

# **The History**

**of the**

# **Bergamo Center**

## **for Lifelong Learning**

**BERGAMO  
CENTER**



**YEARS SERVING  
GOD'S PEOPLE**

We thank the generous sponsors of our Jubilee Celebration 2017:  
Miller-Valentine Group, Houser Asphalt & Concrete and The Enterprise Roofing & Sheet Metal Co.

*1/2/2019 Printing*

## The Beginnings - Mount Saint John

Glaciers, moving southward through Ohio 20,000 years ago, formed Mount Saint John's terrain. When the glacier stopped moving and started melting, it left large hills made up of sand, gravel and clay. Because water couldn't soak through the layer of clay, many springs developed. The earliest trees were similar to ones you would find today in Canada (the seeds came from the glaciers). After the glaciers were gone, about 16,000 years ago, the pine forests grew. By 10,000 years ago, the climate was warmer and drier. The prairies were plentiful as long as 6,000 years ago.

Today the property has woods with oak, hickory trees on areas that have been farmed but are now grown over. There's an old field with many thistles, ironweed and goldenrod, a marsh formed by a large spring and a spring wildflower area contain trillium, lilies, violets, May apples and Jack-in-the-Pulpit and there is a restored prairie

Bro. Don Geiger is primarily responsible for restoring the prairie and developing the 1.5 mile nature trail. He started in 1986 planting prairie grasses and flowers on the eastern 14 acres. You can walk back to this area or see it from I-675. The whole area of woods and trails and prairie is an Outdoor Education Center as part of the Ohio Natural Landmark Program.

The first people arrived about 11,500 years ago. In 1,000 B.C., give or take a couple hundred years, the Adena Indians moved into the area. The Hopewell Indians came here about 1,500 years ago (500 A.D.). These people had long-distance trade with other Indian tribes as far away as Wyoming, North Dakota, Florida and North Carolina. The Indians of the Fort Ancient group lived in the area from 950 to 1,700. The preserved village on the Miami River, just south of the UD arena, was inhabited by this tribe during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hunting was done, but about 50% of the Fort Ancient people's diet came from the food they grew.

In 1700, Miami Indians came, joined with the Shawnee Indians and fought the white settlers. The Nature Preserve is located in a region that was traditionally reserved as an Indian hunting area. The Indians were defeated at the battle of Fallen Timbers, and the Northwest Territory was given to the white settlers by the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. The first Euro-Americans to arrive in this area were John Patterson and his family. They settled on land west of the current Nature Preserve.

The Watervliet Shaker Community was founded in 1806. The Shakers were also known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's second appearing: families lived separately in men's and women's houses. The only way the community grew from the early members was to adopt children who were homeless or invite adults to convert to their way of life.

The Watervliet community grew to about 100 members and lived on land that is now Research Park and Bergamo/Mt. St. John. The community owned 800 acres communally and set up a food preservation house, sawmill, gristmill, a woolen mill, a blue dye house, broom factory and paint shop. They remained here until 1900, when they moved to another Shaker Village at Union. The land was sold in 1902 to Denison State Hospital farm. In 1983 the land became the center of the Miami Valley Research Park.

Watervliet was one of two Shaker towns in Ohio and one of nineteen in the United States. You can visit a restored Shaker village in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky near Lexington. The Shakers wrote beautiful spiritual music. "Tis a Gift to be Simple" is a Shaker song. They invented many practical tools and household aids such as the flat broom, circular saw, perfectly crafted furniture and the washing machine.

The people were trying to live in perfect harmony with nature, God and each other – Utopia. They were hard working and generous. Their day to day life's motto was to "keep their hands to work and their hearts to God". In the 1960's, the remains of two bodies were found on the hill top north of the Nature Trail entrance. It is presumed that the remains were those of Shakers.

The original 80 acres of Mt. St. John were purchased by the Marianists from Mr. Orange A. Ozias in 1910 for \$10,000. In 1912, another 21 acres were bought for \$5,700. There were three buildings on the properties: a tenant farmhouse (it was close to where Sieben Hall now stands), an adjacent barn and a brick house, which was located southeast of the Patterson road entrance.

Here is how the Mount Saint John and property has developed:

1911 The Novitiate – first called St. Anne's Novitiate. In 1956 it became the Marianist Retreat Center; in 1969 it became the Novitiate again.

1913 The Normal School to train teachers began. Later it was called the Administration building. It was razed in 1977. It was situated where the current Chaminade Hall is located.

1920 The swimming pool was opened.

1921 The Eichelberger pig farm was purchased. Triangular in shape, it extended to the north along East Patterson road. It was purchased in order to build the Marianist College, which later came to be known as Marianist Hall, and since reduced in size and remodeled into the current Marianist Mission.

1925 Completion of the Sister's house and infirmary. Currently it is called Meyer Hall; a residence for Marianists.

1929 The Grotto was dedicated.

1944 Marianist Publications were established.

1948 The Croft farm was purchased. The property extended as far as Grange Hall road.

St. Joseph Hall was constructed entirely by the Brothers, including electrical and plumbing work.

1961 The cornerstones were laid for Marianist College and Queen of Apostles Chapel. Although, primarily a place of residence, some classes were held there. However, routinely, students were bussed to the University of Dayton.

1962 A new swimming pool and outdoor basketball courts were opened, and the Marianist cemetery was developed.

1963 The farm was discontinued, the cattle sold and the farm buildings were razed.

1965 The Marianist Provincialate moved from Mt. St. John to High Acres in Oakwood, then back to Marianist Hall in 1974.

1967 Roncalli (Bergamo) center was built.

There are many stories about the days the property served as the Mother house, Novitiate and college. While the farm was operational, the Brothers would can fruits and vegetables for the pantry shelves. One story tells of an old gym shoe placed in a batch to be canned. The prank wasn't discovered until the next winter when the Sisters who cooked for the Marianists, opened the can. Explosions sometimes heard on the property were not caused by the blasting for road construction but by jars of exploding applesauce which were well into the fermenting process. One of the Provincials was known to get on a bulldozer himself in order to move the building program along.

## The Founding Years of Bergamo - 1960's

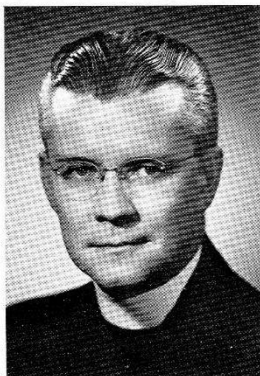
The transition of Mount Saint John of being primarily property owned and used by the Marianists to form their members in religious life and to administrate the Province, to a place where people came for lifelong learning, started in the 60's.

The Marianists were changing. The number of men joining was dropping. Those who did tended to be older than previous recruits. The men in the Order made a decision to live in small communities clustered around the University of Dayton. The large classrooms of Marianist Hall and the numerous areas of residence on the property were no longer needed.

The province decided to use the facilities to encourage educational programs and retreats for renewal. The St. Anne building, one of the first buildings on the site was used as the novitiate until the 1950s when the building became a Marianist retreat center. Groups from the surrounding communities started using the conference space for meetings, training and retreats. Facilities were rented out to these groups and the scope of the programs offered by the Marianists itself expanded from youth retreats and renewal programs to a wide spectrum of offerings, including counseling and training.

In 1960, men of the Marianist Retreat League began raising funds to expand the Retreat House and build a program for a new Renewal Center. Many donations were received through a "Brick-a-month Club", which suggests donors were encouraged to contribute the value of one brick in the construction each month. Total cost of the retreat Center was projected at \$1,300,000.

