

Mt. Irenaeus Mission Statement

**The mission of Mt. Irenaeus is to join with Jesus Christ in “making all things new!”
(Revelation 21:5)**

Rooted in the (Catholic) Franciscan tradition, the Mt. Irenaeus community is committed to simple, joyful, healing communion with God and all creation through contemplation and the communal experience of God’s justice, love and peace in contemporary everyday life. Life at Mt. Irenaeus is centered on attending to what is primary: presence to God, others, one’s self, and the earth. All who participate in the mission of the Mountain join with Jesus in making all things new by creating and nourishing a community that transcends a particular place, opening to all peoples, ages and cultures.

Points to consider:

- Catholic and Franciscan
- Community
- Simple, joyful, healing
- Communion with God and All Creation
- Contemplation
- Communal Experience of God’s justice, love and peace in contemporary everyday life
- Attending to what is primary
 - Presence to God
 - Others
 - One’s Self
 - The Earth

- Participative
- Join with Jesus Christ to make all things new by creating and nourishing a community
- This Community transcends a particular place
- Community is open to all peoples, ages and cultures

Mt. Irenaeus Vision Statement

We welcome you on our journey, we who find ourselves blessed to claim the mission of Mt. Irenaeus. We believe that we are one with all peoples, cultures and indeed all creation in the ancient longing to find and to live in peace. The peace we seek is healing and lasting and “makes all things new again”. St. Paul writes of “all creation groaning” for, and St. Bonaventure speaks of “panting after” this peace, the peace that is Jesus Christ. *St. Francis and St. Bonaventure sought mountains, as we have, as a place of rest and encounter when they felt lost or estranged within themselves, the Church, the world.* We too have experienced the many things within us and without us that draw us away and lead us to doubt and division. We choose, then, to seek to understand and serve those who still experience alienation, hurt or are estranged and “find life burdensome”.

Points to Consider:

- This is a journey
- Be one with all peoples, cultures and all creation
- Finding and Living in a lasting and healing peace is an ancient longing
- This peace “makes all things new”
- Jesus, Francis and Bonaventure all sought Mountains as places to rest and encounter
- Especially when lost, estranged or things lead us to doubt and division
- We seek to understand and serve those who experience alienation

Holy places are part of all spiritual traditions. By the late 1970’s it was apparent to a few of us on the SBU campus that “a place” was needed “to draw aside and rest awhile”, to come to see things in a new way in order to return again to college life and the living of each day. The experience of Campus Ministry at St. Bonaventure University, the life of its students, faculty and others, the alienation, pain and darkness of life seemed to ask us to find a place of hope and new life.

Points to Consider:

- All Spiritual Traditions seek holy places
- Holy Places are needed for rest and to help find a place of hope and new life

We wanted a place, but more than that, a community founded in the spirit of prayer and hospitality. After years of consideration and gaining friends to proceed, we found this secluded and wooded hilltop we now call Mt. Irenaeus, the Mountain. **We believe that we are in the tradition of all other holy places that help persons recognize the holiness of their own lives and indeed the holiness of the world that has come forth from a loving God.** We have established this place and community in the Franciscan tradition of love for the Incarnation, wishing to offer prayerful hospitality to others according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Named Mt. Irenaeus, or the Mountain, its very name means “peace”, “peaceful”, “Peacemaker”.**

Points to Consider:

- A community founded in the spirit of prayer and hospitality is also needed at the Holy Place

- We are in the tradition of all holy places to help people recognize the holiness in themselves and the world that has come forth from a living God
- Franciscans have a special love for the Incarnation
- Mt. Irenaeus means “peace”, “peaceful”, Peacemaker.”

The practical details of our daily living - work, prayer, solitude, community - lend to us and lead us to an experience of life upon which we reflect. This “daily bread” of our life nourishes us for the life of justice, love and peace here and elsewhere. Living each day in a “down to earth” fashion, we find that we have the gift of coming to “see” a God who loves us far more than we love ourselves. This Presence is at the very heart of the healing we experience in Jesus Christ and wish to make it known. We believe that all peoples and cultures reflect this longing and, often, this understanding. **All of this, our daily living, lifts us to gratitude and gladness. It calls us to “be attentive” to the one thing that matters: a life centered in God and in joyful, living service to others.**

Points to Consider:

- We reflect on the experience of the practical details of daily living
- This nourishes us for a life of justice, love and peace here and elsewhere
- We see a God who loves us far more than we can love ourselves
- We want to make this “known”
- It calls us to “be attentive”

Ours is a life founded in the sapiential tradition, finding experience as a most profound way to knowledge, i.e., “doing” leads us to “knowing”. Thomas Merton, in his essay, Learning to Live, says “...whatever you do, every act, however small, can teach you everything - provided you see whom it is that is acting.” And so, with St. Francis, we find rising within us the great contemplative prayer, “**God, who are You, and who am I?**” This question unfolds in multi-faceted ways each day, leading us to believe that God is present and active in our very midst.

