

And God gave me brothers... and sisters.



The Irish have the expression “a thousand welcomes.” Our roots are deep in whatever our ethnicity or race, they lead us to a sense of gratitude for those who lived before us and with us. We have and will have in a few months, “a thousand thank yous” with sad goodbyes. **Michael Fenn**, with the support of his wife, **Julie**, and family, engaged the Mountain and chose to join us in the essential tasks and responsibilities as Executive Director over seven years ago. Working together as best we could, and shaping what was the first full-time executive’s position along with our other integrated leadership responsibilities we continue to work on, we have found challenges, but also the richness and goodness of Michael’s personal generosity to bringing us to now. This is a new time for all of us with our mission alive and Mike, who has helped to bring it to life so we might continue to pass it on.

We have had others over the years who helped us with our practical responsibilities, “the Mountains business,” and other aspects of our leadership with the University and others. When we welcomed Mike and began the journey of attempting a new integration of leadership with many, especially Kevin and me, we entered also into a difficult time by way of health and politics.

I am deeply grateful for Mike’s patience and forbearance through these times with the experience of COVID, etc. within the Mountain and within St. Bonaventure University, who we primarily serve. Mike’s optimism and hard work has strengthened us a great deal, as we continue to search out and understand what it means for all of us to serve Mt. Irenaeus.

As still a quite young man, he really has been a pioneer for the Mountain in ways that will last well beyond his time here. I thank you Mike, and all your family for giving your life to us so liberally and bless you as you journey.



A Mountain in Your Home photo from 2011 – friends of the Mountain gathered in Florida at the home of Mike and Kim Spallone for a weekend of prayer and companionship.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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



Our theme that rose up for this particular newsletter is so fitting for the time we are in: *"And God gave me brothers and sisters."* It rose up a while ago and is especially instructive of this time in the world at large and the little "world" we call Mt. Irenaeus, which spreads out from this hilltop home to Bona's and beyond.

In our last newsletter, I spoke of relationships. "All our relations" over the years; the women and men near and far, now in other countries and all around the world, who have been part of our life and continue to be, in one way or another, "living stones" with us to build up a new church. The Mountain has always been, and is, a unique vocation founded in the Spirit and to be open to be formed by the Spirit, shaped as Christ's body in this "new time."

"Many members, though we are ..." A lot of different folks, young and old, are Christ's body as we consider ourselves Christians, though many who join us are of other faiths or disposed differently towards God and religion. We have welcomed them and continue to do so in the one common effort to be sisters and brothers, because, as Francis noted, God gives us the life and goodness of one another. Many have helped fill out and form the Mountain as God's own expression of "joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new," as our Mission Statement states.

Some of us here still travel out to other circles of "living stones". We lend the strength to new ecclesial designs, groups who are temporarily in a place, but finding their way with one another.

With **Chris Fien** as mentor/collaborator, **Sandy** and **Bill Wynne** welcomed, this fall, into their home, a group of over 30 people in the Rochester area who wanted to gather and share prayer and reflection in God's presence and break bread with one another.

Kate Nolan Clemens was a pioneer in the "Mountain on the Road" and "Mountain in Your Home" experiences before we gave them those names. **Kate, Marla Rapini, Franey Donovan**, as well as **Tim** and **Kim Brown** – who have welcomed us before - hosted us in Connecticut in Tim and Kim's home. We joined them on a Friday evening and shared some prayer and conversation as well as a meal before we went on to the Boston area where **Meg** and **Ryan Camire** welcomed us in. Meg Lush Camire is part of a team in the Boston/New England area, along with **Kathy Colucci, Diane Kuzia Hills** and **Paul Kline**. They welcomed a group from the Boston area in for an afternoon of reflection, celebrated the weekend Eucharist and an informal meal together. Shaped and reshaped, these simple times in homes and other places are tailored to be what



Fr. Dan and Grant Scott have a quiet evening at the Mountain, a time to share stories.



Fr. Dan and Erin Cikatelli take some time to catch up during his visit to California.

we do here at the Mountain with God's blessing in various modalities of our ministry. All who join us each time enjoy finding healing and growing spirituality as family, as God's children together.

