

The Value of Mt. Irenaeus - a review of mission and ministry provided to the SBU community

January 24, 2024

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An (Ideal) SBU student's experience

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When I first walked into the House of Peace at Mt. Irenaeus my first semester freshman year, I immediately noticed a calming warmth radiating from the place, whether it was through the honey-colored wooden floors and walls or the lovely aroma of a carefully handmade meal or the soft chatter of conversation coupled with Fr. Dan's remarkable laughter. Mt. Irenaeus has a special magic about it; not only does it feel like a breath of fresh air beyond the hubbub of campus, but it also invites everyone inside (and outside by the pond!) with a warm hug that just naturally brings out an openness to engage in conversation with new and old friends.

My most recent visits to the Mountain with Asian Students in Action (ASIA) and Active Minds were incredibly special to me because they strengthened my relationship with my culture and spirituality: through the collaborative process of cooking dishes like chana and eating new foods like bibimbap, as well as through my reading of an Indian prayer up in the Chapel.

Ever since my first visit to the Mountain, I have felt drawn back to the energy of the people and place again and again, and I have felt inspired to share this experience with my closest friends, many of whom I have brought to the Mountain to make sure they, too, have the opportunity to experience the joy of Mt. Irenaeus. My own personal growth since freshman year has mirrored the flowering of a deeper connection with the Mountain, and each of the nine times that I have visited (whether it be with the SBU Dance Team, Active Minds, or ASIA) have been a source of the same warmth every time, despite the visits being with entirely different groups of students.

A message for the freshmen and anyone who has not yet been to the Mountain: I cannot emphasize enough how valuable Mt. Irenaeus has been for me. It has truly been an experience that you can choose how much to pour into, but I can assure you that its value goes beyond words. I hope you can embrace being vulnerable there and be a part of the glowing kindness that each individual extends to others.

Ayushi Jain, 2023 Ideal Bonaventure Student Award Winner



The Value of the Mountain

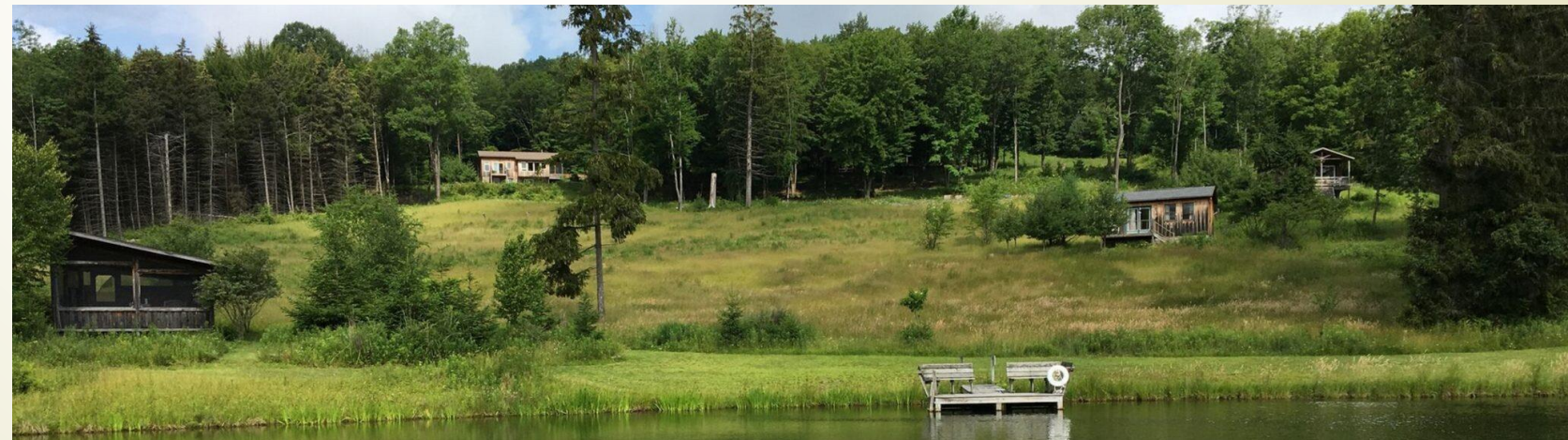
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- Images of the Mountain
- The facilities
- Our intentional community
- Members of the community and their involvement with the University
- Engagement with the University
- The deeper investment to support our partnership



