

**Giardini, Mary D.**

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**From:** Mt. Irenaeus <peace@mountainonline.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 18, 2025 1:36 PM  
**To:** Giardini, Mary D.  
**Subject:** "Making All Things New!" - December 2025 - Love in our Midst, Mass Schedule, 25 Days of Gratitude, Events at the Mountain



Making All Things New

December 2025



### **Love in our Midst**

In these final days of Advent, invoking the wisdom of Murray Bodo, OFM, [Br. Kevin reflects on](#) how St. Francis taught us about the beauty of the incarnate Christ by offering us the first nativity scene, placing before us a child to care for, to cherish. Inspired by the love of presence that he finds on campus, and at the Mountain, Br. Kevin calls us, in the spirit of Francis, to “make love alive” for one another in this Christmas season.

*[Francis: The journey and the dream (1972), by Murray Bodo, OFM]*



# Wise Men Still Seek Him

CHRISTMAS AT  
MT. IRENAEUS

Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. Mass

Christmas Day

11:00 a.m. Mass

New Year's Eve

No Mass

New Year's Day

11:00 a.m. Mass

Every Sunday

11:00 a.m. Mass & Community Brunch



Matthew Cressler, Mountain Board Member, offers us an Advent reflection - click on the picture above to hear his words.

We hope you have been enjoying our [25 Days of Gratitude](#) for this Advent season.

Our good friend Mary Freeman, who is part of our “Weekends and More” branch of The Mountain’s Council for Spirit and Life, came up with the idea that we share “expressions of gratitude” during the season of Advent.

Sprung from the truth that there are many voices of the Mountain, each day of the Advent calendar has included either a written or recorded reflection from a unique voice of our larger Mountain Family.

There are only a few days left in Advent but if you have not had the chance to keep up with the reflections, you can find them all by [CLICKING HERE](#) to visit our website where you will find the first 21 reflections. The last 4 will be posted by Sunday morning.



***The Weekends and More branch of the Council for Spirit and Life prayed the Stations of the Cross on Saturday, December 6, at the Mountain. Don Smith, a branch member, authored the stations along the theme of the Jubilee Year of Hope. His reflection is below.***

Stations of the Cross in Advent? In the snow? Isn't that counter intuitive? Those were the questions bouncing around in my head when the Weekends & More group decided to host the prayer. To help me get my head (and ultimately my heart) around it, I started praying over the stations, and trying to find how they relate to Christ's coming in a hopeful way.

I was shocked when my personal prayer soon became a set of 14 Stations that we were able to pray as a group in the snow of Mt. Irenaeus. The goal was simple: come together and see hope in the darkness. As a group we were able to see the hope Mary gave to Jesus, and that Jesus gave to the women of Jerusalem; the hope of Jesus getting up three times after falling, and the hope brought to us by the foreigner. We even pondered and prayed over the hope that comes in carrying on and acting out of love, even when we would rather not (like burying Jesus).

Like so much at the Mountain, this experience helped make the Stations new in Jesus Christ.



## Younger Alumni and Friends Gather on Zoom

Ian McBride, Convener for the Mountain, invites Young(er) Alumni of SBU and friends to gather together on Zoom during this time of Advent leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ. It's a time to gather with friends - old and new - to discuss ways to lead with intention to create peace in and around our world as we start the new year.

Are you an SBU alum or upperclassman from the years 2005 to 2028? Join us and meet likeminded people who want to connect and support each other. More information can be found by [clicking HERE](#).

Mark your calendars! Ian and the Younger Alumni group will meet again for Lent! Dates and times will be announced closer to the Lenten season.

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## Celebrating Christmas with a Tree from Our Land

Did you know that prior to the Mountain buying the land it currently occupies in West Clarksville, NY, the property was an old Christmas tree farm?

Those trees planted so long ago have grown past their usefulness as indoor Christmas trees, but some of their seedlings have come to take their place, and each year Br. Joe walks the land to find just the right one for the House of Peace.

With a small group of visitors, Br. Joe cuts the perfect tree and transports it back to the House and sets it up in the dining room where it waits for our Advent Overnight when we invite students and others to come and decorate it. Each ornament that is placed upon its branches represents a prayer or intention from the one who placed it. This year, Declan Donahue, pictured below riding back with this year's tree, helped Br. Joe and then together they laced it with lights.



The Christmas tree in the House of Peace after Br. Joe and Declan stand it up.



## **Congrats to the SBU Men's Rugby Team: Men's Division I National Champions!**

Part of the team's journey this season began in fellowship together at the Mountain - [click HERE](#) to hear reflections of their time with us in August!



60 pair of shoes on the porch as the Rugby team begin their sharing session inside Holy Peace Chapel.

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## Oh, What Fun it is to...Climb the Mountain!

