

Mt. Irenaeus - rising from many places and many hearts.

If you look into your heritage, you might find your heroes. St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi are our lifelong teachers. They show us by their lives that we have a clear and hopeful calling, which is powered by God's Word and presence in our world. St. Francis once said, in an exuberant, expansive way toward the end of his life, "Let us begin now for up until now we have done very little!"

Francis was a soldier as a youth and Clare's family was exiled from Assisi during a conflict. Many things emerge from significant times of tension and trial in the world. The Mountain began with students who were struggling with various questions and practices on the Bonaventure campus in the 1960s. After a number of years of taking contemplative days away with groups in other places, we began looking in earnest for property around St. Bonaventure University and its nearby counties. We were encouraged by our advisory group to try a summer experience for what was then simply called, "the Mountain." **Fr. Dan Hurley** said "yes" to my invitation and, with the university's permission and generosity, we moved into Collins Hall on Union Street in Allegany, New York in 1984 for our first 10-week experience of what we then called, "the Mountain in the valley." With day hikes up to Merton's heart and trips over to Allegany State Park, we would pray and sometimes celebrate Masses outdoors with groups of people coming home to share a meal on Union Street.



"Gaze upon" the little bird sitting on St. Francis's head!
This beautiful ceramic piece was given to us by Caro Taylor.

MT. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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



Students from St. Bonaventure, many of them members of our vocation group, spent time each summer living in and creating the experience of Franciscan family life. We gathered Wednesdays in the evening for what became our “Evenings of Re-Creation.” What was just a seed in the beginning, was already sprouting before we ever found our land in Allegany County.

It became clear to us that our mission was to find a place where we might “join with Jesus Christ to make all things new,” by living a day-to-day Franciscan life. St. Francis was an itinerant preacher, a man of solitude and of fraternity who had a contemplative passion for others. He found places to step aside and opportunities, because of that, for others to find deep, practical ways of contemplation with our loving God. **Fr. Alban Maguire**, our Franciscan Provincial at the time, suggested that a simple phrase might be our mission; to create a place for “prayer and peaceful re-Creation”.

The Franciscan women of St. Elizabeth’s Motherhouse in Allegany, who lived in the Ritiro, were especially committed to our journey and helped shepherd this dream. **Sr. Paul Cosmos**, from that community, a practically minded woman, helped us in our planning days and became an early Trustee. She helped us look at details that would make our life comfortable as well as simple.

Giacomo Bini, our Franciscan Minister General a number of years ago, while making a visit to the Americas, came to Mt. Irenaeus. He was struck by our way of life and our engagement with youth. He asked me to write a short piece for a small book that was published internationally as new expressions

of Franciscan life. It was titled, “Signs of the Times – Time of Signs.”

We began creating structures, shaping a Board of Trustees, naming and finding members for committees that would share the responsibility for our life and continue to bring others into our mission. Mt. Irenaeus has grown significantly since its beginning. The land itself here is sacred and we have become more aware of indigenous people who have dwelt here and celebrated their own lives here. “Our Sister, Mother Earth,” as Francis speaks of all around us in his great Canticle, is our primary place of dwelling and one of our first teachers in our way of life. We have welcomed all of the letters and encyclicals of Pope Francis, with eager hearts, studying them and seeing how we might apply them.

The community is so much larger than only humans dwelling here. St. Francis said, “Let us begin now...” We might hear that on a morning when we are called to get up and begin, again, some aspect of our life after prayer together. Our beginnings take us beyond here, but our experiences in the garden,

in the forest, the pond and home, take us well beyond here. They offer us a way of learning how to live elsewhere with each of our hearts formed by being here.

From places of worship throughout the world, prayer reaches to hearts and homes. **William Johnston, SJ** tells us that we are in an “axial time” when things are changing almost to our dismay. Often, during a time like this, some of the “old things,” though not bad, just are not working well enough to meet our current needs. **Ronald Rolheiser** is one who champions St. Clare and St. Francis, St. Teresa of Avila and others, as people who were renewing the church of their time by intuiting new directions, their own creative imaginations, the Spirit of God in their lives, renewing the church as well as human practice, and the face of the Earth. Ronald Rolheiser speaks too of the same sort of need and points to St. Clare and St. Francis as examples of “artisans for a new age.” Johnston and Rolheiser both call out to us for the great need and opportunity for a new time for humanity, all of creation and for the Church and religions across the face of the Earth.



