

Mike Fenn's Reflection on Catholic Volunteer Network Annual Conference Nov 14-17, 2022



As part of our strategic initiative to "Seek others and develop a diverse community at the Mountain, I attended the Catholic Volunteer Network's (CVN) annual conference that happened to be in sunny Orlando just before we got hit with a huge storm back home!

For some background, CVN provides a very useful website for those interested in Christian faith-based experiences of community and ministry across the globe. The search engine allows one to filter for location, types of ministries, length of time, and many other attributes. It has been useful to Mt. Irenaeus to promote our Mountain Companion Ministry. Over the past few summers we have had two young adults join us for nine weeks as summer companions, the posting for which they found through CVN. Once a year CVN brings us together as well for their annual conference.

The few days included seminars to help support our programs, and keynote speakers that inspired us with the incredible work being done across the country. The greatest gift of these days for me was the ability to network with other program directors - some I already knew, but many I had not! There are a small group of Franciscan programs that are part of the Franciscan Service Network that were able to gather and speak about ways we can promote ourselves to those who are seeking a ministry and community in the way of Francis and Clare.

What also came of this time, is the growing importance of community for those who are seeking such programs. For many, the community being experienced is as important as the work being accomplished. This is very much in line with what we are experiencing at the Mountain. When I am asked what the Mountain is, I used to say, well it's kind of a retreat center. Now I always tell folks it's a Franciscan Intentional Community.

The Mountain's future is tied to us continuing to attend such conferences and helping raise awareness of the Mountain to others because we know what a gift the Mountain is for so many, but so many more don't know it exists. Partners like the Catholic Volunteer Network help ensure more people find out about the Mountain.



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