The end of the Fall semester always brings a rush of student activity at the Mountain. From clubs to retreats to reading day, we've had a jam-packed end of the semester, and we wouldn't have it any other way! Intercollegiate Weekend was a bustling weekend with students from SBU, Geneseo, RIT, and Alfred. The Latin American Student Organization (LASO) club members brought contemplation and joy to the House of Peace as they walked the labyrinth and helped Br. Kevin make a wreath out of boughs from a downed tree that Br. Joe cut up. Thanksgiving dinner had the house buzzing again as nearly 40 people joined together to make a delicious meal and spend time together. The students who joined us for the Advent overnight helped shine a light in the darkness as they decorated the Christmas tree, made the wreath for the House of Peace, and helped us usher in the joy of the Advent season. Finally, 30 students climbed the Mountain for reading day and spent a peaceful day at the Mountain studying, working hard, and even taking a dip in the frozen pond!

We thank everyone who has chosen to climb the Mountain this semester, and we thank all those whose generous spirits make these opportunities for students possible!





## Mountain Community Leader and SBU Alumna Speaks at Celebration

Earlier this month in Washington, D.C. St. Bonaventure University completed a recent fundraising campaign and celebrated with a gathering. At this gathering, SBU alumna and dear friend of the Mountain, Claire Fisher, was asked to

share a reflection about her experience at St. Bonaventure University.

As a former summer companion and communications intern for the Mountain, Claire's words were deeply moving and spoke of the support and accompaniment that she received during her four years involved at the Mountain and SBU. Claire also spoke about her growing community as part of the year of service she is participating in with Franciscan Mission Service.

Claire is a shining example of the faith-based leadership formation that we strive to develop while students are part of our life. Keep reading to hear what Claire had to say to the gathered St. Bonaventure donors:

Good evening, everyone, and a huge thank you to Fr. Stephen for his wonderful introduction.

Ever since I was a child, I have felt a part of the Bonaventure family. My grandfather graduated in 1967, and both my parents graduated in 1994. I was even an avid member of the basketball team's 'Pup Club' all the way in New Jersey. So, when I asked myself what it means to be a Bonnie, I knew it meant **family** and it meant **community**.

But *who* is my community? Who are my neighbors? That is what my Bonaventure education taught me.

September of my freshman year, I had the opportunity to visit Mt. Irenaeus at the same time as I was taking a Saints Francis & Clare course. Once I introduced myself, Fr. Dan Riley exclaimed, "Your name is Claire, you are meant to be here!"

Don't we all want to feel that way, **that we are meant to be here?**

That's what it means to be Franciscan and to be a Bonnie. It's to welcome others into your community.

From then on, I delved deeper into my love of Saints Francis and Clare. From learning about them and their charisms in classes, at the Mountain and University Ministries, I watched my community wildly grow. It became the Bona Buddy I

connected with, those I encountered on Mountain on the Road, and even to groups like Jandoli Women in Communication or Her Campus, where my goal was to make every member feel welcomed, seen, and supported.

Now in Washington, I carry the Franciscan charism with me that I learned from Bonaventure. Not only am I a part of a Franciscan year of service program, but my site placement is at a Franciscan advocacy organization. I have a feeling Fr. Dan had something to do with that placement.

My community continues to expand here. My community is the people I live in prayerful community with at the Casa San Salvador. My community is all of those on SNAP programs I advocate for, and every person I meet through Franciscan Action Network conferences, vigils and events.

With your donations, you have given me the opportunity of a lifetime: to offer the gift of **accompaniment and solidarity** with so many members of our Bonaventure family, whether we know them or not.

Your commitment to St. Bonaventure's charisms has changed my life, and so many lives, for the better. Thank you, peace and all good.

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### Upcoming Events:

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

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

#### **December:**

Dec 18 - **8:30 pm** - Young Alumni Zoom - [click HERE](#)

Dec 21 - **Fourth Sunday of Advent - Love**

Dec 24 - **7 pm** - Christmas Vigil at Holy Peace Chapel - please arrive early  
Dec 25 - **11 am** - Christmas Day Mass at Holy Peace Chapel - please arrive early

Dec 23-Jan 2 - Mountain Offices Closed, please call the House of Peace at 585-973-2470 if you have questions

#### **January:**



A mini "On the Road" visit with lifetime friends of the Mountain, Marv and Donna Stocker!

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Jan 1 - **11 am** - Mass at Holy Peace Chapel - please arrive early  
Jan 8 - **8:30 pm** - Young Alumni Zoom - [click HERE](#)  
Jan 19 - Mountain Offices Closed, please call the House of Peace at 585-973-2470 if you have questions  
Jan 23 - Student Event on Campus  
Jan 24 - Student Event at the Mountain  
Jan 31 - Student Event at the Mountain

**February:**

Feb 7 - Mt. Irenaeus Board Meeting  
Feb 18 - Ash Wednesday - Ashes distributed on SBU campus

Keep watching for the dates for our Young Alumni Lenten Zoom gatherings which should start in February.

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Br. Kevin and the students who helped make the traditional wreath for the House of Peace.

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