

**Giardini, Mary D.**

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**From:** Mt. Irenaeus <mgiardin@sbu.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 24, 2024 1:51 PM  
**To:** Giardini, Mary D.  
**Subject:** "Making all things New!" January 2024 - experience the words, visuals and sentiment of the Mountain



## Making All Things New

January 2023

**Greetings of Peace from this living desert in New Mexico as Fr. Dan traveled west on his short sabbatical.**

**To keep up with Fr. Dan's travels, follow Mt. Irenaeus on Instagram or Facebook. You can find the link at the bottom of this enewsletter.**

**We continue to be blessed with the Good News of the Mountain reaching the valley in many ways!**

Lately, that includes many publications that have highlighted our life, such as a profile of Br. Joe in The Anthonian Franciscan, to a spotlight on Fr. Dan by St. Bonaventure after he was awarded an honorary degree, to wonderful overviews by both St. Anthony Messenger and the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

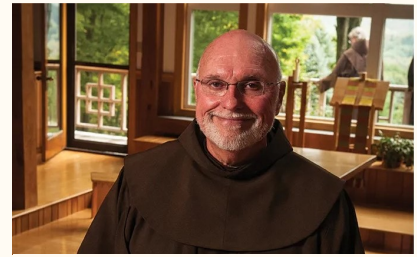


**[At Mt. Irenaeus, Visitors Discover 'Little Miracles' Through Contemplative Prayer](#)**

We invite you into these articles and experience the words, visuals and sentiment of the Mountain through the eyes of different authors and voices.

You can click on the links below or on the pictures you will find on the right.

- [At Mt. Irenaeus, Visitors Discover 'Little Miracles' Through Contemplative Prayer](#)
- [A Path Unimagined](#)
- [Seeking God's Creation in Nature](#)
- [Come to the Mountain](#)



[A Path Unimagined](#)



[Seeking God's Creation in Nature](#)



[Come to the Mountain](#)

## **Fr. Bill McIntyre Remembers and Reflects on his Advent experiences with the Mountain Community**

The "12 Days of Christmas" ended on January 6. These are the days between Christmas and Epiphany (when the Three Kings arrive). St. Bonaventure University's Advancement Office anticipated the 12 days of Christmas! For the twelve Advent days before Christmas, they sent an email featuring a different student who greeted the extended Bonavneture community as we prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Many of these greetings coincided with my first days here at the Mountain!



Although I may be new to many of you, I am not new to the Mountain. In 1985 I was a Bona's undergrad when Fr. Dan Riley, ofm, and Fr. Dan Hurley, ofm invited students to the new home of the previous summer Mountain community. In 1988, I joined the Franciscans along with Br. Kevin Kriso, ofm. In the three decades since my Franciscan vows, I have visited Mt. Irenaeus more than a dozen times. In the last few years, I have felt the call to a more contemplative expression of Franciscan life. After decades of urban, multicultural parish ministry in the south, I have felt drawn back to rural New York, living close to nature, and connected to St. Bonaventure University.

As we anticipated the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, I had the opportunity to be a part of the Mountain Advent prayer, preparations, and traditions. Here is the story of my 12 days of Advent/Christmas beginning December 1, 2023.

Day 1: I arrived to Holy Peace Friary to the grand sight of Br. Joe, James Fitzmorris, and Fr. Lou putting up our 17-foot Christmas tree!

Day 2: On the second day of my stay, St. Bonaventure undergrads, a few visiting for the first time, joined the Mountain community for the Advent overnight. Together, we decorated the tree, shared in reflection, and made Christmas cookies. Rumor has it that after Natalie Pronio and the friars went to bed, a non-contemplative game of Uno was played.

Day 3: The Mountain friars and guests returned to campus to cheer on the Bonnies Men's Basketball Team as they defeated the Sienna Saints, recapturing the Br. Ed Coughlin, OFM Cup. After respectable celebrations, the Friars went back to the Mountain and the students went back to their books to prepare for exams.