We find that God has "given us brothers and sisters," as Francis tells us, not only to befriend them, but also to enter into life ever more deeply through prayer and reflection and the "breaking of the bread." All of this gives us the strength and courage to go into the world as women and men to be "bearers of peace" in a very troubled time. We all are nourished by the Bread of Life and fellowship to extend ourselves when others seem to hold back for whatever has come into their life. Together we seek a new way "of life" and risk, as followers of Francis and Clare, "joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new."

Many have tired of many institutions, religion, political, business, etc. as the world around us seems more self-concerned than concerned about others and their needs. The Mountain tries to be transformed and renewed in the desire to "travel light in the world" and bear Good News generously of God's own love by our service here and now.

This is not easy. We see turmoil among Jesus's disciples and Francis's burden of his early brotherhood trying to understand, perceive, then follow a call that Francis felt he was given and they

were finding challenging together.

We find God has graced us with sisters and brothers, not for tasks only, but for the life we are bringing to the community of God's family. Our work will flow from what we are pursuing with one another for the reign of God here and throughout the world.

It seems more compelling as we change and grow the new gift of "the other" who will enter with us to seek, find and offer life and peace. We continue to invite the others to be "Christ's body now" with their own gifts and talents. We find celebration even in the midst of hard work and grace, even when we might be tired and uncertain. The gift of relationship and reconciliation that Francis celebrates in his Cantic of the Creatures was one he

depended upon, not only for the efforts of ministry, but also for life itself, his life in God.

Pray that we continue to work and give this gift that has been "freely given to us," for a world of relationships, yet longing for the

fullness of Christ body, the richness of sisters and brothers who will join with us another "to make all things new!"

Peace!



Friends of the Mountain gather for Sunday Mass in our Chapel.

If you are on our email distribution, you may have seen that I have decided to move on from my role as Executive Director. After commuting from Buffalo since April of 2016, being away from home and my wife, Julie, for up to 4 days a week, it felt time to look for something closer. I am still in the process of looking for what is next professionally, so if you have some ideas, give me a call! There is no specific end date, I have committed to being here through the end of the calendar year, and possibly until the end of the academic year.

The Mountain is and will continue to be one of my favorite places in the world and walking around the property has always brought me a sense of peace. One of the "hazards" of the job is that now, as I walk about the property, my mind can stray to thinking about what we should do for our next projects. As my days in this role are wrapping up, it is fun recognizing what we have been able to accomplish over these last 7 years. From the colorful Living Stones plaques that are placed around the labyrinth recognizing those who have given significantly to the Mountain, to the solar panels in the valley, providing electricity to sustain our life and ministry. Our ability to communicate from the Mountain has improved dramatically, thanks to New York State providing fiber optics all the way up our hill and our acquisition of communications equipment to spread high-speed internet to most of the other buildings.

Our circle has grown in different ways, helping our mission and ministry continue to thrive. We have been so blessed to have Karen Pulaski living among the friars as part of the core community. Martha Kopcienski has joined our wonderful office team, working on a part time basis and living among the community on the days she is working on campus. Finally, we have recently hired Natalie Pronio as a Ministry Coordinator, bringing a greater Mountain pastoral presence to St. Bonaventure's campus and creating other opportunities for gatherings on the Mountain. We have become members of the Franciscan Federation, and helped establish the Franciscan Intentional Community Network (FICN), helping those around the world discover opportunities to live with others who have a Franciscan heart.

As I note the accomplishments above, it is important to say that I did not accomplish any of them, but a collective WE did. Fr. Dan from the earliest days I can remember has always spoken about how the Mountain is a place of collaboration. The future of the Mountain will need to have those who care about it, care for it. I am so blessed to have played the role I have for these past seven plus years.

~ Mike Fenn



Another tasty meal at the Mountain with our friends from the Franciscan Federation.



The Mountain has had a very close relationship with the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany since our very inception. **Sr. Anne Rothmeier, OSF** was one of our most enduring and endearing Mountain "Sisters." Anne died on July 18, 2023 after living 70 years as a devoted member of the Allegany Franciscan Sisters. She was not the type to boast of her accomplishments and activities, but for those of us who knew her, she was an absolutely amazing example of a true Franciscan. Long before the Pope published the document *Laudato Si'* in 2015 she understood the great truth that care for the planet and care for the poor are one in the same.