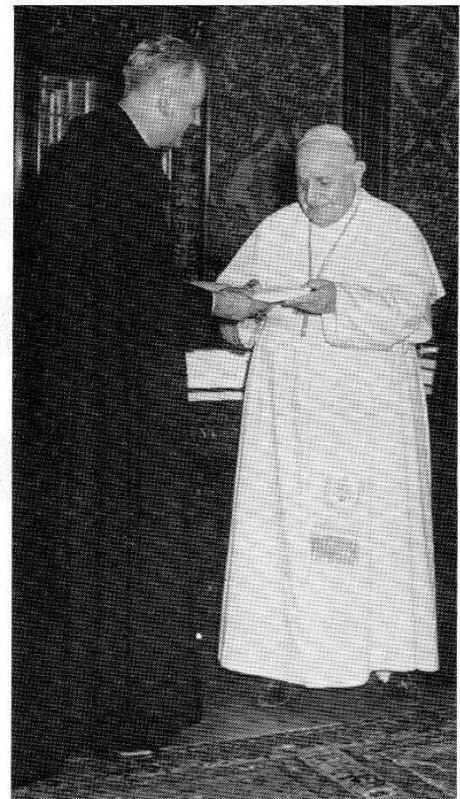
On January 22, 1965, the visiting Provincial Superior, General Very Reverend Paul J. Hoffer, SM blessed the site for Bergamo John XXIII Center for Christian Renewal. The Catholic Telegraph reported on that day, "A step toward the development of the Marianist Center of Christian Renewal in Dayton will be made today, with the blessing of a site for new \$750,000 retreat house. The proposed structure will be the second retreat house at Mt. St. John.... The present Marianist Retreat House will be used exclusively for youth retreats and activities when the new building is in operation.



Very Rev. James M. Darby, S.M., Ph.D.  
Provincial of the Cincinnati Province

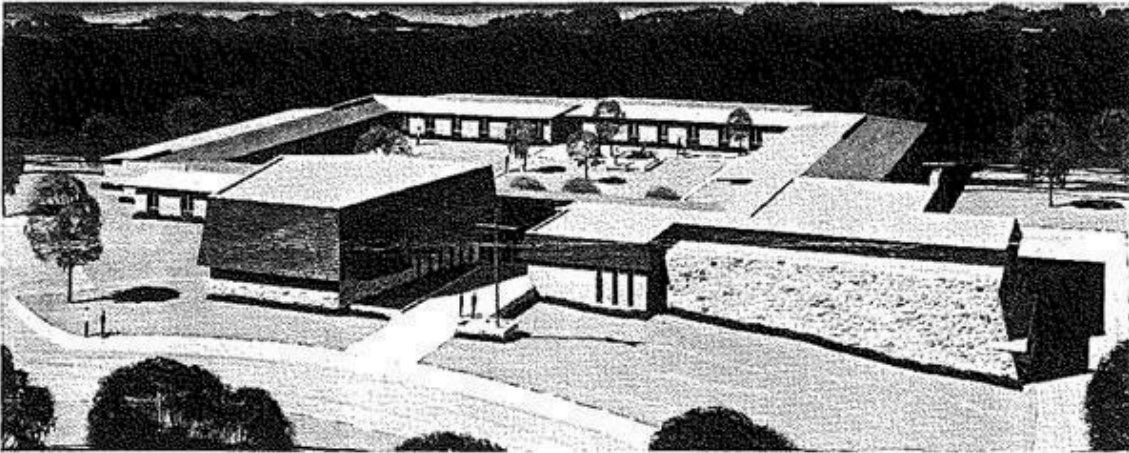
The center (called the Bergamo-Pope John XXIII Center) was named by the Rev. M. Darby, Provincial Superior...

"The idea of a center of Christian Renewal," explained Fr. Crenner (Dir. of the Marianist Retreat House since 1957), comes from the whole spirit of the Vatican Ecumenical Council and the ecumenical movement." As he put it, "I would like to see this Center used to such an extent in this type of dialogue that it would benefit the whole of the Greater Dayton area, to enable us to live together as brothers under the fatherhood of God."



Pope John XXIII commented to the Very Rev. P. Joseph Hoffer, Superior General of the Marianists: "Let your objective and effort in the field of the apostolate be to devote your ingenuity and your strength for the restoration of all things in Christ, under the leadership of Mary."

## BERGAMO, CENTER OF CHRISTIAN RENEWAL



The December 1965 Marianist Bulletin published by the Cincinnati and New York Provinces of the Society of Mary described a new facility to be built on the campus:

The one million dollar Renewal Center named after the birthplace of Pope John XXIII will be located on the east campus of the University (formerly Mount St. John).

Bergamo will probably be the only center of its kind in the United States, and shall be under the jurisdiction of the Very Rev. James M. Darby, S.M., Provincial of the Cincinnati Province of the Society of Mary.

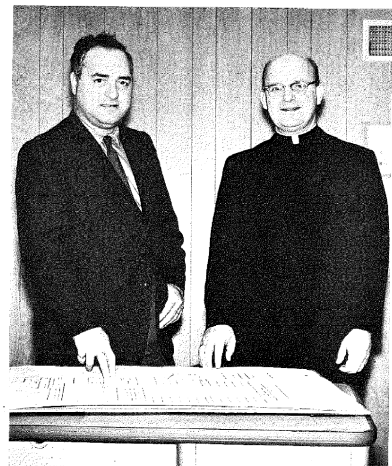
Bids for construction of the Center, in February 1966; construction begins in April and it is to be opened in 1967.

The center will be for workshops, seminars, lectures, institutes, and meetings for all interested in the teachings of Pope John. It will be available to interfaith, inter-racial, professional, youth, family, business and labor groups.

Grateful will we be to any who are able to help finance this new Cincinnati province of the Society of Mary Center for Christian renewal.

That news bulletin suggests that the name of Mount Saint John had at that time been changed to the "East Campus." The projected price tag for the structure listed in various reports ranged from \$750,000 to \$1,300,000.

Ground was broken for the new Center on May 11, 1966, in the presence of Marianists, Victor Cassano, Edwin Besch and Jack Gallivan. Lay involvement in the project was essential for the success up the process including fund raising. Prominent businessman and Catholic layman Victor Cassano was a leader. In the promotional brochure titled *Aggiornamento*, Mr. Cassano writes, "Our new retreat house will only become a reality with our continued prayers, work, and sacrifices and also with our continued support, be it monetary or otherwise. Then we will soon realize our dream fulfilled. Retreat House is not the word to be used. Retreat means to back up, to



Mr. Victor Cassano and  
Father William A. Crenner, S.M.,

withdraw. This will become a Center of Advancement, instead of Retreat. After our exposure to the Center we advance spiritually, we advance in the Love of Christ and Love of our fellow man. So let us look at this new edifice as a Center of Advancement in Apostolic Work.

As work progressed on the Center the excitement around the “East Campus” was growing, as described in this report from the Dayton Journal Herald on October 14, 1966.

“Student brothers at the University of Dayton’s East Campus in Beavercreek don’t have a candidate for homecoming queen, so they are sponsoring a float instead. Their entry in tomorrow’s homecoming parade will be the first for the East Campus. Theme of the float is “Happiness in Openness.”

The brother’s entry will be symbolic of the Bergamo Center, the interfaith center under construction on East Campus. The center will provide person of all faiths a place for reflection and prayer...Several brothers are sharing in construction of the float and are staging a “twist-a-thon” to stuff the float with tissue.”

The altar in the assembly of the Roncalli Center was designed by Henry Setter (1929-2009) from a solid fossilized sandstone from an Ohio quarry. The original tabernacle with colored enamel plates in the southwest corner of the assembly was crafted by Louis Weber.

The chapel design overall with large wooden beams evokes the feeling of a barn, like the one that once stood not far from the footprint of the present day center. The barn had long been a source of pride and sustenance for the Brothers at Mount Saint John. The dairy farm was cited in 1957 as the top dairy producer in all of Greene County with a milk and butterfat production twice that of the state of Ohio average.

The two large colorful windows were made from chunk glass crafted in abstract color design by Herman Verbinnen (1932-1987) of Cincinnati. With an ecumenical outreach in mind, the windows were made abstract since the assembly space would be used by various denominations. Hence there are no specific religious symbols incorporated in to the design. The stained glass was to help set a meditative atmosphere for those using the space. Br. Joseph Barrish, S.M. goes on to describe the stained glass:

“Set in a special resin compound which allows for expansion and contraction because of temperature differences, the faceted colored glass is solid chunks that form the large wall surfaces of the two main windows as well as the smaller windows at eye level. The shapes used in the design often do conjure up specific images – chalices, birds, and people. The time of day, the intensity of the exterior light all help to make the assembly and the windows a very special space at Bergamo...”