Day 4: During our time on Bonaventure's campus we joined the traditions of the pre-Christmas Mass and the University Ministry's team prayer for students before exam week. President Dr. Jeff Gingerich and I were kindly relieved from serving students midnight breakfast. Perhaps we were too generous with the tater tots.

Days 5-9: With campus finals week upon us, students were busy taking exams and beginning their holiday journeys. The Mountain friars and the campus ministry team held meetings and prepared for Christmas. I helped with snow shoveling and braved driving in the snow for the first time in decades.

Day 10: The Holy Peace Chapel preparation began as Br. Joe selected trees and greens from the property and Fr. Dan and Br. Kevin shopped for poinsettias.

Day 11: We finished decorating Holy Peace Chapel with Fr. Lou expertly cleaning behind us. It was the first time in decades I had physically decorated a worship space for Christmas! This may be surprising to some, but as a pastor, I usually invited and encouraged parish family members to join in decorating. Until this year, pine needles never pricked my hands.

Day 12: Faithful members of the Mountain family joined us for Mass as we celebrated the Feast of the Incarnation – God becomes one of us – Christmas! After Mass, we enjoyed community, coffee, and Br. Kevin's Christmas cookies. In the evening, the friars shared gifts and a communal meal. The day after Christmas I traveled to visit my family in New York's mid-Hudson valley.

In the next few months, I will spend time with the friars, Mountain Community Leaders, and guests, discerning whether the Lord wants me to be a permanent member of Mt. Irenaeus. These Advent memories, and the Mountain's "Remember – Reflect – Respond" prayerful guide, will be an integral part of this discernment process.



## Young (or not so young!) Adult Zoom Gatherings

### A Reflection and Invitation from Liz (D'Onofrio) Surprenant

In May of 2010, I graduated from Bonas with my degree in theology. In September of 2011, I moved to Boston and I've been in the Boston area for the last twelve years. I ended up earning my MSW and I now work as a therapist – something that has much overlap with my original theology education but allows me to reach folks through mental health support. I love what I do, but in my years in Massachusetts, I've missed being close to my alumni community, since many alums are in New York. During the height of the pandemic, this distance felt even more pronounced. I was searching and longing for a way to reconnect with my Bonaventure community, and specifically, with the intimacy of Mt. Irenaeus, which sustained and supported me during my college years.

I started attending the Mr. Irenaeus Young Adult Zoom series, which were initially offered during Advent and later during Lenten seasons. These series, which occur over 3-4 weeks during these special seasons of the liturgical year, invite young alumni ("young" being relative!) to sign on and participate in weekly virtual "Mountain time". This time includes silent reflection, music, sacred reading, and communal reflections. It has been such a gift to virtually reconnect with friends whom I met during my time at the Mountain, now over a decade ago, as well as meeting with new friends and "Good Bona People" all over the country. I am so grateful to reconnect and feel part of the Mountain community. It has sustained me through several years of professional and personal transitions, and it gives me an opportunity to stop, reflect, and ground myself after a long day at work.

If you're looking for a chance to participate in a casual, warm, and nurturing space (who isn't?) to reflect on readings, pray as a community, and offer support and encouragement to others sharing their journeys, I highly recommend joining us! Our next series will occur during our Lenten season, and I'm looking forward to seeing old and new friends there. Peace and all good to you!



*A Mt. Irenaeus-inspired grassroots faith group*

### Franciscan Sojourners Zoom Meeting and Invite A Description, Reflection and Invitation from Jacqui Bollinger

The Franciscan Sojourners formed during the Pandemic, a time when many of us sought connection and spirituality amidst great uncertainty, with Mike Camoin, Sean Adcroft and Daniel Everson initiating the group, then guiding us to a collaborative leadership. During the days of isolation, a world of masks and distancing, we began meeting on Zoom and truly fulfilled the Hebrew sense of a sojourner – a resident in a community where the members rely on the good will of one another, in an



atmosphere of shared spiritual growth. Acquaintances and strangers became a circle of spiritual companions.

