

**“Let us begin anew
for up to now
we have done very little.”**



The raising of Holy Peace Chapel – 1989.

*“June is bustin’ out all over! All over the meadow and the hill, Buds’re bustin’ outa bushes,
And the rompin’ river pushes ev’ry little wheel that wheels beside a mill.”*

This song reaches the high notes of an American classic musical by **Rogers and Hammerstein** and is with me now. I hear it along with other wonderful voices that lift my heart and tell me that, once again, creation is lifting up at the call of its Creator, all of us come together, come alive, to “begin anew!”

This land has sung to me its own song, in union with our mission. I first visited this land in August 1984, its summer voices were loud. As Franciscan women and men, we know all of this as “music to our ears,” our hearts, hands and heads and together with others, we have been blessed to birth Mt. Irenaeus.

Creation is the ongoing work and life of Christ, as are all things that come into being. Therefore, there is a humble blessing, a greeting for you and others with us - Happy Anniversary for 40 years of “joining with Jesus Christ to make all things new!”



Holy Peace Chapel – Spring 2024.

Mt. IRENAEUS

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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



We have been blessed by music written for us by **Glenn McClure** - which we still sing daily - and music from **Cyprian Consiglio, OSB Cam.** Cyprian wrote music for our 25th anniversary. It is music that traveled with him as he sang and prayed with people in Christian and Muslim nations around the world. Mt. Irenaeus, a small "hill and meadow," is still bursting forth, it brings us stillness, doesn't it, to open again to the liveliness of life when life can feel divisive, disappearing or dying around us.



This summer I will be working on a memoir, which I hope will offer the stories that are the roots and early seasons of Mt. Irenaeus. This place began in other hearts, in other places, before any of us were alive and sprung forth anew. We will be celebrated this anniversary year with memories recalled and shared.

We, who continue to gather here, heard early on a few words that became central to our mission, "To join with Jesus Christ to make all things new."

These are some of the final words of "the New Testament." We approach our 40th anniversary here with a renewed sense of commitment as well as rebirth. We feel our own "born again-ness" and have the saying that we "join – again – with Jesus Christ to make all things new." All of our other documents for the Mountain come from this deep and hopeful insight that arose at a particular time from the dark collision of youth in the 1960's who were feeling divisions and separations in both the Church and in the world. We gathered then, and do now, "bursting out" with hope that seems embarrassing to claim in a world that seems so discouraged and divided.

When we gathered to consider this newsletter and a theme for it, the sense of springtime immediately came alive. We felt the springtime of the Mountain and the desire to invite you to join in with us again, in that sense of bursting forth

with new life so that all the wheels and all the life might move again together.

In **Ilia Delio's** new book, this theme unfolds from the ancient and rich insights of different traditions and particularly our Christian path opened up by Franciscan theologians/philosophers. It is this Christology that helps us hear the ancient "Alpha and Omega," the "beginning and

end of all things" in God, in Christ. This is especially articulated in Colossians 1:15-20, an early Christian hymn/song/poem, which welcomes us to walk in the early images of the faith of Christians who were overwhelmed even though they were struggling with oppression and separation; overwhelmed by the wholeness and fullness of the bursting out of new life in Christ. This new life was the ancient promise and understanding of a God abiding in their midst, a God who is beyond word and idea, but fully and completely present while still unfolding and becoming in them and with them and all of creation. This same God invites us to a path of an ongoing activity of wholeness and fullness, of care for each other, which is also the habit of our Mountain community.

We are all "in Christ," as Francis once said, "beginning again" – "Let us begin anew for up to now we have done very little". This in no way diminishes the largeness of the path or the greatness of our founders, but rather points to the largeness of the challenges we have, the needs that are before us, also the state of our world today. Yet, it is a very hopeful statement, similar to the ones that come from Ilia Delio. If we can use dimensionality around God, we can hear the wonderful, simple line that God is larger than all of our little problems, and the simple appeal, "Jesus take care of everything."

On our wall over the entrance to the kitchen and over the fireplace of our House of Peace, there are examples of this Christ who was always on the

move. The wagon wheel over the fireplace went up over hills and valleys and down over meadows in times of division between black and white in America, but was retrieving, claiming and bringing forth people from the South into the North where, ironically, there was a promise of new life and freedom.

You and I are called today to help sustain and move the Spirit that is among us.

We are a family called to life. Come join us. Come burst forth this June and be part of this coming time in our life.