Another unique piece of art is the very stylized dove and image of John the XXII that sets in the Bergamo courtyard. This piece was also designed by Henry Setter (1929-2009) and cast in bronze by Roman Art Bronze Co, Corona, New York. The sculpture reflects John XXIII’s encyclical, *Peace on Earth*. The dove’s swollen breast is repeated in the almost comical, cheerful, peaceful John XXIII. The portrait of John’s likeness was eliminated in favor of the overall stylization of anatomy (both in the dove and John). The actual quote which prompted the figure reads:

“There can be no peace in the world unless each man is at peace in his own heart.” --John XXIII

Locating a piece of buff-colored Miami-Valley rubble stone (an extremely hard limestone) in the West Milton Quarry, Henry Setter shaped the statue-base at the Gregory Stone Co. factory. Two sides retain the irregular surfaces from the quarry. The other two saw-cut faces have the words "Peace on Earth...." And an olive branch symbol is incised. The base weighs about 1000 lbs.

It should be explained that "Bergamo" is the name of a small town in Northern Italy, northeast of Milan, with a double claim to fame. In Bergamo Maria Montessori began her revolutionary approach to education. And near Bergamo is the birthplace of Guiseppe Roncalli, later known as Pope John XXIII. In 1967, Bergamo was founded in the spirit of this man whose vision and charisma inspired and launched the Second Vatican Council – the greatest Catholic event of the twentieth century. The spirit of Pope John XXIII is the spirit of the Bergamo Center.



The contractor's work proceeded on schedule through at least the month of January aided by a mild winter up to that point. Stone masons worked their way up toward the roof. Plumbers and carpenters continued without interruption once all the living quarters were closed in. The hope was that work would be finished by June of 1967.



Bergamo was first listed on the Cincinnati Province Personnel of January 1967. At that time it was shown as an activity at Mount St. John with the title "Bergamo" and Rev. John Kelly, S.M., as sub-director. Rev. Thomas Stanley, S.M., was director of the entire Mount St. John (University of Dayton East Campus) complex. Bergamo first appeared as a separate entity of the Province of Cincinnati in the August 15, 1967, Personnel.

It was on July 20, 1967 Rev. George B. Barrett, S.M., Vice President of the University of Dayton, was named Director of *Bergamo, the Pope John XXIII Center of Christian Renewal*, on the University's East Campus. Father Barrett, who had been the University's Vice President since 1958 retained his position as UD's Vice President, but did not serve as the religious director of the school's West Campus. Father Kelley remained with Bergamo, while continuing his studies as professor of theology at UD.

Bro. Donald Wigal, who had been at Cincinnati's Purcell High School, became sub-director of Bergamo, while Rev. Charles Brady, S.M., served as the chaplain and Bro. Paul Merland, S.M., the business manager. These men had been a part of the UD community.

The center was officially dedicated on October 2, 1967, with Bishop Edward McCarthy, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, presiding. The dedication was held simultaneously with the sesquicentennial of the Society of Mary.

Other Marianists assigned to Bergamo were Rev. John Bakle, S.M., Rev. James Kunes, S.M.; and Rev. William Crenner, S.M., and Brothers James Heft, S. M., Joseph Janning, S.M., Robert Fleck, S.M. and John Hockendon, S.M. Rev. Martin Rauscher, S.M., and Brothers John Drerup, S.M., and Norman Eckl, S.M., all of the East Campus, who all contributed services to Bergamo.

Perhaps the best way to describe the construction and features of the newly built Bergamo building is in the words from the publication *MARYtoday*, published in 1967. One gets the flavor of the pride and excitement the new building generated with its opening in 1967.

To accommodate such groups, a motel-like facility was constructed around a center courtyard more than one half the area of a football field. The cost does not include the labor of the Brothers finishing the details, such as pointing, tile laying, and landscaping. It also does not include the cost of the land on which the Center is built. So, as one can readily see, they have a rather imposing structure for the actual expenditure.

As one approaches the new building, the thirty foot, eight-inch "I" beam dominates the entrance. The building features a mansard roof and hand cut stone walls. The outside appearance of the building was somewhat irreverently described by one of the Brothers as "early American barn." We can assure you, however, that from the outside this building is an imposing and tastefully designed structure.

The entire concept is one of total flexibility to permit virtually any use of the building for virtually any size group or groups. It will accommodate as many as 93 overnight guests comfortably in 27 single rooms and 33 double rooms. Complete privacy is now insured for married couples making retreats in the pastoral programs.

The accommodations are so designed as to easily permit the conducting of as many as four separate programs for individual groups at any one time without jeopardizing the integrity of any of them.

A spacious lounge, with a natural brick fireplace, is included for the relaxation of the visitors and also may serve well as a meeting or presentation room. Its atmosphere is relaxing and warm.

A large chapel also is a dominant feature of the front portion of the building. Its inspiring stained glass windows were designed by a Cincinnati artist, Herbert Verbin. In addition to the windows, Verbin is working on tapestries depicting the dove of peace.

Paintings which will serve the decorative aspect of the building will be the work of another out-of-city artist, Mr. Gerald Hardy of New York. These will be another effort to make a visit to BERGAMO a rewarding experience, both spiritually and artistically. The Baptistry is another rather interesting symbol. The baptismal font is set in the center of the Baptistry and sunken approximately two feet. Steps surround the font and symbolize man's stepping down into the

valley of sin and rising on the other side as a child of God.

A very contemporary meeting room is available for large presentations, or may be divided by folding walls to permit up to four smaller presentations at any given time.

The Courtyard mentioned earlier is highlighted by an original fountain designed and built by the talented Brother Anthony Young from Hawaii, who is also responsible for the overall, well-designed landscaping. Brother John Hochendoner was responsible for the execution of the plans. In the rear of the building, a grassy hillside has been landscaped as an amphitheater, with the obvious use for outdoor programs.

Modern features in the building are complete, with year round air conditioning by one of the leading manufacturers as well as a very sophisticated communications system throughout by Executone. With all the innovations in both the building and the concept, no one has forgotten the Pastoral Retreat programs, which preceded the Center. All the programs mentioned before will move to the new building where they can be handled in a more comfortable atmosphere. Only the young people's retreats and other experimental programs for youth will remain in the older building.

The current Director of Bergamo is Father George Barrett, S.M., Vice-president of the University of Dayton. He came to Bergamo from the West Campus of the University of Dayton, where he had served as Director.

Assisting him and directing the special programs for which the Center is becoming so well-known is Father John Kelley, a native Ohioan and professor of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Dayton.

"All groups, regardless of religious affiliation, are invited to inquire about our facilities here at Bergamo. We do ask, however, that we be permitted to share in the planning of their program. It is our hope we can broaden the awareness of the mission of Bergamo in this manner," commented Father Kelley.

Father Kelley went on to say that BERGAMO'S primary concern is to broaden man's experiences with the problems of his complex world. "We believe," he said, "we can best serve this end by deepening our own understanding of these problems through a wide variety of interest groups using our center."

### **About the building**

- Construction began, May, 1966.
- Completion, August, 1967.
- Approximate cost, \$1,300,000 (not including the land value or labor of the Brothers).
- A 53,000 square foot motel - like facility designed around a 181 x 90 foot courtyard.
- Accommodations for 93 persons: 27 single rooms with bath; 33 double rooms with bath.
- Arranged to handle four separate groups, if desired.
- Fully air-conditioned.

- Large meeting room which may be subdivided into four.
- Windows and tapestry in assembly hall by Herman Verbinnen of Cincinnati.
- Courtyard highlighted by a fountain set in a Japanese style garden.
- Architects: Pretzinger and Pretzinger Architects, Dayton, Ohio.
- Builder: B. G. Danis Construction Company, Dayton, Ohio

Programs were scheduled for the Center even before the fall dedication and formal opening, including a formal program entitled *Theology of Renewal*. Several world figures agreed to be present, among them Fr. Bernard Haering, Professor of Moral Theology in Rome; Canon Charles Moeller, Professor at the Louvain, Switzerland; Archbishop George Hakim, the only Catholic Bishop in Israel; and Rabbi Herbert Brichto, Professor of Scripture at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and Fr. Eric Mascall, Anglican priest and professor at the University of London. This three day session for professors of theology; some non-Catholics were expected to participate.