Arising to meet a need, the Franciscan Sojourners brought us all to the core of our belief system, that led us to approach the changing world around us with the vision of St. Francis, and that offered us companions on our journey toward spiritual growth. This has been “a common experience” to what we would find at the Mountain itself, as we share “the Gospel message lived through the Mountain’s life and ministry” (Strategic Plan). As an active branch of the Council for Spirit and Life we are rooted in the Mountain even as we are a somewhat smaller circle.

While there are steady attendees, the faces on our computer screens may vary from one gathering to another, but there is always a sense of spiritual affinity, a space to explore Franciscan ideals. We enter into our shared experience with a musical selection, followed by the “Be Still” meditation that centers us. We approach readings from the Gospel or Franciscan theologians, psalms and prayers often using the Lectio Divina method to enter deeply into the Word before sharing whatever the Spirit leads us to say. We have also brought to the group experiences walking the Franciscan Way, iconography we find powerful, or even spiritual poetry that relates to our discussions. Selection of these words and images rotates among the group, as we feel called. We then share any petitions, closing with a prayer from St. Francis, St. Clare or Thomas Merton. This allows us all to journey in a way that has neither a leader nor followers, but guides and mentors to one another. We are sojourners, residing in the space of our meetings which then settles into our hearts and serves as a light in other aspects of our lives.

As we returned to post-Pandemic normalcy we did not lose the need for the Sojourners; it continues to expand and flourish. We now have a Facebook page with posts related to “readings from the Old and New Testament, Franciscan works by St. Francis, St. Clare, Thomas Merton and others; images of religious iconography and artwork; meditations on the Franciscan Lectio; an opportunity to post prayer requests and announcements of our virtual gatherings” (Facebook Group Rules). Members of the circle have posted readings and images that elicit purposeful contemplation of the Word, and of the Franciscan way of life; we’ve shared prayer requests and messages of support.

The Mountain is a place, but it is also a spirit, a way of life and a community that extends beyond any geographic limits. We meet virtually, connect on-line and recognize in one another companions on our journey, even as we reside, as sojourners, in this circle. Together, we make all things new in Christ.

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## An update on the Mountain Fund

Many of us have a natural pattern throughout the year, and the month of January is no exception. Some of us go through the setting of resolutions, others might be looking forward to the NFL playoffs, or conference basketball at St. Bonaventure. There are those lucky ones who are planning their spring break travels in hopes of escaping the frigid temperatures in parts of the country.

At the Mountain, one of our January practices is to assess the generosity of our friends to our annual appeal called the Mountain Fund. So many people remember us as the year ends with gifts to support the day-to-day life and ministry. We receive donations all year but it is heightened over the holidays.

Taking a moment now, after a flood of generosity to see how we are faring relative to our annual

budget is an important exercise. It helps us understand what is required for us to meet our goals in the last five months of the year, as **our fiscal year wraps up May 31.**

The Mountain Fund is the most important financial lever that keeps us operating day after day. It pays for food, gas and utilities so we can have students visit throughout the school year. It provides the Friars a stipend to cover their community's needs so they can live at the Mountain. It gives us the ability to have Mountain Companions like Karen live within the Mountain community. Your generosity has allowed us to hire Natalie Pronio, who now works alongside Br. Kevin in accompanying students both on campus, as well as on gatherings up at the Mountain. Related to her presence, we are seeing many more students visit the Mountain. Martha Kopcienski has also joined us in the office. Among her many responsibilities is working with Br. Joe and tackling maintenance projects around the campus of the Mountain. We are making upgrades to most of our buildings in some capacity. Mountain Fund dollars go toward those projects as well.

Upon reviewing our reports, it's clear that once again there has been a tremendous amount of support for the Mountain. We are slightly behind our goals for the year. We've increased our Mountain Fund target this year to help cover the added expenses of additional personnel and more students visiting. In order to keep providing a place of peace and belonging to all those who gather there, we will need to find other friends that want to support this ministry. If you are able to give a donation, even a small one that covers the cost of a student's dinner each month, we would be so grateful.

