

**Giardini, Mary D.**

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**From:** Mt. Irenaeus <peace@mountainonline.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 8:57 PM  
**To:** Giardini, Mary D.  
**Subject:** "Making All Things New!" - June 2025 - Greater Franciscan World Connections, Thank You for Your Help, Retreat Opportunity!



**Making All Things New**

**JUNE 2025**

## **Part of the larger Franciscan Family**

**~Karen Pulaski, Director of Adult Faith Formation**

A quiet moment in time at the Mountain, surrounded by our beautiful mountains – everything feels so very green and alive this summer after such a white and snowy winter; I take a moment to remind myself that we are a part of this amazing creation – that Francis reminds us through his beautiful Canticle of the Creatures that Creation is brother, sister and mother to us, not something separate from us. It can feel sometimes that the Mountain is its own little world, high away from the neighboring towns. But this experience of creation reminds me that we are all a part of something much bigger.



This spring I was fortunate enough to have two amazing experiences that also reminded me that we are part of a much bigger Franciscan family. Much gratitude to Siena college as they sponsored several of us from both Siena and St. Bonaventure to attend the international JPIC annual conference for Integral Ecology in Rome. There we were joined with Franciscans from all over the world – more than 12 countries represented – and given the opportunity to explore deeply the biblical, theological and philosophical meaning of the Canticle of the Creatures, as well as to hear about the impact that Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, has had as we celebrate its 10th anniversary. Finally, we were able to share with one another different projects and initiatives that are happening all over the world related to justice, peace and integral ecology.

I also had an opportunity, along with two other colleagues, to attend and present at the AFCU (Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities) conference at Viterbo University. Several colleges and universities were represented with outstanding keynote speakers. While the conference was extremely educational, the bigger impact it had on me was to once again be reminded of just how far spread and vast our larger Franciscan family is – we are not in this alone.

In both experiences, I carried all of you, who are part of our Mountain family, with me in my heart and in my prayers. For me, in the current and challenging world we find ourselves in, it renewed me and strengthened me in my desire to share our Franciscan love, charism and way of living with others. I truly believe that we can change the world - one person at time - by continuing to live out our faith in a contemplatively active way; and to always remember that as Francis said, “God gave me brothers (and sisters)” – we do this WITH each other, by responding to the call that God calls all of us to – to love one another deeply and authentically the best that we can.



## Let Your Light Shine

As the sun rises, Lord, Let your light shine on me.

Destroy the darkness about me, Scatter the darkness before me,  
Disperse the darkness behind me, Dispel the darkness within me.  
Let your light shine on me.

As the sun rises, Lord, Let your light shine on me.

The warmth of your Presence, The brightness of your love,  
The radiance of your joy, The shining of your hope.  
Let your light shine on me.

As the sun rises, Lord, Let your light shine on me.

Your light to guide, Your light to lead, Your light to direct, Your light to brighten.  
Let your light shine on me.



## A Voice of the Mountain on National Public Radio

**Matthew John Cressler, Ph.D.**, historian and author, and a newly elected member of the Mt. Irenaeus Board of Trustees, was recently invited to offer his expertise on Pope Leo XIV in the context of American Catholic history for National Public Radio's 1A show. **Please click HERE and take a moment to listen** to his keen insights on the cultural and historical significance of the first American born pope.

## Thank you for a Record-Breaking Mountain Fund Year! ~Mike Fenn, Executive Director

We wrapped up our fiscal year on May 31. As noted in our last email blast, it was in fact a year like no other. We all mourn the loss of Fr. Dan Riley, yet as he would want us to do, we pushed forward to ensure that his vision and legacy will continue.

Before Dan's passing, he was involved in the planning of our first Mt. Irenaeus 40 Hours of Giving. Our goal for that day was to raise \$40,000, but we raised much more than that. Thanks to friends like you, we raised well over \$100,000. Support

continued throughout the fiscal year, and we neared a total of \$400,000 for our Annual Mountain Fund. This far surpassed the greatest year we've had by over 10%.

We couldn't be more grateful for everyone's support.