For 47 years, Anne was a nurse, a healer and advocate for the poor. She ministered in several of her congregation's hospitals and in clinics for farmworker migrants and caring for patients in the comfort of their own home. In 1999, Anne was a founding member of a "community supported agriculture endeavor," which in 2002 became a ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany known as Canticle Farm. Anne served as director of Canticle Farm from 2001-2002. Her great appreciation for nature was apropos as she enjoyed her time at the farm, riding the tractor or tending to the crops and weekend trips to Mt. Irenaeus for Mass, a meal and the company of friends.

None of the friars are quite sure how or when Sr. Anne first became affiliated with the Mountain Community. Our best guess is that she came up for Mass and brunch one Sunday and kept coming back. After brunch, Anne always positioned herself at the pots and pans sink and wonderfully interacted with everyone, students and older folks alike as they scrubbed, rinsed and dried the pots and pans. Fr. Dan Riley remembers how students and Mountain guests felt very at home in her presence. She was genuine and real.

Dan Riley and especially Joe Kotula were part of the early days of Canticle Farm. Its mission was very closely aligned with the Mountain. Anne's relation as a Mountain Sister grew deeper as the years passed. She spent every Holy Week and Easter at the Mountain. Anne was surprised and delighted when she was asked if she could attend one of the Mountain pilgrimages to Rome and Assisi with a mixed crew of friars, secular Franciscans and St. Bonaventure University Students. In many people's minds this was a highpoint of her life as a Mountain Sister. Brothers and sisters on pilgrimage together.

Later in life, Anne's path took another unexpected turn. At the age of 80 she decided it was time to commit her life even closer to God by breaking a chemical dependence and spending time in a sister's rehab community. God transformed once again and brought a new community of beloved friends into her life. She was an inspiration for anyone who would think, "I'm too old to change."

Years ago, I read a passage in the cancer treatment book, "Love, Medicine and Miracles." I may be paraphrasing but here it goes, "If you ever wonder if your mission here on Earth is done, if you are still alive, it isn't" God bless you Anne and keep us in your prayers. Your mission is still not over and I am sure you would not want it any other way.

~ Kevin Kriso, ofm



Members of the Intentional Community Committee from the Franciscan Federation joined us for retreat and discussions.



Members of the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry gather at the Mountain for their spring retreat.

Greetings!

In early June I began my position as part-time Project Facilitator for the Mountain. Typically, I drive to the Mountain and spend two to three days working, staying overnight on site while I am there. My job has many different facets and it has been a new and interesting way for me to serve the Mountain in a community of brothers and sisters.

One aspect that I truly have enjoyed is working more closely with the amazing team that work at the Mountain offices on the SBU campus. Previously, I had known Michelle, Mary and Mike mostly through email. To now work in person with them has been a true joy.

Another joy has been living in community with the friars and participating in their daily life. The rhythm of morning and evening prayer, whether it be recited prayers, Lectio with a Gospel reading, or Mass, has often given me a deep sense of peace and pause. Sharing an evening community meal with guests or students has given me the opportunity to meet many interesting and faith-filled people on different journeys. New friends, brothers and sisters alike, that have come into my life for a time are truly a blessing for me.

~ **Martha Kopcienski**



Spending the summer at Mt. Irenaeus entailed many, many things. I went in to the 9 weeks not knowing what to expect, but came out with an entirely new perspective on life. Between getting to know the brothers, meeting new people, and learning more about myself, I would say that it was an enriching experience. Getting to know the brothers at a much deeper level was by itself a gift, but them showing me their way of life was an absolutely incredible experience. Before this summer, I did not know much about how the brothers lived up at the Mountain, and the four of them did not make much sense in a group. However, after living with the four of them and Max (Wink), I saw that even though they had their differences, they each had their own responsibilities and knew how to live with each other very well.

This summer, I also had the privilege of meeting many incredible people at overnights, retreats, and even weekly Mass. Some groups that were particularly inspiring were the St. Mary's Youth Ministry of Pompton Lakes, NJ, the Orientation Leaders, and both summer retreat weekend groups. The St. Mary's Youth Ministry brought six students from their group to stay at Mt. Irenaeus for 4 days, and each student was devoted, kind and interesting. The Orientation Leaders came for dinner before their first group of freshmen came in to Bona's. The group had a bubbly, carefree vibe at first, but throughout the night, they showed more and more how dedicated they were to being leaders of the incoming class of freshmen. As for the summer retreat weekends, both groups were full of people who immediately became major influences in my life. One person in particular spent one of her summers at the Mountain as well. She influenced me the most as she is now part of a research program at an amazing college and she told me all about how her summer affected her and how much she grew. Each group was packed with love and devotion and I could not have met a better range of people this summer.

