

**Along our difficult path,
there are those
who will walk with us.**

Easter in February?

A quiet swirl of very large snowflakes greeted us as we stepped off the porch of the Mountain's first home, an old rectory. We made our way on a night walk up a country road without flashlights in the midst of a February snowfall! The snow circled our heads and surrounded us, landing on our eyelashes and shoulders we were laughing at how we each appeared, all 16 of us. Enjoying a deep sense of Easter freedom in the midst of winter. We were enjoying new life that comes with a reconciliation service. **This was 1972 and our second "Weekend Away:"** sixteen or so undergrads, another friar and a Josephite Sister were away for an opportunity to "begin anew."

Everything speaks to us in its own voice. That night still speaks to me of the conjoining of the fresh energy of young people enlivened by the Sacrament that grows from the Easter mystery gives us the strength to walk up a hill in the dark of night with the bright promise of renewed lives. Easter with all its hope blossomed, it truly did, in the cold of a February night – and I began to hope for a place that we would someday call "the Mountain."

This year, at Easter time, with a cold winter behind us, why would I ever remember a night walk in the snow that many years ago? It was from a small village barely known to many, yet its name is Rexville, the



Our fall Women's Overnight was organized by a great group of Bona students and University Minister, Amanda Naujoks.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

Visit Mt. Irenaeus online at www.mountainonline.org or email us at mount.irenaeus@gmail.com



"village of the king" or "the kingdom!" We climbed a hill then, as we often do now, looking for the peace of a place on earth, but more than that, a human community that through finding life somewhere, would also find a deeper love for our Sister, Mother Earth and all creation. Peace was all around us that night and it is too at the Mountain as we continue to do night walks and often find these times are more than magical, truly mystical and miraculous even if we get lost and need to find our way again. Often, over time, we have helped each other come through darkness, come around a bend, find our way back to the Chapel or down to the house.

Once again, and now in a new and graced way, we are discovering our path forward by remembering some of the earliest times of our journey to "climb a mountain" to find and to "grow" Mt. Irenaeus.

Along with Clare and his earlier followers we understand the need for "the food of fellowship" as well as the food of the table. Our habit is to go to the marketplace, but to return to and welcome others to the family that is Mt. Irenaeus.

After looking for land for a number of years in August of 1984, I was brought to the hilltop we now call the Mountain. The owner, **Al Ernst**, welcomed me to walk by myself up the road full of what we call weeds; the wild perennials of New England asters, grasses and goldenrod galore standing upright in the August sun with a chorus of bugs and bees around them to greet me. It was as if all the earth, which had sprouted these plants was saying, "Welcome, this is now your home, bring others here." I often tell that story and say I felt "intoxicated." My eyes filled with tears and it was what we would now call an "Easter moment." Christ's own Passover for us seemed to be manifest in this country hillside that was in its own recovery from misuse and darker times. **Cyprian Consiglio's** song, **"There is a Light"** was not yet our anthem and yet the land, the air and all of the



Some of our student athletes show their Bona pride with the SBU Wolf hand signal!

vegetation sang back to me St. Francis's own Cantic.

St. Francis, in his "Cantic of the Creatures," prays, "Praised be You, my Lord, through brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene and every kind of weather, through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures."

Our Mountain Fundamentals and our Vision Statement tell us that "We believe that we are in the tradition of other holy places that help persons recognize the holiness of their own lives and the holiness of the world that has come forth from a loving God. This place and community has been established 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."

This sense of relationship with the earth and all creation as healing places for all of us, has been true for us since the beginning of our retreat experiences in 1972, onto the finding of the land in 1984 and the growth of the Mountain through today. We speak of it as our "living relationship with the land and its inhabitants," plant and animal. We know that in all of this is a healing place, as many indigenous peoples discovered, and as Jesus Christ himself shows us as he often withdraws to "deserted places" for solitude and for his conversations with his Father. Our Pope Francis, with his great hope for the earth and all its peoples, points to this sacred relationship of all creatures with their Creator in the Christ who has risen for us in the Easter Mystery.