Friends and family gathered in April for our “work and prayer” day at the Mountain. We thank all who attended for their generous help!

The Mountain began, now over 39 years ago, but actually had its first expressions in Allegany, New York in 1983 before we made our way to Allegany County in 1984 and have continued to find life in new expressions here through this year. Mt. Irenaeus, still with great humble awareness and gratitude, has chosen a mission statement that is so strong in understanding of self that it would have us walk along with you and others. We chose our Mission to "join with Jesus Christ in making all things new."

"We welcome you on our journey, as we find ourselves blessed to claim the mission of Mt. Irenaeus. We believe that we are one with all peoples, cultures and all creation in the ancient longing to find and live in peace. The peace we seek is healing, lasting, and **"makes all things new again."** - Mt. Irenaeus Vision Statement

Come join us and participate in our mission and its creation. Come join us in the efforts we have, to roll up our sleeves and do what we need to do to extend the Mountain's life and ministry to others here, at Bona's and beyond!

Peace!
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As Karen and I were making our way to St. Louis, for our second Franciscan Federation conference in as many years, we found ourselves reflecting on the year in between, and what a gift it has been to get involved with this dynamic group of women and men inspired by Francis and Clare from across the country. It reminded us, from our Strategic Planning work, of a need to be more immersed in the larger Franciscan world. Friends of ours – notably **Sr. Kathleen Moffitt** and **Sr. Margaret Carney** – recommended we get involved with the Federation. Both **Fr. Dan** and **Br. Joe** reinforced this by sharing that we have a relationship with many of those who are involved in this organization. From their website: the Franciscan Federation "promotes the exploration and study of Franciscan Evangelical Life and its implications for our world today, provides networking opportunities and resources to further ignite Franciscan values, and provides space for the emergence of new ideas."



Karen Pulaski and Natalie Wasek

In previous newsletters and other places, you may have heard us speak about Franciscan Intentional Communities, and our efforts to help promote current communities and new ones across the country. The Mountain is itself a Franciscan Intentional Community. From our work within the Federation, a group has emerged called Franciscan Intention Community Network (FICN). While in St. Louis, Karen and I were part of a small group who hosted conversations around the subject for those seeking communities, and those looking to partner on building this network. This work was affirmed by several who joined us in conversation, noting that these communities are part of a "new emerging church."

One other highlight of our time in St. Louis was catching up with **Natalie Wasek**, a two-time Summer Companion at the Mountain and currently Associate Director at Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investment. Natalie was on a Young Adult Panel, sharing aspects of her life including how she walks with her faith, how she builds community with others, and the importance of her

work as part of her spiritual path. Natalie also noted her time at St. Bonaventure, and her time in community at Mt. Irenaeus, as important building blocks on how she lives her life today. She clearly made a mark on those in attendance, and is a wonderful example of young people walking in the Franciscan Spirit today.

For a second year, we left the conference with a wonderful energy. We left with a greater sense that we are an important part of a larger movement, that we are working in a place of abundance rather than scarcity. We felt that each one of us brings unique gifts to the world, and that God asks us to do what is ours to bring the Spirit to everything in which we are a part.

~ Mike Fenn



Karen and Mike gather with old friends, and new, at the Franciscan Federation Conference.

MARTHA KOPCIENSKI JOINS THE MOUNTAIN TEAM AS PROJECT FACILITATOR

We are delighted to share that **Martha Kopcienski** has joined the Mountain team in the role of Project Facilitator, working for us on a part-time basis. Martha is a Bona graduate from 1985, and earned her CPA license in 2012. Since then she has gained deep experience in the accounting field, including working five years at Roberts Wesleyan University. This experience will assist in her role with budget and financial management for the Mountain. We have also asked Martha to establish a process of more effectively supporting our wonderful volunteer network, and managing projects, which require hiring contractors working on maintenance projects, and future capital initiatives.