Images of Mt. Irenaeus

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Sacred Spaces of Mt. Irenaeus

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Mt Irenaeus Facilities

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- ▶ Located 21 miles/35 minutes from campus
- ▶ 360 acres of property includes miles of peaceful trails, ponds and natural surroundings
- ▶ Holy Peace Chapel - built in 1989, a place students of all faiths share and reflect with one another
- ▶ House of Peace – main house with large kitchen where students share in creating a homestyle meal, other spaces allow for comfortable conversations. Space for 30 to comfortably share a meal.
- ▶ 7 cabins available for overnight stays, capacity for over 20 to comfortably stay overnight.
- ▶ Extensive garden is usually a new experience for students.
- ▶ Recent investment in solar panels offering an education in the benefits of caring for creation.



More than a facility...a Franciscan Intentional Community

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“Mt. Irenaeus, founded in the Catholic and Franciscan tradition, proclaims the healing peace of Jesus Christ. In that tradition we are fleshing out a deeply prayerful and familial retreat community. We are responding to the needs of a university community and to others who seek such a place in our world today”

- From Our First Notion on Mission

“All who participate in the mission of Mt. Irenaeus join with Jesus Christ in “making all things new” by creating and nourishing a community that transcends a particular place, opening to all peoples, ages, and cultures.”

- From Mt. Irenaeus Mission Statement

“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.”

- From Mt. Irenaeus Vision Statement

- ▶ All ministry that springs from Mt. Irenaeus arises from a deep commitment to our Mission and Vision.



Fr. Dan Riley

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- ▶ 1964 Alum, Founder of Mt. Irenaeus
- ▶ Author, lecturer, artist
- ▶ Facilitator for retreats across the nation
- ▶ Franciscan presence for the SBU community for 50 years.
- ▶ Pastorally available to hundreds of SBU alumnus and current students 24/7
- ▶ Attends and celebrates SBU alumnus, weddings, funerals, children's baptisms.
- ▶ Mountain "On the Road" gatherings throughout the year.
- ▶ Younger alumni virtual gatherings



Fr. Dan Riley

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- ▶ NYC alumni Mass in the fall since 9/11
- ▶ 80's weekend presence including prayer service Saturday afternoon
- ▶ SBU NAAB Chaplain
- ▶ Daily spiritual meditations and reflections on Facebook and Instagram with thousands of followers, majority Bona affiliated.
- ▶ Other spiritual content presented to the Bonaventure community including regular video messages, and our seasonal newsletter.



Br. Kevin Kriso

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- ▶ Guardian of Mt. Irenaeus, Director of Life and Ministries at Mt. Irenaeus
- ▶ Began ministry at Mt. Irenaeus/St. Bonaventure in 2008
- ▶ Most frequent presence on campus from Mt. Community. Part of team that makes up University Ministries and supports many ministry initiatives on campus.
- ▶ Primary contact with students, leads Mountain Community Leaders, a student group aimed at developing leadership skills tied to their faith
- ▶ Partners across the campus – schools, dorms, sports teams, clubs etc. to create engaging gatherings at the Mountain.
- ▶ 12-step recovery expert available to the University community
- ▶ Offers a friar presence throughout the academic calendar, including
 - ▶ Orientation
 - ▶ Spring into Bonas
 - ▶ Becoming Bonnies
 - ▶ Blessing of the Brains
 - ▶ Student led activities including musicals, academic presentations
 - ▶ Supportive of students at times of traumatic moments across the campus and in their lives



Br. Joe Kotula

- ▶ Primary caretaker for property and facilities, allowing our community to enjoy the natural setting, a walk in the woods.
- ▶ Student involvement with Mountain Community Leaders and student retreats.
- ▶ Part of Mountain on the Road visits.
- ▶ Active with Bona Responds.
- ▶ A presence on campus through student activities, basketball games, and other university events.

Fr. Lou McCormick

- ▶ Senior member of the community offers hospitality to all who visit.
- ▶ Former Timon H.S. teacher, easy disposition with young people



Karen Pulaski

- ▶ SBU alumni, class of 1984 – very involved in University Ministry
- ▶ Moved into Mountain residence June 2022 for full year, presently committed to living in community throughout the school year.
- ▶ Organizes woman's retreats attended by alumni.
- ▶ Through her 30 years as professional Occupational Therapist, has focused efforts to engage Health Professions school.
- ▶ Partnering with University Ministries, led student trip to Capitol Hill through Franciscan Action Network leadership weekend.
- ▶ 1:1 relationships with students
- ▶ Member of SBU sustainability task force

Mike Fenn

- ▶ SBU alum, class of 1991 – highly involved in University Ministry
- ▶ Recently earned Masters in Pastoral Studies at CTU to support ministry
- ▶ While primarily administrative role, active on campus with students, including men's prayer, supporting retreats, chaperoning University service trips.