This new time, this spring time we are in, arises often from colder times and darker times, but even through these we have found "there is a light."

Along with snowflakes, there are presences of other persons. Along with difficult paths, there are those who will walk with us. Along with the challenges the earth has in many places, there is our community here on the Mountain that in joy and humility, feels conjoined with both the healing power of the earth, the Sacrament who is Christ and the desire you and I might have to be part of all of this healing.

There is an ancient longing we hear echoed from many peoples and in other languages. Here, it brings us to reconciliation and peace and here it offers us healing peace; Christ's Easter peace empowering us to go among others as a "Hallelujah people" with Easter as our song!

Peace!
Augustine

Moving Forward: Bringing Our Strategic Plan To Life

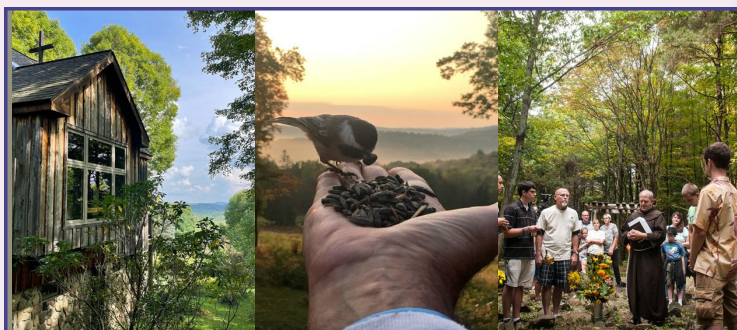
I just read through what I wrote in this space four months ago out of the energy and excitement of our Strategic Plan brainstorming weekend and finalizing a draft of the plan. It was a wonderful gathering that has led us to a clear path of action. We have organized into small teams to help us meet each of six objectives championed by the Board of Trustees and supported by the friars, myself and others. It is a wonderfully ambitious plan and all areas are vital for the flourishing of the Mountain. As we move forward in our work, I will try to highlight some of the areas where we are making progress in our objectives.

One such area that has seen wonderful activity is reaching out to the Worldwide Franciscan leadership about developing life and formation. In parallel to our own work being done, the U.S. Franciscans have been organizing, for several years now, preparing to create a larger US Province from 6 regional Provinces. As part of this process they have been meeting in smaller work groups with the Mountain brothers being actively involved in the Ite Nuntiate ("Go and Tell") group. They have been meeting via Zoom and gathered at the Mountain this past January. They came from as far as Arizona and via Zoom from Ireland and Costa Rica, to speak about the life they are called to live as Franciscans. It was a significant gathering that provided the opportunity for friars who have never gathered at the Mountain to be part of the experience, raising awareness of what we have to offer to other friars, and Franciscans of all walks of life.

We also plan to attend the Franciscan Federation's annual gathering in Pittsburgh this June. This brings together professed sisters and brothers and lay women and men who are committed to the Franciscan life. We look to collaborate with those seeking a greater experience of Franciscan contemplation. As we cultivate old and new relationships we will invite these brothers and sisters to experience this life for themselves.

These significant actions are just an example of the outreach we think is critical to build rich relationships and to raise awareness of what the Mountain has to offer to the larger world. This objective and all others are tied to the desire of continuing our Mission based way of life and ministry for generations to come. If you are interested in becoming involved in this exciting work, please reach out to any of us at the Mountain!

~ Mike Fenn



MT. IRENAEUS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



Learn more at www.mountainonline.org

#1: Reach Out to Worldwide and U.S. Franciscan Leadership About Developing Life and Formation at the Mountain

#2: Seek Others and Develop a Diverse Community at the Mountain

#3: Ensure Co-Ministry With St. Bonaventure Helps Foster a Transformational Student Experience

#4: Expand the Footprint of the Mountain Beyond the Mountain

#5: Design and Develop a Physical Master Plan to Visualize the Future of the Mountain

#6: Create a Comprehensive Advancement Plan

MT. IRENAEUS
FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY



Friars from across the U.S. gathered at Mt. Irenaeus to help dream of our common future together.