A further example of the ecumenical spirit of the new Center, one of the first programs hosted in the Center in late October 1967 was a program underwritten by the Protestant magazine, *Guideposts*. With the cooperation of several leading Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish friends, a program entitled "Community of Faith" was about to take place. What was envisioned was several days of community living for the principal religious leaders from this area to hear explanations of the theme, "The community of faith in the service of the community of mankind." The description goes on to suggest, "They will have intense small group sessions and several sessions open to the public at the University of Dayton. They will have common worship each day and common meals and recreation. By this type of formation in fraternal charity and experience in understanding, a whole new set of attitudes towards faith and public life will develop." The group included some leading scholars including Fr. Demetrios Constantelos, Holy Cross Orthodox Seminary; Mr. Mark Gibbs, President of the Audenshaw foundations; Most Reverend Paul Hallinan, Archbishop of Atlanta; Dr. Elwyn Smith, Editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*; and Rabbi Marc H. Tannenbaum, American Jewish Committee.

The first three day high school retreats in January of 1968 were with Purcell High School, Moeller High School and Chaminade High School.

By 1969, Bergamo was the primary focus on the property with the Marianists using small portions for office space, residence and the Novitiate. The personnel at Bergamo was primarily Marianist in the beginning, but between 1969 and 1988, more persons with the expertise needed to expand programs were hired and the number of Marianists directly employed by Bergamo declined.

## Bergamo in 1970-80's

Beginning in the 70's one of the perennial programs offered each summer at the Bergamo Center is LIFE. Marianist LIFE (Living In Faith Experience) is a national faith formation program for high school students rooted in Catholic and Marianist tradition. Based on the founder's vision for building a community of communities to change the world, Marianist LIFE provides Marianist and non-Marianist institutions opportunities for communities of faith to form, grow, and flourish. Since 1970, Marianist LIFE communities have developed in many parishes and high schools. There are approximately 40 institutions actively involved with Marianist LIFE in 10 states, Puerto Rico and Ireland. LIFE (Living In Faith Experience) does not end after high school. The purpose of Marianist LIFE is to lead young people from high school Marianist LIFE Communities to the greater Marianist Family and Marianist Lay Communities.

Bergamo was a lively place in the early 1970's. A sampling of some of the programs at the time includes one publicized in the *Aggiornamento* newsletter of Nov. of 1970.

### PHIL DONAHUE OPENS WORKSHOP

Phil Donahue, widely acclaimed for his daily television show, is the keynote speaker at a student Government Leadership Training Workshop scheduled for Dec. 4-6 at the Bergamo Executive House. This training session will explore new patterns of student leadership for the '70's, use of "group processes" to heighten communications, how to implement effective decisions and design action programs, and team approaches to leadership development. Team leader of the program is Dr. John Jansen and the staff includes members of project interface. For details, contact Richard Strathern at Bergamo Center.



Also in 1970, the Marianists asked Bergamo Center to take over another large building on the campus, Marianist Hall to use for retreats, conferences, meetings and educational events. A listing of some of the more notable speakers, and presenters and their topics and dates of their presentations at Bergamo during these years include:



### **James Baldwin**

Writer, novelist, poet, playwright, activist  
"Negro In America Life and History", Nov. 22, 23 1968



### **Mary Catherine Bateson**

Cultural Anthropologist, Daughter of Margaret Mead  
"The Role of Foundations in the Seventies"  
Nov. 13, 1970



### **Angie Brooks**

Liberian Ambassador  
President of the United Nations General Assembly  
Bergamo dinner prior to UD talk  
"Women's Liberation" - March 2, 1970



## **Major General Edwin Ralph Chess**

Chief of Chaplains of the United States Air Force  
Bergamo Press Conference, Sept. 24, 1968



### **John Henrik Clarke**

Professor, Pioneer in the creation of Africana studies  
Black America Workshop, Oct. 31-Nov. 2 1969



### **Don Donoher**

University of Dayton Basketball Coach  
Don Donoher Basketball Camp at Bergamo, Summer 1972



### **Rev. Avery Dulles**

Cardinal, Theologian, Jesuit Author & Lector  
Canon Law Society Symposium  
at Bergamo, Sept. 12-14 1969



### **Fanita English**

American Psychoanalyst, Author  
"PAC Theory" at Bergamo, March 1971



### **Dr. Eduardo Frei**

Former President of Chile  
"The Challenge of Chile", Nov. 5-6, 1971



### **Br. Raymond Fitz**

Professor, President of University of Dayton  
"The Responsibility of Hope and the Future of the World"  
May 26, 1970 address at a Bergamo



### **James Farmer**

Leader in the Civil Rights Movement, Cofounder CORE  
"Conference on Higher Education Programs for Poor & Minority Youth"  
at Bergamo Sept. 15, 1970



### **Dr. Clarence Funnye**

Civil Rights Activist  
Housing Integration Seminar at Bergamo, May 23, 1970



### **Rick Good**

Folk Artist, Early Bergamo staff member  
Bergamo Folk Concert April 4, 1970



**Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan**

Archbishop of Atlanta

Champion of racial equality and liturgical reform

“Interaction of Community and Liturgy”, Oct. 23, 24, 1967



**Fr. John A. Hardon**

American Jesuit priest, writer, and theologian.

“The Priest and Humanae Vitae”, October 1968



**Fr. James Heft**

Professor of Religion at

Univ. of Southern California

Program Director at Bergamo Center (1970’s)

“A Critical Analysis of Youth” - Aug. 21, 1971



**Maj. General Lewis B. Hershey**

4 Star General, Exec. Officer of the Selective Service System

Press Conference at Bergamo, October 30, 1967



**Dr. Thomas Gordon**

American Clinical Psychologist

Effectiveness Training - March 1972



**Archbishop Iakovos**

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of

North & South America 1959-1996

Supporter of Civil Rights

Bergamo Forum on the Ecumenical Movement, Nov. 15, 1971



**Bro. Joseph Janning, SM**

Founder of Troop 1

International Boy Scouts in Japan

Assistant Director of Bergamo, 1971 Returned to Japan in 1971 to celebrate the 50th birthday of the troop he founded.



**Elizabeth McAlister**

American Peace Activist, Former nun, wife of Philip Berrigan

National Conference on the

Apostolate of the Future, 1971



**Michael Novak**

American Catholic philosopher, journalist, novelist, and diplomat

“The Layman & Dissent”, March 28, 1968



**G. Warren Nutter**

U.S. Economist

Foreign Policy Conference at Bergamo - Feb. 8, 1971



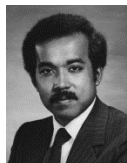
**Dr. Neil Postman**  
American Author, Educator  
RAAP Reducing Alienation and Activism  
by Participation - April 1972



**Bernice Reagon**  
Teacher, Performer, Folk Singer  
Black America Workshop, Oct. 31-Nov. 2 1969



**Everett Reimer**  
Education Theorist  
Proponent of De-schooling  
"Should Schools Survive" – Oct. 24, 1971



**Joseph Rhodes**  
American Politician and Activist  
Participant  
Kettering Foundation Seminar, Nov. 1970



**Archbishop Thomas Roberts**  
English Jesuit priest, Archbishop of Bombay, India  
Press Conference at Bergamo, Oct.17, 1969



**Pete Rose**  
Cincinnati Reds Professional Baseball Player  
Koehring Co. Regional Managers – Jan. 1972



**Gerard Schillebeecz**  
Dutch theologian, Second Vatican Council Contributor  
"Secularity and Contemporary Theology", Nov. 21, 22, 1967



**Mike Seeger**  
Folk Musician  
Yes, Pete Seeger's brother  
Bergamo Folk Festival, April 17-19, 1970



**Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum**  
Human Rights & Social justice activist  
"Attitudes toward Service of the Secular", Oct. 23,24, 1967



**Dr. Robert J. White**

Neurosurgeon  
First Scientist to Isolate the Brain  
“Man in Charge of His Universe”, April 7-11, 1969



**Joe Wise**

Lay Theologian  
Songwriter, Recording Artist  
Concert at Bergamo. Oct. 12, 1968

**Father Hoelle Years**

A large source of information about the history of Bergamo during the 1970's and 80's comes from the book *Philip C. Hoelle, SM, Servant Priest*, by Joseph J. Kepes and Joanne Lopez Kepes. The following Bergamo history is taken directly from the book.