Peace!
Ignacio

**Lifting up his eyes to heaven,
Jesus prayed saying:**

**“I pray not only for
these, but also for
those who will believe
in me through their
word, so that they
may all be one, as you,
Father, are in me and I
in you, that they also
may be in us, that the
world may believe that
you sent me.”**

John 17:20-26



Reflecting on 40 years of Mt. Irenaeus

While I am writing this, we are in the midst of a team retreat at the Mountain, sharing time in prayer, on the land, over a meal. As it is Tuesday, the day started with Lectio Divina, our practice of reading the Gospel 3 times with different voices. Today's Gospel was a favorite of some of us in the circle (John 15:9-17) and we shared why it was so important to us. I reflected that there were three words that were central themes through this Gospel that are so important— joy, friend, and of course, love.

Joy to me goes beyond simple happiness or being lighthearted, but a belief in a God that loves me, who created the world and those around us, and that brings me into an incredibly positive disposition, if I stay centered in this unconditional love. When I am down it is usually when I lose focus on this.

That Jesus calls me friend was something I did not really grasp until becoming close to the Franciscans. I was used to a patriarchal/hierarchical church. In addition, the importance of relationships became so clear to me as I became close to the Friars of Mt. Irenaeus and St. Bonaventure. I am so grateful to have learned of the church as a community and not just the building or institution.

We spoke about the word love a lot and as I looked around the room, recognizing that I have known many of those in the room my entire adult life and others for only months, I thought about what a great gift it is to work with people that you love. Most of us do not have that experience and it probably is not for everyone, but I find as one who tries to follow the command of this Gospel to love one another, it is a great gift. That does not mean we agree on everything, and Lord knows we experience conflict and tension at times, but it is this call to live a Gospel manner of life that helps us get through these troubling times.

We are still forming what celebrating our 40th anniversary of Mt. Irenaeus looks like, recognizing this important milestone, but also being aware that our ministry and life is celebrated every day in very active and full ways. Please pray for us as we celebrate 40 years, and if you feel called to, support this way of life and ministry so it may continue for the next 40 years.

With Joy, Friendship and Love!

~ Mike Fenn

To join with Jesus Christ (Again) in making all things new. This is the foundational mission of the Mountain that has lasted 40 years and is still very relevant.

Recently we had a barbecue for St. Bonaventure University seniors at Mt. Irenaeus. These young people began their journey at St. Bonaventure in August 2020. These are part of the so-called "Covid kids" or the "lost generation" whom many people have fretted about. The thought is that since their high school experiences, their orientation at SBU and their first-year experience at SBU was so disrupted that somehow they would be "lacking" academically and socially, maybe for the rest of their lives.

In the fall of 2020 students from Bonas and many other schools were not allowed to leave campus lest they bring the virus back to school. So, there were no trips to the Mountain. Faculty and staff of SBU and we at the Mountain were asked not to eat with the students in the dining hall at school and spectators were not allowed at many sporting events. We at the Mountain missed getting to know so many students who started at SBU in 2020 and 2021.

However, in the last couple of years we have been able to get to know and love many of them and they are like old friends. People are making up for lost time and we are actually seeing many more students at the Mountain than we were pre-pandemic. They want and crave the Mountain experience and understand how a visit to the Mountain helps them to heal, make sense of and integrate all of their experiences, the good and bad.

Some of the seniors who came to the Mountain for the barbecue, were actually visiting the Mountain for the first time- just days away from graduation and they were blown away by the experience. We could say, "Wow that's too bad they waited so long." On the other hand, even though they arrived at the "11th hour," they came at the right time. They were able to use their short visit to the Mountain to reflect on their unusual experience of college and see it in a new light- to make all things new. Instead of having a defective college experience, they have had an unusual college experience. They have developed new strengths, faith and great stories to tell their grandchildren.

~ Br. Kevin

I never visited the Mountain in my first three years even though I was aware of the opportunities to go there. That was until my senior year.

I was dealing with a lot of stress, anxiety and depression that caused me to have a negative effect on others. This resulted in me being suspended from my campus media activities. It caused me to doubt myself and doubt my dreams.