STAYING AT MT. IRENAEUS IN THIS TIME OF COVID

We continuously monitor New York State recommended COVID guidelines. Before coming for a visit, please review our latest practices at www.mountainonline.org.



BACK TO THE FUTURE!

Our Common Ground
While Making All Things New!!

Two weekend retreats for Mountain leadership
June 24-26, 2022 and July 22-24, 2022

We are always renewing the Mountain's life and we are fulfilling new strategic plans and we want to renew ourselves, taking a break from our lives, indeed from the work of planning, to enter again into the rich relationships of the Mountain and its founding mission.

We welcome members of our Council for Spirit, our Conveners, members of the Branches, Sojourners and participants of our Young Alumni Group, as well as the members of our Board of Trustees, to two weekends this summer.

Please register soon, saving a place for yourself so we can offer you more information as the theme and the dynamic of the weekend will be further described.

*Again, the dates of these weekends are
June 24-26, 2022 and July 22-24, 2022.*

For any questions please feel free to contact our office at 716-375-2096 or mmarc@sbu.edu and we will reach back to you.

Several years ago a friar in Boston told me a story. He was greeting people after Mass on an Easter morning and a man stopped by to talk. The man said, "When I was younger, Christmas meant more to me than Easter. Now, as I am growing older and know more and more people 'on the other side,' Easter is becoming more important to me."

Several years ago, **Fr. Harry Monaco, ofm**, a friar who is himself now "on the other side," showed me a patch of wild leeks in the Mountain's back woods and how to harvest and clean them. I usually take a hike to the spot each Easter time to harvest some of these leeks for potato leek soup. The soil is sometimes still frosty, but the leeks are pushing out of their dark resting place to start a new cycle of life.

Living as we do at Mt. Irenaeus, so close to God's creation, it is easy to experience the mystery of Easter and the resurrection. Easter at Mt. Irenaeus comes after what is usually a hard winter. Even when Easter falls in mid-April, there can still be snow on the ground and it is easy to imagine that the world will always be muddy and chilly. Spring does eventually come, the light green haze showing up on the trees, the grass that turns ridiculously green, bright dandelions that give the happy and hungry bees their first fresh pollen and nectar of the year. Being this close to Spring, it's not hard to believe in the Resurrection.

It's hard **not** to believe in the Resurrection.

~ Br. Kevin

SUMMER EVENINGS OF RE-CREATION AT MT. IRENAEUS

This summer's Evenings of Re-Creation will be held rain or shine! We will begin with Evening Prayer in the Chapel followed by time on the land and supper. At this time we plan on having our traditional dish-to-pass meal, but this may change due to any COVID restrictions. After supper, join us in the Chapel for Mass. The evening concludes around 9:00 p.m.

Our Evenings of Re-Creation
will take place on:

Wednesday Evenings

June 29th — July 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th

Our schedule is as follows:

- 5:15 pm Meet in the Chapel for Evening Prayer followed by quiet time on the land
- 6:30 pm Supper
- 7:30 pm Mass in the Chapel
- 9:00 pm End of program and departure from the Mountain.

For information on our COVID protocols, visit us at www.mountainonline.org



HOLY WEEK

- and -

EASTER SERVICES

Holy Thursday

April 14, 2022

6:30 pm

Dish to pass supper

8:00 pm

Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday

April 15, 2022

3:00 pm

Liturgy of the Passion –
followed by silence
on the land

Holy Saturday

April 16, 2022

8:00 pm

Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday

April 17, 2022

11:00 am

Easter Sunday Mass –
followed by dish
to pass brunch



Here are a few quotes Kathleen Moffat has offered us as she was asked the question, "What do you believe are the gifts of the Mountain?" (Part 1 of 2)

Celebrating the Mountain

I don't know who God is exactly

But I'll tell you this.

I was sitting in the river named Clarion, on a water splashed stone
and all afternoon I listened to voices of the river talking.

Whenever the water struck a stone it has something to say,
And the water itself, and even the mosses trailing under the water.
And slowly, very slowly, it became clear to me what they were saying.