Gatherings at the Mountain

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Spring Semester

- ▶ Women's track team
- ▶ 80's alumni overnight
- ▶ Women's overnight
- ▶ St. Francis High School (prospective students)
- ▶ Dance team
- ▶ Men's overnight
- ▶ Franciscan Volunteer Ministry retreat
- ▶ Intercollegiate weekend
- ▶ Open afternoons and overnights for students
- ▶ Easter prayer and Mass services
- ▶ Day of service
- ▶ ASIA day at the Mtn

This summer

- ▶ 3 Different high school visits
- ▶ Orientation leaders
- ▶ Orientation overnight
- ▶ HEOP overnight
- ▶ Resident life day away
- ▶ Becoming Bonnies week
- ▶ Men's Rugby afternoon



Gatherings at the Mountain

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▶ Fall Semester

- ▶ BBQ for incoming students
 - ▶ Francis week work day
 - ▶ Women's overnight
 - ▶ Parents weekend open house
 - ▶ Men's day away
 - ▶ Intercollegiate weekend
 - ▶ Reading day away
 - ▶ Open September overnight
 - ▶ Francis Week overnight
 - ▶ Choir overnight
 - ▶ Dance Team evening away
 - ▶ Thanksgiving Dinner
 - ▶ Advent overnight
- ▶ This summer we hosted ~ 190 students, including RA's, HEOP, Orientation leaders and attendees, and Men's rugby. We also hosted prospective students from Pompton Lakes Parish.
- ▶ Through the fall we had at least 350 students and parents visit. This does not include those who join us for Sunday mass (transportation provided from campus).

The Mountain and its support of recruitment

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- The Overnight at Mt. Irenaeus during Spring Into Bonaventure is the highest yield event hosted by the University. Averaging between 25-30 attendees, nearly all who attend have chosen to enroll at SBU.



- “The Mountain Overnight has been a fan favorite both between prospective families as well as the Admissions team. It always offered a rewarding and impactful experience for students, providing an in-depth look at one of St. Bonaventure’s most unique treasures, and the results have always spoken for themselves.”

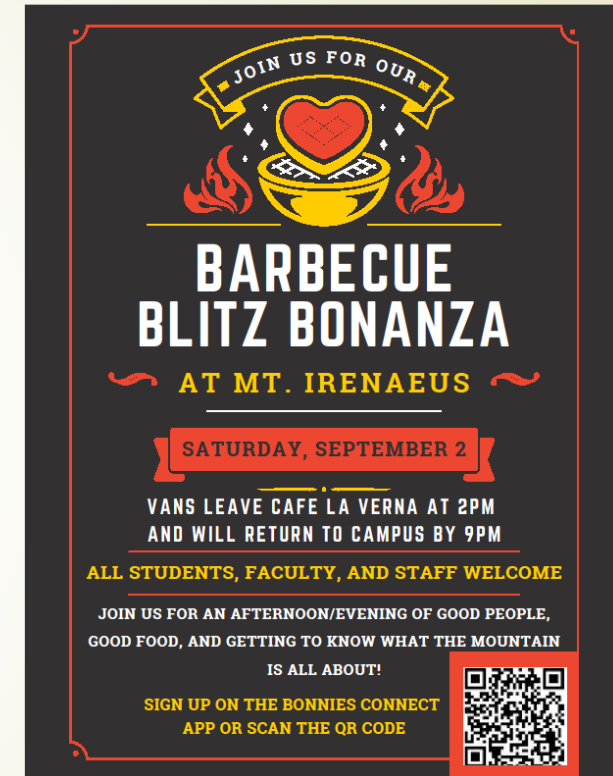
- Dean Whitcomb, Director of Undergraduate Admissions



The Mountain and its support of retention

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- ▶ One orientation session each year includes a Mountain overnight. 24 students attended this summer.
- ▶ The Mountain partnered with University Ministries and Student Affairs to host homesick students on September 2nd. 21 students attended.