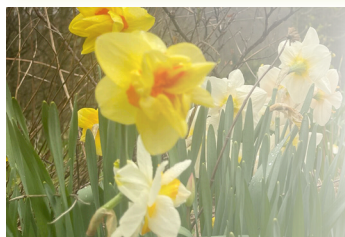
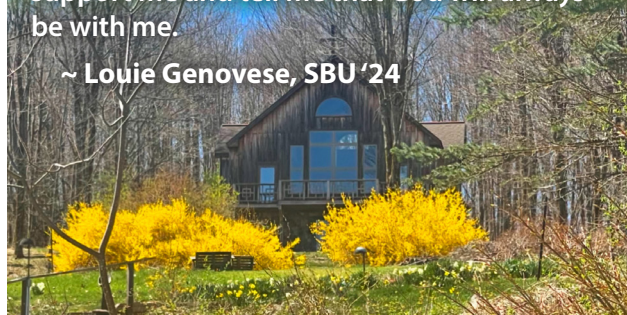
This year I looked to reconnect with my Catholic faith and I got an opportunity to come to the Mountain on a men's overnight. After, that I was so grateful to go up there. I got to meet people who had their own struggles and know that I am not alone.

I am grateful to meet the friars like Br. Kevin and Fr. Bill, they have been welcoming and open to talk with me and I truly felt like I knew them my entire life.

The best lesson I learned up there was that God made me fine the way I am, but that doesn't mean I will stop changing or evolving. Part of reconnecting with my faith is knowing I am not perfect, but I am still blessed. I learned to trust his plan for me and know to focus on him in the moment through the quote from Br. Kevin, "Don't put a period where God placed a comma." Going to the Mountain helped me realize how blessed I am and that inspired me to keep living for the Lord and surrounding myself with people who are supportive of my dreams.

I look to come back to the Mountain when I can and keep in good contact with those who support me and tell me that God will always be with me.

~ Louie Genovese, SBU '24

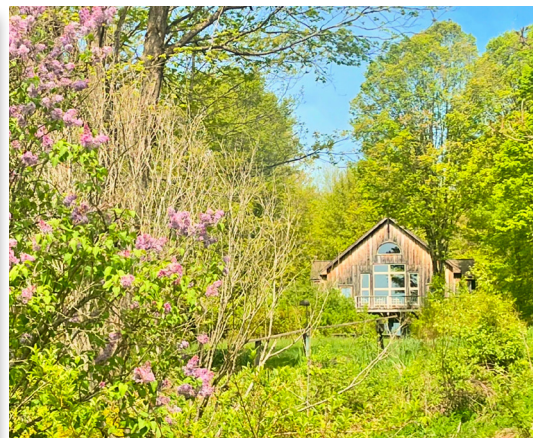


The Mountain truly shaped my Bonaventure experience as a student. Whenever I was lost or struggling, I knew I could find peace for myself in the community there. I would return to whatever situation I was in with fresh eyes. I hope to continue to use everything I learned there in the next stage of my life.

~ Cassidey Kavathas, SBU '24



Friars and staff on Mountain's Intercollegiate Retreat with students from SBU, Hilbert and Rochester Institute of Technology.



Friars and members of SBU's Senior class at the Mountain. Some were first timers and others were many timers!

SUMMER EVENINGS OF RE-CREATION AT MT. IRENAEUS

Our Summer Evenings of Re-Creation will begin with Evening Prayer in the Chapel followed by time on the land and supper. After supper, join us in the Chapel for Mass and "conversatio."

The evening concludes around 9:00 pm.

Our Evenings of Re-Creation will take place on the following Wednesday evenings:

JULY 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Our theme this year is "The Power of the Slowing."



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

MT. IRENAEUS ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

We would like to express our deep gratitude to all who have supported our way of life and ministry through a gift to our Annual Mountain Fund. Your gifts make a difference - helping to meet our nearly \$800,000 operating budget which allows us to nourish and grow our Mountain Community.

Your support has helped us move ahead on renovation projects! The House of Peace, Chapel and Other House are all getting new roofs this summer. In fact, we have already received a lead gift to go toward the Chapel roof. We are also in progress on renovating Juniper. Some of the enhancements include installing electric appliances, new flooring, countertops, hardware and furnishings. Eventually we wish to renovate all the older hermitages. If you have an interest in "adopting" one of them, on your own, or perhaps as a family gift? Email Mike for more information - mfenn@sbu.edu

Also - Happy Anniversary! The Mountain turns 40 this year! We will be finding ways all year to celebrate this milestone with you. Make sure you are on our email list as opportunities to get involved will be available online at [www. MountainOnline.org/](http://www.MountainOnline.org/) events, through social media and by email.

From our hearts to yours, thank you. We pray for you each day and invite you to be a larger presence in our lives. Thank you for your ongoing support,,

Jackie Lanzillo
Development Chair/Board Member
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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 the Mountain at
mmarc@sbu.edu