Please save the date for this year's 40 Hours of Giving, which will start on Sept. 8 at 8 am! Similar to last year, we will share videos from the Mountain community and other friends showing how your gift has impacted our lives and the lives of our guests. Hopefully you will be able to continue to provide your support at that time. We will be sharing more about this as the months of summer continue onward.

I would like to share one last sincere thank you for all the support from this past year.





## 2025 Living Stones Weekend

On a cold Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, almost 100 friends gathered to celebrate the newest Living Stones of Mt. Irenaeus. On the perimeter of our Labyrinth, you will spot colorful tiles decorating the entrance ways. On these tiles are the names of those who have given a lifetime of talent and treasure to the Mountain. In 2017, we began to recognize those friends who have been so generous. This year was a monumental one, as we included our dear founder, Fr. Dan Riley, in this circle as well.



The day included a pattern of our usual day at the Mountain – morning prayer, followed by time on the land and sharing meals. In between, we had sessions related to looking back at the past 40 years and envisioning the future of the Mountain. There was lively conversation and engagement of all throughout the day. We culminated the afternoon with a Mass celebrated by Fr. Lou and reading the names of our new Living Stones. A delicious meal was prepared by Michael Sullivan, owner of the Hilltop Inn in Elmira, New York who was also a new Living Stone! If you have an interest in understanding our Living Stones program more, please [follow this link](#) to our website page, which we created to celebrate this group and list all three cohorts.

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## Memory and Legacy Light our Way Forward: Two Alumni Reflect on Returning to the Mountain

Visiting Mt. Irenaeus during the 2025 reunion reminded me of how lucky I am to be part of such a wholesome community. Being able to show my partner, Jayson, the place that was a significant part of my college experience where incredible friendships blossomed was very fulfilling and bittersweet.

Fr. Lou, Mari, Br. Joe, and Natalie welcomed us with open arms, and I soon forgot that it had been several years since I had last visited. While



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**\*\*In the photo above you can find Kristin and Liz in the group of students in the Chapel.  
\*\*Below are Jayson, Kristin, Natalie, Liz, and Roger.**

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touring the House of Peace, walking the grounds, and catching up with fellow classmate Liz and her husband Roger, I felt the familiar sense of comfort that many discover at the Mountain. Muscle memory guided my steps to the Chapel, and echoes of "There is a Light" played in my head as our group sat down for some conversation.

Nostalgia was a constant companion during this visit, and, as happy of a time we were having, my mind wouldn't let me forget that this was my first time back at the Mountain since Fr. Dan passed. My initial thought was he's not here, but what I quickly realized was he is here(!), and it's because of his vision, passion, and generosity that we can all continue being here.

After letting that realization settle upon me, my mind and heart were at ease. Every moment of silence, every laugh, and every hug showed me that Fr. Dan's legacy continues to embrace us and brings us together. I look forward to visiting again soon, perhaps at an upcoming women's overnight, and hope that others take the opportunity to visit when the time is right for them.

~ **Kristin Marsicovetere**



Visiting the Mountain was at the top of my list when I returned for my 15-year reunion in early June. I've had the print of the House of Peace in the living room of every apartment I've ever had, and now I finally had the chance to introduce my husband, a great lover of nature, to my favorite place.

We had the wonderful privilege of walking the grounds of the Mountain on a warm Saturday afternoon, taking in the trails, sitting in the Chapel, and feeling the presence of God (and Fr. Dan!) in every inch of the property.

I've always known that Bonaventure students had access to something really special at the Mountain, and it was such a joy to visit again, now fully in my adult years, with my favorite person by my side. Thank you for the continued generosity and wonderful hospitality, especially Natalie, who made all of us feel right at home.

~ **Liz Surprenant**

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## Meet our Summer Companions

Hi! My name is **Audney Burnside**! I am about to enter my senior year at Bonaventure as a Public Health Student! I am in the Certified Health Education Specialist and Occupational Therapy Programs as well. I am so thrilled to be living at the Mountain this summer!