Points to Consider:

- We are a wisdom or sapiential tradition
- Experience leads to knowledge and doing leads to knowing

This life helps us to see that all life is educative; all life leads us to the knowledge and love of God and each other if we have the heart to see. This approach to knowledge has always had a special place in the Franciscan tradition. Thus, we know we have a service to offer to St. Bonaventure University and other colleges, local churches, individuals and groups.

Points to Consider:

- All life is educative
- This approach to knowledge has always had a special place in the Franciscan tradition
- Sharing this approach is a service we can offer

We find, then, an education for life here on the Mountain so that we might live more fully elsewhere with others. We wish to care for all creation, attending to those who are not at home, who are alienated and marginalized. We seek ways of pursuing justice, of forming “family life”; we seek

ways of praying, of celebrating and of ministering God's presence to others. We are finding new, as well as old, ways of learning and we wish to pass them on to students, young and old.

Points to Consider:

- We seek this education on the Mountain so that we might live more fully elsewhere
- Attend to those who are not at home, alienated or marginalized
- Forming a Family Life is an important part of our approach

Jesus models a way of servant leadership that we seek to follow and reflect upon. We find many concrete examples of this model in the lives of Francis and Clare as well, and certainly throughout the Gospel. **The simple practices of creating and maintaining the Mountain and its everyday life, as mentioned above, are these “places” of learning where we seek and come to know this God who heals us all and who “makes all things new again”.** “Our home” here is also the land and “family” is all of the creatures with whom we share this Holy Place. *This larger Gospel meaning of “home” and “family” teaches us to live well with others elsewhere in the world.* As we find ourselves called to care for the land, we are humbled by and grateful for its care for us.

Points to Consider:

- Jesus is our model for servant leadership
- We reflect on the larger Gospel meaning of home and family to live with others elsewhere in the world
- As we care for the land we are humbled by and grateful for its care for us

Silence and the simple activity of keeping a home, working and living on the land with its creatures is instructive in itself. The rest of creation is both companion and mentor to us. We find our contemplative life enriched by word and sacrament, as well as by community and solitude, by time in the woods, conversation and restful quiet.

Points to Consider:

- We find instruction in silence, keeping a home, working on the land with its creatures
- Contemplative life is enriched by
 - Word and sacrament
 - Community and Solitude
 - Time in the woods
 - Conversatio
 - Restful Quiet

We are committed to keeping a comparatively small community of guests and core community in order to continue a simpler life in which guests help in the preparation of meals, the cleaning, gardening, etc. We promote a more intimate environment, without television or radio so that we are not preoccupied or dominated by the commercial media. Our way of living encourages storytelling, enriches conversation, and the ability for relationships grows naturally.

Points to Consider

- Keeping a small community and number of guests promotes:
 - Intimacy

- *Watching out for things that affect our ability to be present to each other, guests, God and the land such as screens and media*
- Participation/ belonging
- Conversation and relationships

We have found it a daily practice not to be “task oriented” or “task driven”; we wish to allow life to speak to us rather than to become over-programmed or over-planned. We find that relative smallness and informality enhances our spontaneity, calling us to attentiveness.

Points to Consider

- The daily practice of not being task orientated or task driven promotes:
 - Life’s ability to speak to us
 - Spontaneity
 - Attentiveness

We who live here and participate in the Mountain seek to open our circle, our common life, for it is our conviction that, as St. Bonaventure says, “God is like a circle or a sphere” who is centered in each one of us and who extends life well beyond us. Our life of prayer is evangelical because we have found that Mt. Irenaeus is a new “seed bed” for church vocations. Many come to confirm and renew their lives of ministry or they begin to discover and to experience affirmation of their gifts for ministry. Further, we wish to continue the mentoring that happens naturally each day through prayer, work and community.

Points to Consider:

- We open our circle to imitate God’s Expansiveness
- Our life is evangelical because it helps renew and confirm people’s lives in ministry
- Mentoring is very important

We firmly trust in the goodness of humanity and we relish the ancient words of St. Irenaeus “that the glory of God indeed is a human person or ‘humankind’ fully alive!” We believe that all of creation is called to its fullness in Jesus Christ. We, therefore, pursue a journey with others, believing the “perfect love casts out all fear” and leads us all on our journey into God’s reign of light; “of justice, love and peace”.

Points to Consider:

- Our theology and view of humanity is very positive and hopeful
- We work with God so we and others can come to fullness in Jesus Christ
- Love is core
- Love casts out fear