In terms of getting to know myself, I believe that this summer was highly important. Spending 9 weeks away from my family and friends in a hermit-supporting space was certainly an experience from which I learned a lot. With so much alone time, I got to really think about things that were important to me and got to "get away" from those that were not. I had the opportunity to spend a ton of time doing things that are important to me, such as hiking, reading, and hearing stories from many different people. Overall, I am incredibly grateful for my time spent at Mt. Irenaeus this summer.

~ **Kylee Leonard**, Summer Companion

I am the youngest of four children, so growing up I never had the experience of a new baby coming home and all of a sudden having a new brother or sister to care for and know. This past November, however, I became an uncle and the birth of my niece finally gave me a moment of a brand new family member to love. Thinking back to my first day as a Summer Companion, the feeling of becoming a part of the community at the Mountain was, funnily enough, not unlike the feeling of meeting my niece for the first time. Both were moments in which I was presented with a person or people I did not know very well and God seemed to be saying, "Here is your family and I want you to love each other."

The Mountain is a place that does a really great job of making everyone feel like brothers and sisters right away. I felt this the first time I visited in January of this year and actually met the brothers and Karen (Pulaski) for the first time. I think people are so quick to feel like family at the Mountain because everyone who comes, even if they have not met before, has a shared love for the land and the peace it brings. However, during my time there, this "magic of the Mountain," as I sometimes call it (and I am sure many others have as well), came most of all from the relationships formed with Kevin, Joe, Dan, Lou, and Kylee (Leonard).

There is true joy that comes from meeting someone at the Mountain and knowing that, in some way, we are already brothers and sisters and, like any relationship, the trust and familiarity that only time can bring deepens that joy. The greatest gifts of my time at the Mountain were the relationships I got to form while there and seeing how they grew as the summer went on. In a similar vein, it was also so heartening to see the relationships that the brothers have with each other. It is so beautiful seeing the care and love between the brothers that have come from decades of life together. It is that love that I think gives life to everything else that happens at the Mountain.

~ **Max Wink**, Summer Companion





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 caring hearts and commitment to the Mountain's mission make a profound difference, and we are truly thankful for your continued support.

Join Us for an Exciting Online Auction Event! Our much-anticipated online auction begins Friday, October 20 and runs until Sunday, October 29. You can link to our auction here: <https://bit.ly/MtAuctionCatalog>
Please share this link with your friends and family. Spreading the word is invaluable to ensure the success of this event!

This year, we have an incredible array of Franciscan-themed items that we cannot wait to share with you such as artwork and photographs by Fr. Dan; Br. Joe's beautiful Tau crosses, handcrafted wooden stable and a one-of-a-kind table and Br. Kevin's canned Mountain goodies. We also have fun gifts such as dinner with St. Bonaventure University President **Jeff Gingerich** and his wife **Betsy**; a Bona Golf Bag; signed sports memorabilia; fun getaways; a Lobster dinner sent to your home; and a Rohrbach's Brewery experience. You will be sure to find special treasures!

Your contributions make a tangible difference and allow us to share our Mountain way of life and ministry every day with thousands of students, visitors and friends. Auction proceeds directly benefit the Mt. Irenaeus capital improvement and operating budget. Last year more than \$35,700 was raised, the most ever in our online auction. Those funds enabled us to purchase essential equipment and other "fund-a-need" items.

As we approach the holiday season, keep an eye out for the **Mountain Marketplace**, where you will find wonderful Christmas gift options. Also, do not forget to mark your calendars for **November 28**, our **Day of Giving**. It is a significant day for us to connect with you, share our message from the Mountain, and raise essential funds for our mission and ministry.

Your support truly embodies the spirit of Mt. Irenaeus. Together, we can continue to make a positive impact on the lives of many.

Peace,
Jackie Lanzillo
Chair, Mountain Development Committee

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