I have been involved with the Mountain for about a year and a half now and had the opportunity this past school year to serve as a Mountain Community leader. The Mountain has been a second home to me, and a place that produces such meaningful conversations, lessons, and moments. All I want is to be able to give back to the Mountain, while also immersing myself in the simple lifestyle, which is why I decided to jump into this summer companionship!

I have been having a wonderful time here working on the land, meeting dozens of new people, and growing in my faith journey. Every day is a new adventure, and I am learning to cherish everything, even afternoons spent weed whacking in the blazing heat or enduring the smell of compost. There's never a day without immense laughter and joy. I am so happy here, and hope to meet some of you at the Mountain this summer!

Hi! I am **Adam Watson** and I am a rising junior from Webster, New York. My favorite place at the Mountain is Naomi's Knoll and my favorite color is green. A fun fact about me is that I biked the Erie Canal end-to-end. My first year at St. Bonaventure has had its highs and lows, and the Mountain always seemed to help me get out of the lows. I also knew that this was the year when I could do this. The Mountain gave so much to me, and now is my chance to give back to it. The first three weeks have been a rollercoaster from the highs of getting to meet so many amazing people to the low of finding a bat in my room (true story), and include the learning opportunities for yard work and gardening, as well as times to thrive and take a coddiwomple (defn: to travel in a purposeful manner towards a vague destination). I'm grateful for everything that has happened thus far and excited for what is to come!







## A Day's Work

Daily at Mt. Irenaeus, anyone can be found working: picking vegetables, cleaning cabins, or fixing loose doorknobs. During the summer that work can look a little different, as can the faces and hands completing it. Enter: our 2025 Mountain Summer Companions.

Audney Burnside and Adam Watson signed on to live into the life at the Mountain for nine weeks. Three weeks in, it's already been an experience.

Mowing, digging ditches, painting, cooking meals, and leading prayer are some of the tasks done weekly. Not everything is second nature - both students said their first encounter with the weed whacker was intimidating. Audney, who enjoys the physical labor of the summer, said she feels accomplished at the end of the day. Once she learned how to use heavy equipment, she showed others how it worked.

Often rigorous, summer work isn't only sweat and grit. Spending time with Br. Kevin in the garden is a rewarding experience for Adam that involves meaningful conversations and learning how to grow food.

According to Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, work is "where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God." This summer, Audney and Adam bring these words to life. What a gift.

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## **Our Kitchen Renovation is Complete!**

In December 2024, we changed the direction of Giving Tuesday, asking friends to invest in a renovation of our kitchen. Having served tens of thousands of meals, over time the island, stoves, countertops and cabinets all needed renewal. The flooring in front of the sink in the dishwasher area was wearing as well so we decided that needed replacing too.



We offer many thanks to Joel Serra, his wife Dianne Garrity, the recently deceased Bob Cancelosi, and his wife Barb, for providing a generous challenge gift that allowed us to raise close to \$40,000 to go toward this wonderful work. Many friends took on that challenge to bring us close to our goal for this project.

Working with great friends of ours, Jim Plukas, a talented woodworker, and his sister Sue Besecker, the design and installation of the countertops and the cabinetry, including the drawers, was completed. Another good friend who has done so much work around the Mountain, Paul Aroune, volunteered his time to replace the floor by the sink with durable tile and installed the tiling on the backsplash.

The result is a stunning new look to our beautiful kitchen. It enhances the kitchen as an important place of ministry at the Mountain. The “theology” of our kitchen allows students to slowly enter into the life of the Mountain, helping prepare meals, being in service to others, and most importantly, building relationships with one another in a way that carries forward in their lives, and brings the Kingdom of God closer to us.

We are in great gratitude to everyone who was part of the refreshing of this Sacred Spirit, a critical place of ministry for Mt. Irenaeus!

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**An Invitation: Wednesday  
Evenings of Re-Creation  
~Mike Kelley**

Jesus left us a lot of things, but did you know that one of his great gifts was a “to do” list? Not the kind you would put on your refrigerator (but you could), but the kind you would hold in your heart.

Starting on July 2nd, and continuing every Wednesday evening through July 30th, the Mt. Irenaeus Community will be hosting it's Wednesday Evenings of Re-Creation, with a focus on The Sermon on the Mount, specifically the BEATITUDES, the ‘to do’ list that Jesus left us.