One strong Marianist figure in the history of Bergamo Center from 1973 - 1993 was Father Philip Hoelle. Father Hoelle had joined Bergamo in 1973 and ended his years there just as the Center was celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1992. During his stay at Bergamo, he had a variety of titles, including director of the Bergamo Center Marianist community. A brochure, advertising a program, which he directed in 1984, states, "Father Phil Hoelle is a specialist for retreats and adult renewal in religious programming." The following material comes directly verbatim from the book titled, *Philip C.*

*Hoelle, SM, Servant Priest*"

More important than any titles he held was what he did. Basically, his efforts were centered on the religious programs presented at Bergamo. He mentioned in his curriculum vitae that he initiated National Marriage Encounter, Bergamo Adult Renewal Board (BARB), Family Vacation Week (summer program), Annual Charismatic Retreat, and Annual Scripture Institute. But, the above list is by no means complete. In addition, he continued his priestly activities of celebrating Mass; presiding at weddings, baptisms, and funerals of friends and family; and giving retreats and providing spiritual direction. People continued to come to him for counseling; over the years some 150 became converts. One of them was a descendant of Cardinal John Henry Newman and another was a descendant of Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn who commanded the British expedition that burned Washington, DC, in the War of 1812.

A project of particular note was his role in the initiation at the beginning of this period of an ecumenical program, the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue (DCJD). His work with the Christian Jewish Dialogue became a national phenomenon. Through its statement promulgated in 1965 (*Nostra Aetate*, § 4), the Second Vatican Council encouraged the Church to look more closely at the way it had related to the Jewish people. We were reminded that Jesus Christ was a Jew and we had much to learn from our Jewish brethren. An academic program in Judaic studies was inaugurated at the University of Dayton in 1964. About this time Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta was invited to come to Dayton to give an address at a Jewish synagogue. Informal talks between Christians and Jews were being held in private homes. The subject of Christian-Jewish relations was in the air.

Father Hoelle saw the possibilities of a more formal dialogue and he put his people skills to work. The dialogue started as a grassroots movement in Dayton in the early 1970s. He coordinated a regional workshop (for people from Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton) at Bergamo Center on Catholic-Jewish relations in October 1972. This workshop drew some seventy participants. The success of this workshop required the cooperation of many people and organizations, both Catholic and Jewish, on the local and national level. He was the glue that held it all together and, as always, he recruited many lay volunteers. Concurrently, there was an ongoing Jewish-Protestant program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton.

Father Hoelle asked a laywoman, if she thought a Catholic-Jewish dialogue could be started." This was followed in March 1973 by a meeting of a few Catholic and Jewish lay people that was hosted by Father Hoelle. Father Edward Flannery, a nationally-known author of the book *The Anguish of the Jews*, was a guest that night. Phil also arranged for Father Flannery to give a public talk at the University of Dayton and to meet with students and members of the Marianist and Jewish communities. Father Bertrand Buby, SM, became involved at that time with the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue (DCJD) and has remained active ever since. He identifies Father Hoelle and two laywomen, Eileen Moorman and Shirley Flacks, Catholic and Jewish women, as the ones who started the DCJD that was to become the prototype for a national movement.

The first national Christian-Jewish workshop was held at Bergamo in November 1973, with 101 participants. It was so successful that in the years to come these workshops spread throughout the country. There is no better illustration of the value of the program, begun in Dayton, than the remarks made by the local Catholic bishop, James Malone, at the eighth national workshop, which was held in Youngstown, Ohio, in November 1984.

This workshop has come a long way in about ten-years time. We began as a single local dialogue unit in the early 1970s and look at our workshop and its outreach today. In my judgment, this workshop has earned itself the accolade of the most significant regular meeting of Christians and Jews in the world today.

The success of these dialogues in these early years was due in large part because of lay involvement on the part of Christians and Jews, people talking to people. The two women who started the program in Dayton remained active on the national level for many years. Father Hoelle had stepped back and let others take the lead. He had a saying: "Begin, be brief, and be gone." He did attend meetings of the local group on an irregular basis and even in retirement he followed the activities of the DCJD closely. In his role as a director for religious programs at Bergamo he sponsored a number of events concerned with Christian-Jewish relations, often participating in the events himself. These talks included *Religious Freedom-200 Years Later* (1976) and *Roots and Branches* (1979).

A Bergamo Center program in 1980 featured Father Hoelle's presentation on *A Glimpse of Our Judaic Roots*. The DCJD sponsored two talks at Beth Jacob Synagogue in March of 1982. At one, Father Hoelle's address was *The Land of Israel-a Christian Connection*. He had a rather short time to prepare, but typically, he was most thorough, filling a stenographic notebook with notes from the sources that he had collected. The paper extends to more than eight typewritten pages. The final sentence of his talk is typical of him, "In closing, I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue for helping over the years to make me a better Christian." The talk was well received. In 1984, two major talks on the Christian and Jewish approaches to the Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Peace were sponsored at Bergamo. In 1986 there was a DCJD retreat on spirituality where Father spoke on the Catholic viewpoint. A

similar retreat was held in 1989.

Members of the Jewish community recognized his contributions to the dialogue. At the fiftieth anniversary of Fr. Hoelle's profession of vows (1980), Eric L. Friedland, a speaker at that first national workshop who remained active in the DCJD, arranged to have trees planted in the Holy Land in Fr. Hoelle's name. The Dayton chapter of The National Conference of Christians and Jews honored him at the 1986 annual awards dinner that was held for 450 people. The following comments were made about him in the dinner program:

A charter member of the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue (founded 1972), he was central to the planning for the National Workshop on Christian Jewish Relations at Bergamo (1973), which has since become a major national interfaith conference. At Bergamo, Father Hoelle, who earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University, initiated many programs for lay renewal and education. NCCJ honors the Reverend Philip C. Hoelle for his lifelong devotion to a ministry of reconciliation. He has encouraged dialogue among people of disparate faiths and has exemplified in his personal life the virtues of learning, peace, love, and justice.

Because he was so involved in working with people, Father Hoelle was very conscious of the importance of group dynamics; he kept notes on how to lead a group depending on its size. Because he had to advertise programs and write pamphlets and the like, he also collected material on creative writing and rules for editing and sending out direct mail.

Father Hoelle so appreciated the value of volunteers that he remarked:

Volunteers were central to the message of Christianity-love of neighbor as self. Christianity can be considered a volunteer movement-it means committing oneself to the service of others. It is a duty of the heart ... Many people are seeking ways to find an inner personal satisfaction, so one should make them part of the team, make them feel needed and wanted, and make them feel that what they do will be helpful to others.

From his careful listening and observing people, he could often sense when an individual would be receptive to an invitation to participate in some ministry; some called him a mind reader. People were often surprised when he picked them out of a group. It was hard to turn him down, because he would say "you can do it" and because he would ask in his gentle way. At the same time, he never took offense if the individual was not in a position to take up his request at that particular time.

Father Hoelle invited a group of women involved with the former Dominican retreat center in Oakwood, Ohio, to meet with him. He discussed with them the possibility of continuing their retreat activities using the facilities at Bergamo; Father Phil arranged for space at the Center." Shortly thereafter, he was formally assigned to Bergamo Center and other volunteers joined the group. The women met regularly for a time but had difficulty finding a focus. He listened patiently and one day quietly suggested a day be spent exploring new directions. This day of reflection did the trick. This group of women came to be called the Bergamo Adult Renewal Board or "BARB."

There were monthly meetings featuring different speakers. Each meeting would start with Mass and a short homily from Father Hoelle. BARB researched topics of interest, especially subject areas not available elsewhere. Sometime in the mid-1980s he wrote a three-page memorandum describing the group. In it he mentioned the group's history, focus and purpose, Marianist

character, and membership involvement, structure, and accountability. About a dozen women were very active during his time at Bergamo. Most of the Bergamo volunteers were or became Spiritual Affiliates of the Family of Mary and also volunteered in other public service activities. One woman, for example, received the JC Penney Golden Rule Award in 1989 for her volunteer work for starting programs at Bergamo and in the community at large.