Martha knows the Mountain well! She has been involved with the Council for Spirit and Life for several years, is an active participant of the Mountain in the Homes around Rochester, and she and her husband, John, were recognized as Mt Irenaeus Living Stones last October as lifelong supporters of our life and ministry.

Martha started working in the beginning of June and is looking forward to staying at the Mountain as part of the community during the days she is with us, joining us for prayer, meals, and conversatio.

Please welcome Martha to our team!



Our Easter time arrangement in the Chapel with a beautiful illustration by Fr. Dan Riley.



Our first group of guests for the new academic year – the Orientation team came for prayer, good food and bonding.



Our friends and family gathered for a good meal during our "work and prayer" day.



In early June 2023, the Mountain friars attended the last gathering of our mother province, the Most Holy Name of Jesus Province of the Order of Friars Minor headquartered in New York City. Holy Name Province was established in 1901 and will become part of a new larger US province by joining with five other Franciscan Provinces in October 2023. Our new province will be called Our Lady of Guadalupe and be headquartered in Atlanta.

Our gathering was a time to mourn the passing of an era and to become excited for the new. We Holy Name friars remembered our immigrant roots, the good works, the struggles, the characters and the saints from the past 122 years of our history. For us at the Mountain, we remembered and gave thanks for the time, support, encouragement, expertise and funding that Holy Name Province and St. Bonaventure University have given to us. In the 1970's when Dan Riley and others had a dream to establish a place for peaceful re-creation, intentional community living and prayer and contemplation, not everyone could see the value of this "new" way of living and were reluctant to support the idea. In reality, the way of life at Mt. Irenaeus is very old, dating back to the days of St. Francis of Assisi! But St. Bonaventure University Presidents and Leaders of Holy Name Province had enough faith in this project and Mt. Irenaeus in turn has been able to offer an experience of early Franciscan living for thousands of people on their journey.

As Holy Name Province becomes part of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, we find the Mountain in a very fortunate position. Our World-Wide Order has been calling on the friars throughout the world to renew our Franciscan lives through more intentional fraternal life, deeper prayer and contemplation, listening more closely to the cry of the poor and the planet, seek peace and reconciliation where possible, and to welcome all people of whatever background to participate in our lives. These are principles that are not new for us, but are actually foundational principles of the Mountain!

Mt. Irenaeus has become well known as a unique and respected expression of Franciscan life throughout the US. In the last ten years, the Mountain friars have consciously participated in inter-provincial commissions, committees, planning groups, gatherings, workshops, pilgrimages and retreats throughout the US and have gotten to know many of the men who will be members of the new province. They have also gotten to know this place and us. More than one friar has wondered aloud about joining the Mt. Irenaeus Community. In this time of transition, it feels as though the wind is in our sails!

~ Br. Kevin Kriso, ofm



"FRANCISCAN LECTIO" by Fr. Dan Riley is now available on Audible.





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

MT. IRENAEUS ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT, we reached our Mountain Fund goal before our May 31 deadline!

Your donations have helped us to serve others in the following ways:

- ✦✦ We welcomed a new community member to the Mountain;
- ✦✦ Hosted friars in formation;
- ✦✦ Fed and housed many students on retreats;
- ✦✦ Were a voice in Franciscan meetings;
- ✦✦ Gathered for prayer on Zooms, in homes and On the Road;
- ✦✦ Assembled groups to help care for the land and lead faith formation circles;
- ✦✦ Upgraded our facilities;
- ✦✦ Worked with students on campus and supported their faith and spiritual growth as young adults.



This year, we will do all of that and more! It takes a community to sustain a Mountain and you are part of our community. As with the rest of the world, our expenses have increased over the past few years. Your continued support is vital to maintain our mission of "Joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new!"

Please visit us! Come pray with us, join us On the Road or virtually, help with our online auction, advocate for us on Giving Tuesday, set up a monthly or one-time donation, volunteer! Visit our website at www.mountainonline.org to find more information on these and other upcoming events and opportunities. Thank you again for your generous support and may God bless you and grant you good health. Contact us when you wish.

~ **Mary Giardini**

Advancement & Communications Coordinator

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

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