but that wasn't Dennis. He always looked to build relationships first and from our mutual gifts we could get things done, always for the common good.

Like all who got to know Dennis, even for a brief time, I feel a deep sense of loss for myself, for the University and for the Mountain. Br. Kevin will offer at times the question, "What is mine to do?" The best way I can honor Dennis is to be guided by his example of leadership, and to help carry forward all the good works that he has begun for our Franciscan community.

~ Mike Fenn

While in-person physical retreats are challenging for most and impossible for some, the friars and friends of Mt. Irenaeus have continued to carry out the mission of the Mountain: to join with Jesus Christ in making all things new. During the months of December and January, a team of young alumni have gathered to plan and facilitate virtual Zoom evenings to create a space of welcome, quiet, and shared conversation. These Mountain-style events have provided opportunities for all to pause, reflect and act during a time of much-needed personal interaction through isolation.

"Much like the physical Mt. Irenaeus was a place to stop, reflect and be reminded about the stars in the sky as a student, Mountain evenings on Zoom have brought the warmth of the big house, peaceful and welcoming nature of the Chapel and depth and inspiration of looking up into a vast and beautiful starry night," shared Ian McBride, class of 2005 and one of the leaders of the Mountain young alumni group.

Early on, the planning team decided to plan a four-part series to develop continuity, but also create a space for attendees to join as much as their schedules and desires allowed. The first series focused on the concept of "Behold" and asked attendees to consider ways they observe their current situations in life and think about how they can use this space in each other's company to advance their lives in a strong and positive direction.

Although not physically at the Mountain during the Zoom evenings, most of the attendees have prior experiences at Mt. Irenaeus or Mountain on the Road events. The hope of the young alumni team is to create a similar experience of rejuvenation and calm despite the hundreds - or perhaps thousands - of miles physically separating them.

Fr. Dan Riley, OFM, shared his thoughts on the meaningful foundation this first four-part series established. "The young adult gatherings in the Mountain-style are 'seed beds,' Zoom circles of rich conversation - that support our individual growth and clear insights while at the same time stirring us to look at the world and wonder as St. Francis did; 'Lord, what would you have me do?'"

As we entered the season of Lent, the planning team was once again considering themes and discussions for a second four-part series beginning

on Thursday, February 18. The running theme of this series is "Walking Together to the Mountain." Again, although the evenings will continue to be virtual, the idea is to create a space to share reflections and images to help each other move forward with clearer minds and open hearts.

"From the moment we enter the sessions together, there is a sense of camaraderie and shared desire for growth," shared Lilly Whelan, SBU 2014, and member of the young alumni planning team. "The spirit of the Mountain flows through our evenings, with vulnerability and honesty through sharing and in moments of quiet. Each time I hear the familiar Psalm 'Be still and know that I am God,' I am transported back to the Chapel and know that I am home."

Ultimately, the group foresees a time when we can all come together physically and share moments, insights, and meals at Mt. Irenaeus. While we are eager for this eventuality, the group plans to continue the evening series through a virtual platform in the coming months and years.

~ Chris Novak



Well, there's certainly no doubt that the year 2020 will be one not soon forgotten. Our memory of that unbelievable year will, in most cases, take only the mention of one word, name or phrase to bring unwelcomed thoughts and emotions raging back to our minds: COVID-19, social distancing, isolation, facemasks, election, statues, George Floyd... insurrection. It was a year of challenge, tragedy and loss all around the world. It is clear that the deep divide that has been growing in our nation for more than 350 years has ravaged and left us feeling uncertain about our safety, sorrow for our Country, concern for our bodies and lives and distant from our families and friends. We are also distrusting of our leaders and lacking a basic notion of trust for what we believe about our collective past and the future. In a deep reservoir of pain and frustration we ask ourselves daily, "What can we do?"

As a Mountain community, we know that our strength is found in faith, connection and reflection. With that as a base, a small diverse group of us have chosen to gather online in the last few months to form a Racial Injustice Discussion Group. Called together by Fr. Dan Riley and Bona's alum, Luke Brown, we have been meeting to engage each other in "courageous dialogue and conversation," taking time to listen, share openly and thoughtfully with each other on a journey towards equity and understanding. The effort is young, but we feel that we are gaining ground. We do not meet claiming to have answers that will resolve these longstanding national issues of race, oppression and hate. But, in the style of the Mountain, we are committing ourselves to walking together into a new sense of honesty and intention; using our faith to navigate the paths that might open hearts and minds to new ways of being love in the world.