The number and kinds of programs that Father Hoelle and the BARB group initiated and contributed to were quite impressive. Some of the events at Bergamo were one evening, some overnight, some a weekend, and some were ongoing. The complete list mentioned in his BARB memorandum is quite extensive: National Marriage Encounter; Engaged Discovery; Monthly Days or Mornings of Renewal; Family Vacation Weeks; Cursillos; Scripture Institute; Beginning Experience for Widows, Widowers and Divorced; Separated and Divorced Group; Widows Support Group (a number of whom took private vows); Creative Experience for Artists and Writers; Genesis II; Young Adults Beginning Experience; and Caring for Aging Parents. In the case of the last one mentioned, Father Hoelle and BARB saw the need to establish a support group for the caregivers of aging parents, so they organized one in 1982. There was a two-day, overnight program at Bergamo on this topic to begin the process. He worked closely with this group until his retirement in 1993. Meetings were held once a month, often with people from the Dayton community speaking on a wide variety of appropriate topics. The March 1993 attendance list showed twenty-eight people present.

Father Hoelle gave some of the talks during these monthly meetings, reviewing spiritual resources available for use with the elderly. Groups started and ended; a need may have disappeared or some other church or public entity may have stepped in to fill the perceived need. This was the classic way he operated: start an activity to fill a need and then encourage others to take over the task.

Fr. Hoelle's method of relating with the Bergamo staff, the women active in BARB, and the many others in the various lay groups can be expressed in the words of the individuals themselves. One of them writing in 2005, on the occasion of his ninety-third birthday said:

Father Hoelle led us gently by example and suggested ideas for lectures, speakers to invite, ways to market programs, how to write the flyers describing the programs, and how to listen to the needs of people around us so we could offer programs to fill their needs. Father Hoelle encouraged us to be open to new ideas. He liked to tell us that a mind stretched by a new idea never returns to its former dimensions. All in all it has been my experience that Father Hoelle taught us best by his personal example to forget self and to show love for God and Mary, by serving the needs of others with a cheerful heart.<sup>31</sup>

Another BARB member in an interview remarked that at the beginning she did not believe she had anything to offer and did not appreciate that lay people could be ministers. After her experience with BARB and other people she met at Bergamo, she came to see, as did so many of the others, that she also was the Church. She further added that Father Hoelle empowered people and, in a sense, "ordained hundreds of people to the ministry." She further commented that he was a wonderful listener; one of his sayings was "God made us with one mouth but with two ears." His nondirective approach allowed her to find out for herself what it was that God expected of her. He often would remind the BARB people of the old saying: "Change is often desirable, frequently necessary, and always inevitable." Her final comment as our interview ended was, "Father Phil was God centered and someone who made the scriptures come alive for me."

A longtime staff member at Bergamo during his tenure commented on their working relationship. If a particularly difficult problem arose with the scheduling of events or the need to respond to an individual with a personal problem, Father would tell her that he would look into it. He would then resolve the situation himself or find someone else to do it. Father was always friendly and always smiling and was "always there," perfectly groomed with not a hair out of place. When asked if Father ever lost his temper, spoke an angry word, or said no to a request, her answer was, "He never said no and never spoke harshly to anyone." Individuals and groups of people would come to see him at odd hours. Nevertheless, the next morning he was always fresh and happy. No matter what happened he would take all things in stride. If there were a particularly vexing situation for him, she noted he never "lost his cool," though in such cases he was quieter than usual. To her mind, he was the perfect image of what a priest should be. She summed up by saying, "He ministered to people but was not the minister." He was a servant priest. His impact on the people at Bergamo is best described by the comments of another long-time volunteer and BARB member. She was given the "Philip C. Hoelle Award" in 1993 in recognition as a community leader who has extended the mission of Bergamo Center to the public. Some of her comments at the award ceremony follow (not verbatim):

He has the gift of drawing people to him and pointing out what they can do. "You can do this," or "You would do well at that." In church (with a small c) and Church (with a capital C), he is a visionary, prophet, a wisdom figure. As both Jesus and Mary did, his YES has always been firm, willing, unconditional-that is, if his calendar is not full.

The president of Bergamo Center in 1982 summed up Father Hoelle's role at Bergamo in a letter asking him if it would be okay to name a room in the center after him: "You are our senior statesman, our respected elder, and our most honored colleague. Your contributions to people through your Bergamo ministries would not admit of that assessment-they are too great."

Bergamo Center also served the Family of Mary in ways Father Hoelle identified in a December 1983 communication to the Marianist community. The Center served as a guesthouse for visiting Marianists, a meeting place for the Family of Mary in Dayton, the homecoming weekend location for all Marianists in the Cincinnati Province, and for Marianist religious wishing annual retreats or private and directed retreats. The Family of Mary Affiliates from the entire province (100 to 140 people) had annual weekends there. Bergamo was also the residence of a small Marianist community that provided emergency services and promoted and strengthened the original spirit of Bergamo among the staff.

Summer was a busy time at Bergamo. The Marianist newsletter *Family* listed some of the eight summer programs in 1983: Golden Opportunities for Older Religious Men and Women, Theology and Vows of Religious Life, and Religious Formation: People, Programs and Philosophy. Young Marianists conducted weeklong LIFE programs for Marianist high school students. There were other events that Father Hoelle was involved with throughout the year not mentioned here, but the breadth of his efforts is clear. To cite a final example, the schedule for group retreats for March 1976 had him as the presenter for eight of them.

### **Building "The Wall"**

As the Center greeted guests during the 1970's it is hard to imagine that the peace and serenity of Mount Saint John could be disrupted by traffic, but apparently it became enough of a distraction that the property had to "build a wall" to solve the problem.

From the *Cincinnati Province Newsletter*

Jan. 14, 1978

**BERGAMO CENTER CLOSES SHAKERTOWN ENTRANCE:** Because of the unauthorized traffic which made use of the Shakertown entrance and the Mount St. John property for a short cut to Patterson Road, Bergamo Center some time ago closed the Shakertown entrance as an experiment toward eliminating such authorized traffic. When the temporary barrier became subject to acts of vandalism, a permanent cement wall replaced it and the entrance permanently closed. The result has been an almost complete elimination of the undesirable traffic,

**TRAFFIC REGULATIONS FOR THE BERGAMO/MT. ST. JOHN PROPERTY:** Those driving on the Bergamo/Mt. St. John property are asked to conform to the following few traffic rules which seem to be sufficient for mutual safety:

- 1) The speed limit should not exceed 25 miles per hour,
- 2) Drivers should stay on the right side of any yellow lines.
- 3) Pedestrians have the right of way; and
- 4) Parking should be only where parking is permitted.

It is not clear how long the concrete barrier stood and if it came down in any kind dramatic fashion like the Berlin Wall. Today there seems to be little concern for the occasional times when folks short cut through the property.

### **Bergamo East**

From a program folder dating back to at least Oct. of 1984 "Bergamo" published the following description of services and listed various clients shared with "Bergamo East" in Marcy, New York, which apparently shared the same mission and type of corporate clientele. The sections without capitalization were intentional and a common graphics style of the time.

BERGAMO is a change agent operating through adult-youth centers offering programming consultants and residential facilities for educational, intercultural, ecumenical, and industrial seminars and workshops.

workshops and seminars designed by bergamo and programs of various groups and firms held at the dayton and marcy centers include:

UNIVAC  
**management development seminars**  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
**international communications workshop**  
XEROX CORPORATION  
**training laboratories sessions**  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS  
**police-community relations institute**  
MEAD PAPER COMPANY  
**management training sessions**  
AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES  
**interpersonal dynamics workshops**  
CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION  
**national bishops-editors symposium**  
NATIONAL CASH REGISTER

**kepner-tregoe programs**  
DON DONOHER AND ASSOCIATES,  
INCORPORATED  
don donoher basketball camps  
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
professional development programs  
POSTAL ACADEMY PROGRAM  
training program for postal department and federal office of education  
ANTIOCH COLLEGE  
**conference on minority opportunities**  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, ALBANY  
**project motivation seminars**  
OHIO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
**mass media conference**

Bergamo - 4100 Patterson Road, Dayton Ohio 45430 (513) 426-2363  
Bergamo East - Chaminade Road Marcy, New York 13403 (315) 865-5271

the bergamo center and executive house in dayton, ohio and bergamo east in marcy, new york,  
are subsidiaries of the marianists of ohio, inc.