Other examples of engagement on and off campus

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► Spring Semester

- Bona Responds projects
- 2023 Chicago/Loyola Basketball game – Sunday mass for 25
- 80's weekend prayer service (100 alum) and engagement throughout weekend
- NAAB meetings
- Graduation weekend
- Alumni weekend



2022-23 Mountain on the Road numbers

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FALL 2023

- 17-Nov Erie PA 25
- 18-Nov Pitt PA 26
- 19-Nov Cleveland 79

SPRING 2023

- 24-Feb Albany, NY 24
- 25-Feb Stamford Ct 26
- 26-Feb Long Island 59
- 30-Apr Atlanta GA 48
- 1-May Charlotte NC 35

~765 Alumni engaged
through three
semesters

FALL 2022

- 20-Oct Buffalo, NY 58
- 22-Oct Rochester 67
- 23-Oct Syracuse 47
- 3-Nov Binghamton 29
- 4-Nov Philadelphia 31
- 5-Nov Silver Spring MD 24
- 6-Nov Alexandria VA 70
- 9-Nov New York City 77

On the Road visits over the years

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Areas visited since 2001, either Mtn on Road prayer service, or Mass. Many Masses were held in Catholic High Schools

- ▶ Atlanta, Albany, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Erie, Hartford, Long Island, New Jersey (several locations), New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Stamford CT, Silver Spring, Washington DC, Arlington, Alexandria, Richmond, Charlotte, Ft Lauderdale, Orlando, Naples, Houston, Dallas, Austin Phoenix, San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Monica, San Diego



From Former Director of Alumni Services

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- ▶ *“For over 30 years the University has supported and encouraged a spiritual outreach to alumni primarily through Mountain on the Road events and Masses. Having personally attended hundreds of programs I can assure you they are viewed as a University effort to reach alumni. MT on the Road have had the support from the past eight University presidents and a similar number of Vice Presidents for Advancement. Both offices have regarded them as a valuable service to alumni as well as a component of the ongoing cultivation effort of alumni and friends”.*

Joe Flanagan



Significant commitment to our ministry with SBU

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Natalie Pronio

- ▶ A 2009 Alumni, who was deeply involved at the Mountain, Warming House, Bona Responds, Youth Mentor with Seneca Nation while a student.
- ▶ Professionally has served as a parish minister since graduating, including work with high school students and young adults.
- ▶ Through strategic planning, a need was noted for a minister closer in age to our students. Having a female minister for the Mountain adds a valuable attribute to our team.
- ▶ Beginning her position in September, 2023, has already had significant impact as Mt Irenaeus Ministry Coordinator, adding a deeper presence for ministry on campus, engaging students both on campus and providing opportunities for Mountain experience.
- ▶ This is an incremental Mountain expense of over \$70K.



Summarizing the value of the Mountain

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- ▶ Franciscan intentional community whose primary ministry is centered on St. Bonaventure population
- ▶ 5 community members and one full time employee who are primarily focused on the ministry to the university, providing a Franciscan presence outside of the classrooms, into the community and the marketplace.
- ▶ 360 acres set in a beautiful rural setting always available to the community
- ▶ Offering weekly hospitality to students throughout the year including meals and transportation
- ▶ Continuous Franciscan presence on campus
- ▶ Daily reflections on social media
- ▶ Mountain on the road events

"I personally love the Mountain. My first time at Mt. Irenaeus was during my HEOP challenge program. It helped me understand the individuals who will be my family for my next 4 years at Bona's. Being at the Mountain with people who I didn't know well, help me see those people as family. I would love for other students to experience what it's like to be at the Mountain and feel like they have a home far from home." *Adelyn Santos, student at St. Bonaventure University*

Current financial agreement and other notes from the past

- ▶ At the commencement of its fiscal year, SBU shall make a contribution to the annual operating budget of Mt Irenaeus in the amount of \$125,000.
- ▶ The parties will automatically renew on the anniversary date of June 1st unless either party notifies the other 60 days ahead of anniversary date.
- ▶ It's the intention of SBU that its commitment to the annual operating budget of Mt. Irenaeus never be less than its current commitment of \$125,000 or a minimum of \$110,000.
- ▶ A previous administration had committed to 3% annual increases and covering 70% of the Mountain's budget
- ▶ Dennis DePerro verbally committed to increasing the budget allocation to Mt. Irenaeus. He had a vision where every student experienced the Mountain before they graduated.

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