Thank you for being part of the life of Mt. Irenaeus.

[Click HERE to Support the Mountain with a Donation](#)

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Find videos and Fr. Dan's reflections on our [Instagram page](#).

And don't miss our student-run Instagram page at this link:  
[Mt. Irenaeus Happenings](#)

**Upcoming Events:**  
[schedule and ways to participate can also be found online here](#)

**January:**

**January 27** - SBU Play in the Snow  
Day/Overnight - RESCHEDULED to Feb 3!

**January 28** - OFS meeting at the Mountain after Mass and Brunch - all are welcome to join.

**February:**

**Early February** - Mountain gatherings in California - Area organizers and Fr. Dan will reach out to those in their area.

**February 2 & 3** - Mt. Irenaeus Board Meeting

**February 3** - SBU Play in the Snow  
Day/Overnight

**February 4** - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - email us for details

**February 9** - Jandoli School Women in Communication Retreat

**February 14** - Ash Wednesday - Ash distribution at SBU, not at the Mountain

**February 16** - University 101 in University Ministries Great Room

**February 16-18** - 80's Weekend on SBU campus and at the Mountain

**February 18** - 80's Weekend Mass at the Mountain at 11 am with brunch to follow

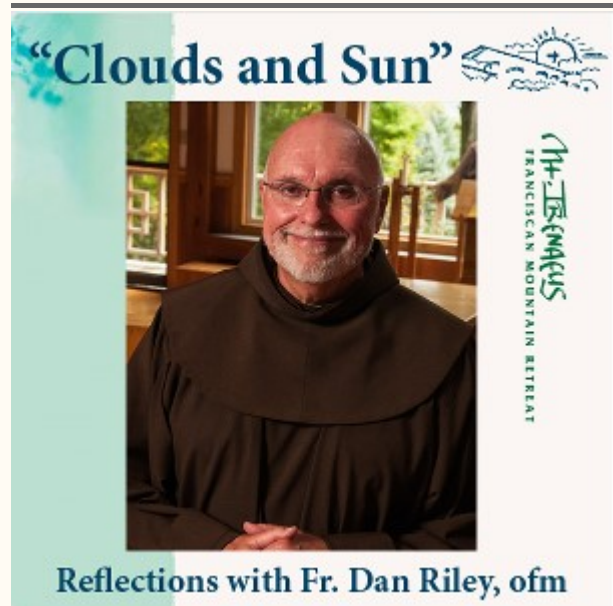
**February 25** - OFS meeting at the Mountain after Mass and Brunch - all are welcome to join.

**March:**

**Did you know?**

Fr. Dan is currently on Sabbatical. What does a sabbatical mean, what does it entail?

A sabbatical is an extended time away for a purpose, it is not a vacation. For a priest it can be a time to pray, write, research, read and do other things activities that in the normal rhythm of life there is no or little time for. In this case, Fr. Dan will be taking some silent time to pray and talk with God, take some time for painting, visit friends, participate in spiritual direction and other things along those lines. He has frequently told us he is NOT on vacation - but we are careful to respect his "hermit" days and silent retreat time.



**"Clouds and Sun" Podcasts**

**"The Beauty of the Journey"**

**"Chosen In This New Year"**

**"Holding Us Together This Christmas"**

**March 1** - Mountain on the Road in Phoenix  
- more info on our Events Page

**March 2** - Mountain on the Road in Las Vegas -  
more info on our Events Page

**March 3** - Mountain on the Road in Denver -  
more info on our Events Page

**March 3** - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - email  
us for more details

**March 8** - SBU HEOP Overnight

**March 9** - SBU Choir Overnight

**March 16** - Facing Racism Day at the Mountain  
with presenter Bill Wynne - Registration will  
begin on Feb 15. Please see our Event page for  
more details. Seats are limited.