Patty O'Grady, a former long-time scheduler of events at Bergamo, recalled the many businesses that utilized Bergamo as a Conference Center. The Mead Corporation was one of the first, followed by Lexis Nexus, Monsanto, Dayton Power and Light, Wright Patterson Air Force Base. These businesses and corporations conducted staff training that often lasted as long as a week.

Bergamo became an independent corporation in 1986. The name *Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning* was adopted in 1988. The first President who was not a member of the Society of Mary was President, David Ramey. (See a complete list of Presidents and Executive Directors in the Appendix.) The buildings that fall under the Bergamo's management were the Marianist Hall, Roncalli Center, the shop building and Sieben Hall. The buildings belonged to the Society of Mary, but were given rent free to Bergamo. Bergamo in turn owned the furnishings and took care of the maintenance.

### **Pete Rose Talks**

Another interesting side note to the Bergamo history is its use as a location for talks during the probe of Cincinnati Reds baseball player Pete Rose's gambling on baseball by Major League Baseball. The talks actually took place in the lower level of Sieben Hall. In the book *Hustle: The Myth, Life, and Lies of Pete Rose*, author Michael Sokolove reported:

Rose was deposed by John Dowd and two other lawyers representing major League baseball in two sessions, which took place on two different days in April 1989. The locations, picked by Rose's legal team, was a basement room in a Catholic conference center outside of Dayton, a former monastery which had been renamed the Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning. The Center was run by Marianist priests.

"Former monastery" might not have been the best description of Mount Saint John, as Marianist brothers and priests still resided on the property in the late 1980's, as they do yet today. The Society of Mary was the sponsor of Bergamo Center. The Marianists originally provided personnel where appropriate, allowed free use of the buildings, provided an endowment to support religious and human development programming and provide an operational subsidy and

some funds for renovation of furnishings.

Through the years the Bergamo Center has seen various updates and remodeling projects. Bro. Jack Somerville, Bro. Tom Payne and their mentor Bro. Norm Eckl have managed the maintenance of facilities at Bergamo over the years. Bro. Jack recalls that in the 1980s, dropped ceilings were installed in all the bedrooms at Bergamo Center. Over time, the weight of the light fixtures began taking a toll. One day, while one guest was at lunch, the entire ceiling fell in his room. The moral of the story is that lunch is a good thing – never miss it! Bro. Jack assures all that the issue was addressed and there are no more of those ceilings at Bergamo.

Sometime in the 1980's a local guest to the Bergamo Center, Marilyn Schwieterman was driving by Bergamo and a deer came bounding across the road and towards the center. It jumped through the glass windows of one of the bedrooms. She continued to watch as the deer managed to jump back out of the window after wreaking havoc in the bedroom. Marilyn parked her car in the parking lot and went on to the front desk to inform the staff, "I'm not sure how to explain this but I think you have a deer wanting to check into the Bergamo Center."

By the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Center in 1992, Bergamo, like other nonprofits and conference centers elsewhere, was no longer part of a growth industry. In addition, the number of members of the Marianist community was not increasing, so Bergamo was in for a period of change to adjust to the new situation. More parishes were now engaged in providing some of the faith formation programs started at Bergamo.

Meanwhile in 1992, The Marianists became aware of some serious systemic deterioration in the Marianist Hall and they decided to raze most of the building. The work eventually took place in 1996. Consequently, Bergamo had to be downsized. In December of 1993 most of the operations of Bergamo were moved to the Roncalli Center, what is now known as the Bergamo Center. The number of employees dropped from 70 to 26. The number of Conference rooms dropped from 16 to 6, sleeping space (beds) down from 254 to 96 and buildings from 3.5 to 1.5.

After Hoelle left Bergamo, the heart and soul of the BARB group was gone, and its role and that of other groups he initiated gradually faded. Remaining members of BARB stayed close to Father Phil and several were present to help celebrate his ninety-third birthday in 2005. On that occasion a woman said of him: "Our BARB was symbolic of what has happened all over Dayton because of Father Phil Hoelle, SM."

Nonetheless, the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning was a celebration on Oct. 3, 1992. The Quintessence Woodwind Quintet provided the musical concert entertainment. The Center proudly recognized: Victor Cassano, Dr. Angelo Dalambakis, Br. Victor Forlani, S.M., Jack Gallivan, Rev. Phil Hoelle, S.M., Bro. John Jansen, S.M., David Ramey, William Wiggenhorn.

The Board of Trustees listed at that time

Rev. Jim Fitz, S.M.  
Rev. Dennis Gatto, S.M.  
Bro. Ronald Overman, S.M.

Board of Consultors:

Sr. Mary Barhorn, SND de N.  
Fr. Lawrence Breslin

Delila Callahan  
Robert Chappell

Barry Clark  
Robert Daley  
Joel Davis  
Br. Thomas Giardino, S.M.  
Diane Lawrence  
Richard Meyers  
Richard Miller  
Bro. Bernard Ploeger, S.M.

Carol Shaw  
Marvin Steele  
Fred Ungerman  
Jerrold Wareham  
Newell Wert  
Charles Wiesman  
Fred Zeidman  
Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski

The Mission Statement at the time was brief:

*We expand the boundaries of human learning and potential, offer a hospitable environment, create workable solutions to evolving human problems, and thereby, collaboratively transform society.*

At this time the Center took on the “Center for Lifelong Learning” theme in supporting the learning needs of people locally, regionally and nationally to answer Fr. Chaminade’s call to social transformation vision through offering programs that nurture the educational and spiritual needs of youth and adults. Bergamo Center added Counseling Services. A Child Development Center was opened as a means of supporting families. Adult day care programs were offered as well.

In 1994 Father Hoelle was given an opportunity to look back at some of the things in which he had been involved. The four subjects that were closest to his heart were the Marian Library, the Dakota Center, the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue, and Bergamo Center. For Fr. Phil, his formal assignment at Bergamo had come to an end; he was nearing eighty and moving into retirement. Father Hoelle, of course, would never retire. He kept many of his contacts made at Bergamo, continued with Dakota Center, and was ready for new challenges. He still had thirteen more years to “Do whatever He tells you.”

Also in 1994 the Board of Trustees announced the new appointment of Tom Cox as Executive Director. It appears he was the first to hold the title of Executive Director rather than President. Mr. Cox had been on the staff at the Bergamo Center since 1987. He had served as Coordinator for Ministry Development Services, Coordinator of Teamshare, Director of Adult Development and Leader of the Quality Leadership Training Team. Assistant Provincial Br. Joe Kamis and Acting Director of Bergamo for the past year said, “over the past year, Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning has been going through a restructuring process. Tom Cox has been a member of the Bergamo Staff for the past seven years. He has the experience and enthusiasm in communication and education to move Bergamo forward in a most positive way.”

## Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Into the new millennium the fifth to go to the Bergamo Center continues to grow under the sponsorship of the Society of Mary. It is among a number of ministries on the Mount Saint John Property, which include the Marianist Novitiate, Marianist Mission, North American Center for Marianist Studies, Queen of Apostles Parish, Marianist Environmental Education Center, and Gallery Saint John.



One story that captures the spirit of the Bergamo Center appearing in Vol. 1, Issue 1 Autumn/winter 2000 edition of *Outreach & Reflection*, the quarterly newsletter of the Bergamo Center is titled *Mischief Making and Spiritual Awakening: Lessons from a Youth Retreat*

Jim Cook credits his parents with teaching him honesty. On a high school retreat at Bergamo Center last fall, St. Joseph gave him a chance to use that value wisely.

Jim and his friend Matt Munhall, students at Bishop Watterson High School in Columbus, were on their senior retreat. They admit it's against the rules to sneak out of their rooms, but on this particular night, a group snuck out and St. Joseph's head fell off. The statue of St. Joseph, that is.

Joseph is prominently honored on the Mt. St. John campus because of his significant place in Mary's life. A couple students decided to stand on the platform and have friends take their picture. That's when the trouble began. "When someone stood on the slat, it caused the statue to fall back ward. It scraped against some rocks and the head fell off," said Cook.

Chaos followed. Lots of students ran away. Munhall was one of them. He almost reached his room when his conscience stopped him. Munhall, one of eight brothers and sisters, has learned a lot about telling the truth. Also, he relates, Bergamo has a special place in his heart.