**July 2nd**, the prayer and conversation will be on Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as Blessed are Those Who Mourn, for they will be Comforted.

**July 9th** will feature Blessed are the Merciful, for They Will be Shown Mercy, and Blessed are the Pure of Heart, for they will see God.

**July 16th** will be Blessed are the Peacemakers, for They Will be Called the Children of God.

**July 23rd** will be Blessed are Those who are Persecuted because of Righteousness, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**July 30** will conclude with Blessed are the Meek, for They will Inherit the Earth, and Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness, for They shall be Filled.

The Evenings will begin about 5:15 with Meditation, Prayer, Conversation and Reflective Time on the land.

There will be a dish to pass meal in the House of Peace (more conversation), followed by Mass in the Chapel. At this time July 23rd will have a Communion Service.

Please consider joining us for one, two, or all five evenings. All are Welcome, All Belong.

Peace and All Good.

Directions are on the Mt. Irenaeus website [www.mountainonline.org](http://www.mountainonline.org)

Contact Mike Kelley 716-474-5013 with any questions.

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## **Before Everything, God Is!!**

**~Steve Gilmore**

Mt. Irenaeus Summer Retreat #1 13-15 June

When you can describe a weekend as: richly rewarding, uplifting, thought provoking, spiritually enhancing, appetite satisfying (wine may have been involved), storytelling fun, relationship building, and soul renewing – in a venue exuding welcoming warmth and peace -- now that's a wonderful weekend!



The Mt. Irenaeus Council for Spirit and Life recently sponsored the first of two summer weekend retreats that was all that, and more. The retreat was attended by long time veterans of the Mountain, first timers to the Mountain, young and old, religious and lay, couples and singles, Mountain staff and student Summer Companions – 15 in all, who helped each other learn, reflect and grow. The weekend was a perfect blend of thoughtful Gospel readings, small group discussion, large group conversation, prayer, petition offering and quiet time of contemplation.

Karen Pulaski, Director of Faith Formation sculpted and helped facilitate a rich program that led the retreat along three segments:

- Circumspection – Look Around
- Inspection – Look Within
- Re-spection – Look Up

One of the more spiritually moving and thought-provoking sessions was when the retreat participants physically and artistically (well, maybe not so much) drew and then shared what their image of God is – the wide variety of images and ensuing discussion majestically brought the group together.

The weekend ended on the high note of inspiring and sharing that we are *all* a part of God's magnificent creation and with the challenge to go out into the world to share that by our spirit and example.

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**Room is still available for our second summer weekend retreat which will take place on July 11-13. If you are interested in this retreat opportunity please contact Karen at [kpulaski5204@aol.com](mailto:kpulaski5204@aol.com) or call our office at 716-375-2096.**

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### **Upcoming Events:**

**Schedule and ways to participate can also be found online [HERE](#).**

**Every Sunday - Mass is at 11 am with a dish-to-pass brunch following Mass.**

**All are Welcome - All Belong!**

### **June:**

June 23-27 - Franciscan Friars on Retreat at the Mountain

### **July:**

July 2 - Wednesday Evening of Re-Creation

July 6 - Franciscan Sojourners Zoom - all are welcome! Email us for more information.

July 9 - Wednesday Evening of Re-Creation

**July 11-13 - Weekend Retreat - call for availability 585-973-2470 - reservations required**

July 16 - Mountain Community and University Ministries Retreat

July 16 - Wednesday Evening of Re-Creation

July 20 - Student Event

July 23 - Wednesday Evening of Re-Creation

July 30 - Wednesday Evening of Re-Creation

### **August:**



Aug 20 - Student Event at the Mountain  
Aug 22 - Student Event at the Mountain

### September:

Sept 1 - Mountain Offices Closed,  
please call the House of Peace at 585-  
973-2470

**Sept 8-9 - 40 Hours of Giving  
Appeal - More info to come!**

Sept 12-13 - Mt. Irenaeus Board  
Meeting

Sept 14-17 - Friars on Retreat



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