**March 19** - Franciscan Volunteer Ministries  
Evening Away with SBU Students

**March 22** - SBU Student Student/Group  
Overnight

**March 23** - SBU Men's Overnight

**March 24** - Palm Sunday Mass at 11 with dish to  
pass brunch to follow

**March 28 - April 1** - Mountain Offices  
closed. Please call 585-973-2470 if you need to  
reach the friars.

**March 28** - Holy Thursday - Mass at the  
Mountain at 8 pm

**March 29** - Good Friday - Mass at the Mountain  
at 2 pm

**March 30** - Holy Saturday - Mass at the  
Mountain at 8 pm

**March 31** - Easter Sunday - Mass at 11 am with  
dish to pass brunch to follow

**April:**

**April 5** - SBU Women's Overnight

**"What Does Christmas Look Like?"**

**"Awakening During Advent"**

**"The Shepherd in Each of Us"**

**"The Life and Joy of St. Francis"**

**"God's Bounty is Beyond Our Imagination"**

**"The Light of Clare"**

**You can find more podcasts, and many other  
resources at [mountainonline.org/be-still-and-pray](http://mountainonline.org/be-still-and-pray).**

You also invited to [check out our video  
library on our YouTube channel](#), which  
includes reflections from the friars and  
Mountain Companions, and behind-the-  
scenes looks at our way of life.



**"Franciscan Lectio" Podcasts**

Fr. Dan Riley, ofm, invites us into the world  
of Franciscan Lectio, a companion podcast  
to [his book](#).

**Gazing at What's Present**

**We All Have a Story**



**April 6** - SBU Student Student/Group Overnight

**April 7** - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - email us for more details

**April 12-14** - Intercollegiate Retreat

**April 19** - Workday Overnight

**April 20** - Workday at the Mountain - please help if you can!

**April 26-27** - Mountain Board Meeting

**April 28** - OFS meeting at the Mountain after Mass and Brunch - all are welcome to join.

### May:

**May 3** - SBU Reading Day Away

**May 5** - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - email us for more details

**May - 11 & 12** - SBU Graduation Weekend

**May 25** - Welcome Summer Companions!

**May 26** - OFS meeting at the Mountain after Mass and Brunch - all are welcome to join.

### June:

**June 2** - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - email us for more details

**June 7-9** - SBU Alumni Weekend

**June 17-21** - Friar Contemplative Retreat - Brothers, email Br. Kevin Kriso for more information at [kkriso@sbu.edu](mailto:kkriso@sbu.edu)

**June 28** - St. Irenaeus Day

**June 29** - Mt. Irenaeus' 40th "birthday"

**June 30** - OFS meeting at the Mountain after Mass and Brunch - all are welcome to join.

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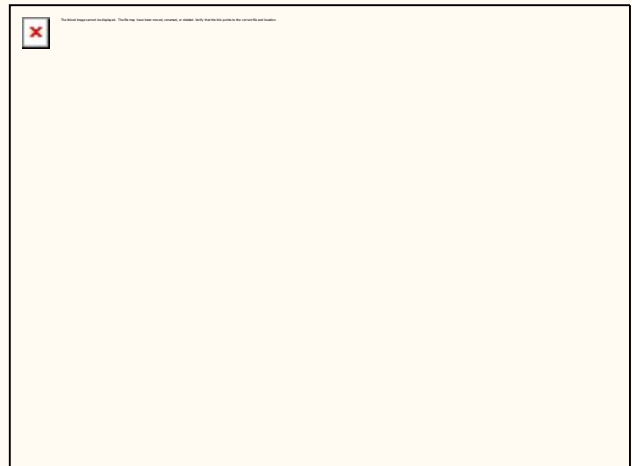
If you would like to leave a prayer request or you can help answer other people's, please click on this link below.

**PRAYER REQUEST**

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We appreciate you and pray for you and your family.

Come visit and pray with us!



**Join us for Mass on any Sunday at  
11 am and stay for our dish-to-pass  
brunch!**

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## Mt. Irenaeus



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The Mission of Mt. Irenaeus is to join with Jesus Christ in "Making  
all things new!" (REV. 21:5)

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Mt. Irenaeus

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