"A lot of special things have happened (at Bergamo) for me," said Munhall. "I couldn't just leave it like that."

According to Cook, about six or seven students put the statue back on its platform, replaced the broken head and brushed some debris under the bushes. He and Munhall said the crack was almost invisible but the nagging feeling they had about what happened plagued them.

It was a time of confusion. It was a time for faith and a time to pray. The students joined hands around the statue and asked for guidance. By the next morning, Cook and Munhall had decided to confess, even at the risk of serious punishment by school officials.

Though the students shouldn't have been out of their rooms, Barb Kozlowski, director of youth programs at Bergamo, calls how they handled themselves admirably. "They could have walked away and we wouldn't have had a clue who did this."

The students told Kozlowski what happened and, in the same sentence, promised to get the repair money. She told them it would take about \$900 to fix the statue, so over Christmas break, they held a marathon phone campaign to raise the funds. Cook says he found the experience enlightening. Students who slept while the statue fell gave money. Students who weren't on the retreat gave money. "We were on the phone non-stop asking people how much they could give," said Cook.

Finally, they had enough to fix the statue. Munhall and Cook drove to Dayton with a cashier's check and gave it to Kozlowski. She said the high school retreats are designed to be an awakening of the spiritual life.

In the end, these students learned that lies only snowball while honesty, though difficult, pays off. Adults learned young people can face a tough situation with grace and dignity.

"It added to what people experienced at the retreat. Everyone who witnessed it grew by figuring out something about themselves," explained Cook.

The students from Watterson are among the nearly 4000 youth who make retreats at Bergamo Center.



*St. Joseph stands proud with repaired head*

In 2002 the Cincinnati Province joined with three other Marianist provinces to form the Province of the United States, which has its headquarters in St. Louis. Old Marianist Province of Ohio offices on the Mount Saint John Campus were dissolved.

From 2000 to 2014 the Bergamo Center was guided by Dick Flack. Dick began as director of Operations and soon took on the role of Executive Director. During this time the Center continued to extend hospitality to a wide range of guests from civic, non-profit, hobby, University, churches, Catholic school and parish groups. Through the efforts of Barb Kozlowski and Kevin Kozlowski, services to Catholic High Schools numbering more than a dozen from Dayton, Cincinnati and Columbus resulted in a greater percentage of youth retreats at the center. Pre-Cana retreats in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati were coordinated by Adult Program Director, Barb Kozlowski who also in partnership with Sr. Therese Laengle introduced the Ignatian Spirituality Project or ISP to Bergamo Center. Small groups of individuals in transition from homelessness or in recovery have the opportunity for a weekend retreat at the Bergamo Center.

Upon the retirement of Dick Flack in 2014 the Executive Director role was handed to Brent Devitt. The Bergamo Center has seen improvements in new carpet, painting, wallpaper, chairs, new Mansard roof, new windows and technology updates. Much new construction on the Mount Saint John property funded by the Marianist Province took place from 2014 -2016, first, with the remodeling of Marianist Hall to become the new site for the Marianist Mission, the building of a new Novitiate dedicated in 2015 along with the new home of the North American Center for Marianist Studies in the new Chaminade Center dedicated in 2016. The 2015-16 liturgical year marked the Jubilee of Mercy leading right into the Jubilee of Bergamo 2016-17.

Today the Bergamo Center rents facilities from the Marianist Province and receives an endowment of support. There is still a Board of Trustees who advise on the operation of the Center and there is still representation of Society of Mary members on that Board.

The future of the Bergamo Center appears bright and hopeful as it continues to serve God's people, individuals and groups alike, from Dayton and around the world.

The current mission statement of Bergamo reads:

Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning: a retreat and conference center founded in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Mary, extends hospitality in a spirit of peace and renewal by providing a tranquil, natural environment in which individuals and groups refresh the body, expand the mind and renew the spirit.

In the Marianist tradition Bergamo Center offers holistic spiritual formation programs for youth and adults throughout life that deepens self-awareness, develop interior life and elicit a personal and communal faith response to changing times.

**Sources:**

*Aggiornamento* Newsletter, November 1970

*Concerning the Windows in the Assembly at Bergamo Center*, A. Joseph Barrish, January 2002

Dates of land purchases and construction at Mt. St. John/Bergamo were obtained from *Fifty and Growing: Mt. St. John, University of Dayton, East Campus*.

Facts about the Shakers were taken from Bro. Geiger's text and pamphlets from Shakertown in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.

*Hustle: The Myth, Life, and Lies of Pete Rose*, by Michael Sokolove, Simon and Schuster. 2005

*MARYtoday*, published in 1967

Material about the geologic and biologic history, as well as information about the early settlers in the area was originally written by Bro. Don Geiger, SM)

The most current history of the relationship between Mt. St. John, Bergamo Center for Lifelong Learning and the Society of Mary was taken from interviews with Father James F. Fitz, Provincial of the Province of Cincinnati and Fr. Philip Hoelle staff member at Bergamo Center. (cf Provincial Council minutes of September 13, 1967.)

*Outreach & Reflection quarterly newsletter of the Bergamo Center, Vol. 1, Issue 1*

*Philip C. Hoelle, SM, Servant Priest*, by Joseph J. Kepes and Joanne Lopez Kepes, Dayton OH 2011 Meyers Printing and Design.

"Rev. George B. Barrett, S.M. Named Director of Bergamo" (1967). *News Releases*. The University Of Dayton, Public Relations Department, Paper 3176.  
[http://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls/3176](http://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/3176)

*Welcome to Bergamo Center's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 1967-1992*, Booklet

## **Appendix**

### **President / Executive Director**

### **Term**

Rev. George Barrett, S. M.	August 15, 1967 to May 4, 1970
Bro. John Jansen, S. M.	May 4, 1972 August 15, 1974
Rev. George Barrett, S. M.	August 15, 1974 two August 15, 1980
Br. Victor Forlani, S. M.	August 15, 1982 January 1, 1988
Mr. David Ramey	January 1, 1988 to February 8, 1992
(Sr. Donna Fyffe, O.S.B. - Acting President)	(February 8, 1992 to March 16, 1992)
Mr. John T. O'Bryan	March 16, 1992 to March 12, 1993
(Br. Joseph H. Kamis, S.M. - Acting Admin.)	(March 13, 1993 to Aug. 28, 1994)
Mr. Thomas Cox, Executive Director	September 1, 1994 to May 18, 2000
Dick Flack, Executive Director	May 20, 2000 to June 30, 2014
Brent Devitt, Executive Director	July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2024
Kelli D. Kinnear, Executive Director	June 24, 2024 to present

## A Prayer at Bergamo

Lord,  
I came to Bergamo in need  
With hopes and expectations,  
Not knowing what would happen here.  
In this haven blessed by Heaven.  
    The name was just a word to me -  
    A place to come and go -  
    A place of learning and of prayer -  
    A place called: Bergamo.

Built as a memorial  
to holy man of hope.  
Roncalli was his name, they say,  
Bergamo, hometown of the pope.

I came for new Ideas and thrusts  
In Formation work I do.  
But most of all, I sought for peace  
Within myself, in You.  
    This age filled with transitions, Lord,  
    Is difficult, You know!  
    And as a man, religious - priest,  
    I knew not where to go!  
some of the answers came to me  
Through speakers' words so wise,  
Some came from the participants  
Who come from far and wide.

The days that followed were for me  
A time of blesse'd retreat.  
I'd left all cares so far behind -  
The bidder for the sweet.  
    In hope I prayed for many things.  
    One came - a gift from You -  
    A peace, a great tranquility  
    I somehow never knew.  
In the courtyard, near the fountain, Lord,  
As "Font of Life" You came,  
As Friend and true Companion  
To journey through my pain.

With trust we ventured through the past  
Relationships and scenes,  
Uprooting hurts and doubts and fears  
In their stead selling peace.  
    Prepared for my departure now,  
    My being refreshed, renewed,  
    I thank you for your presence, Lord.  
    With which I've now imbued.  
I have discovered treasures here.  
This place I've grown to love.  
Burgh (a place) - Amo (I love)  
"Bergamo" - gift from God above!