If this journey sounds like something that resonates with you, contact Michelle in the Mountain office (mmarc@sbu.edu or 716-375-2096).

Our nation and our world needs people who seek justice and who are ready to step up in faith. As Dr. Cornel West says. "Justice is what love looks like in public." Think about joining us on the journey.

~ Reggie Harris



Soon our garden will be planted and bearing food for ourselves and guests.

"There is a Light" is a song many of us hear and can quickly connect with an experience or memory at the Mountain. In a year filled with darkness throughout our world, the invitation to recognize that, indeed, there is a light in our world has been a welcomed message. The Mountain, Fr Dan, and a team of "young" alumni have shined that light over the past few months through a series of Mountain style virtual evenings on zoom to gather and build community, centered around Scripture, stillness, prayer, and reflection.

This very literal experience of "Mountain in Your Home" has connected alumni and friends across the past 15 years from Buffalo and West Clarksville to Charlotte, Chicago, California, and everywhere in between. It has brought some who were highly involved with the Mountain as students and others who have only been to the Mountain a few times, each seeking light for their "bona ventura."

If this sounds like something you are interested in, all are welcome! Find us on Facebook, in our new group called "Young Adults for the Mountain" or coming soon, on the Mountain website.

~ Ian McBride

When I was a student at Bonaventure during the '80s, I never imagined that I would be talking on the phone with Fr. Dan Riley while he was driving to Buffalo. But thanks to technology, that's exactly what happened on the Friday afternoon before the virtual '80s weekend. Marian "Missy" Roohan, '84 and I were preparing for the virtual "Memories, Prayer & Thanksgiving," and we wanted to discuss our readings with Fr. Dan. In the background, we could hear Google Maps telling Fr. Dan when he would need to turn right, and that prompted us to debate the merits of Waze over Google Maps.

And, yet, despite (or maybe because of) technology, we all felt a deep connection with each other as we discussed the upcoming '80s weekend, talked about what we have been doing this last isolating year, and remembered our times at Bona's and our mutual friend Harry Monaco, ofm, '85.

During this past year, technology (mostly Zoom) has allowed me to feel connected to friends and family through weekly happy hours, monthly dinners and holiday and birthday celebrations. And even though I often feel like I have Zoom fatigue, I could not imagine what this past year would be like without technology. Virtual '80s weekend certainly was not anything like the real thing, but it still allowed us to come together, to pray, to laugh and to support each other and the incredible Bonnies Men's Basketball team. I look forward to gathering in person but, for now, I am thankful we can gather around the video screen and smartphone.

If you would be interested in being a part of these virtual gatherings, please let us know at: mmarc@sbu.edu.

~ Lisa Rabasca Roepe '85



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HOLY WEEK PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES

April 1 - Holy Thursday 8pm

Mass of the Lord's Supper

April 2 - Good Friday 3pm

Liturgy of the Lord's Passion

April 3 - Holy Saturday 8pm

Easter Vigil

April 4 - Easter Sunday 11am

Easter Mass



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

MT. IRENAEUS ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

While the Mountain remains quiet, the Mission continues to thrive!

Due to the pandemic, the Mountain has remained closed to the students of St. Bonaventure and other college campuses, yet Mountain life seems to be more active than ever! A major part of this is because the resident community has embraced technology to share the Gospel message. They have done this by hosting virtual "Mountain in the Home" events and Livestreaming prayer gatherings from Holy Peace Chapel and the House of Peace.

As the costs to operate the Mountain are mostly fixed, our expenses have remained at similar levels from past years even though we have had significantly fewer guests. Because of this, your support of our Mountain Fund remains the most important way you can help us cover the \$600,000 it takes to bring our Mission to life. We are so appreciative for the outpouring of gifts we have received so far during this challenging time. Friends have stepped forward to support the Mountain Fund through a matching gift challenge where any new gifts of \$1,000 or more will be matched. This has been well received, yet there are still funds potentially available to match gifts at this level or higher. Would you consider helping us utilize those funds?

Monthly Giving: More and more friends are signing up for our monthly giving program which allows for smaller monthly gifts to make a larger impact. If you would like more information about this method of support, please contact Michelle at mmarc@sbu.edu/716-375-2096.

Once again, we thank you!

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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.

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING



Daniel A. Hurley ofm
Legacy Society

Contact Mary Schlosser at
mschlosser@sbu.edu