Said the river: **I am part of holiness.**

And I, too, said the stone. And I too, whispered the moss beneath the water.

Mary Oliver. DEVOTIONS, p.86 (Penguin Press, NY 2017)

Within our own Franciscan legacy, Eric Doyle, beloved Friar of Canterbury, who taught many summers in St. Bonaventure's Sacred Science Program, echoes Mary Oliver, writing: "Francis responded to the word spoken to him by creatures with a love and a reverence which distinguished him as one of the most mature and responsible beings ever to have lived." And then there is the "Canticle of The Sun!"

And THIS is the gift of the Mountain.



A beautifully, haunting hymn, "Before We Speak" by Kathleen Deignan, CND reminds us:

Before we speak, you've **already heard us**, you are the only one, our God.
Before we go to you, you're **already near us, in us and above us**, eternal and unseen.

You live in us, you, the only one, our God.

We love you, for you dare to be with us here...

Show to us, God, if only for this time, that what we desire can really come true ...

Peace upon Earth, justice be done, fear be allayed, hunger appeased.

Bread to be broken, **joy to be shared, this is our hope for now and always.**

Borne by Grace: Songs of Praise and Contemplation. Schola Ministries, Inc 1998

And THIS is the gift of the Mountain.



The Jesuit author, Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboys Industry, a gang-intervention program in Los Angeles, tells us in his astonishing book, **Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion**, a book about universal kinship simply highlighting charity and goodness wherever they are found:

God created us – because God thought we'd enjoy it... In the utter simplicity of breathing, we find how naturally inclined we are to **delight and to stay dedicated to gladness**. We bask in God's unalloyed joy, and then we let loose with that same joy **in whoever is in front of us**. Then we exhale to breathe into the world this same spirit of delight, confident that this is God's **only** agenda.

And THIS is the gift of the Mountain.



Fr. Jud Weiksar feeds our hungry little chickadees on the porch.



Box 100 West Clarksville, NY 14786
Tel. (585) 973-2470
Office (716) 375-2096

Visit us online:

www.mountainonline.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SHARON, PA
PERMIT #50



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

MT. IRENAEUS ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

Your Generous Gifts Continue to Grow our Mountain Ministry

With the coming of Spring, we anticipate the rebirth of the world around us. Spring adds new life and our hearts become lighter in anticipation of the earth's reawakening. Just as God's gifts of nature bloom and grow all around us, your continued support and generosity enable our ministry to grow and bring the Mountain message and experience to so many people's lives. Your gifts make a real difference.

Auction and Giving Tuesday Break Records!

This fall, more than \$35,000 was raised in our online **Mountain Auction**. Our heartfelt thanks to those who donated and bid on items, helped spread the word about our event and to our dedicated committee co-chaired by **Karen Karaszewski** and **Kim Robinson**. We are looking forward to the excitement of next year's auction!

Your kindness continued in November with online Giving Tuesday. With our matching gifts, more than \$50,000 was raised. A special thank you to **Jacqui Bollinger, Mike Camoin** and **Greg Licamele** for their support through this project.

Mountain Fund- Still Time to Donate!

We are grateful for donations received to our 2021-2022 Mountain Fund which continues until May 31, the end of our fiscal year. Thank you to all who have donated so far and know you can still donate online at www.mountainonline.org. The Mountain Fund remains the most important way you can help us raise the needed dollars to support our \$600,000 annual operating budget and bring the Mountain mission to life. Special thanks to **Marv Stocker** for donating his time and talent to help lead our Mountain Fund team and to all our dedicated Phonathon volunteers.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the Mountain, a Mountain-on-the-Road experience, and online--- sharing in our mission of joining with ***"Jesus Christ to make all things new."***

With gratitude, we thank you. Pax et Bonum,

Jackie Lanzillo
Volunteer Mountain Development
Chairperson & Board Member
jlanzillo@rochester.rr.com

Michael Fenn
Executive Director
mfenn@sbu.edu
716-375-2613

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