



CONGREGATION OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION
31970 State Highway P, Clyde, Missouri 64432-8100 Phone: 660/944-2221

News Release

Dec. 3, 2008

Business with a heart: Benedictine Sisters altar bread ministry especially meaningful during the holidays

CLYDE, Mo.— They might be small in size but are perhaps the most meaningful symbol of Christ, and during the holiday season millions of people around the world will use them to celebrate his life.

The production of altar breads, also known as communion wafers or hosts, is a tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. As the nation's largest religious producers of the small, round wafers, the Benedictine Sisters take pride in a business very close to their hearts and which stretches back almost a century.

"This work is vitally important to our ministry and fits in so perfectly with our life of prayer," Clyde (Mo.) subprioress Sister Lynn Marie D'Souza, OSB said. "We are women dedicated to the Eucharist, so to be able to produce the bread that becomes the Body of Christ is very meaningful."

Their altar bread production began in 1910 with a gasoline stove, one bread cutter and a lot of instruction from a Franciscan community in Ohio that had decided to close their own altar bread business and transferred their knowledge to the Benedictine Sisters.

Now, almost a hundred years later, the altar bread business is their main source of income, sustaining their contemplative lifestyle and enabling their direct participation in the faith life of the Church. Customers include churches around the world and from several denominations that appreciate the Sisters' dedication to the highest standards of quality as well as their distinctive ties to Eucharistic celebration.

A dedicated lay staff of 14 and more than a dozen Sisters help produce almost 2 million breads each week, with close to 9 million baked each month. Orders increase during Lent and Easter, with Advent and Christmas demanding the highest number of breads.

<MORE>



Low-gluten altar breads are produced exclusively in the United States by the BSPA.

Contact – Kelley Baldwin, Director of Communications

Phone – 660/944-2221 ext. 180

Mobile – 660/562-7433

Fax – 660/944-2152

Find us on the Web at www.BenedictineSisters.org

“We keep our production consistent through the year, so we aren’t too busy at one time,” Sister Lynn said. “We are able to store our breads safely and freshly for a period of time, which allows us to prepare for the busier seasons.

While the Sisters have continued the tradition of producing quality wafers for generations, they added a new product – low gluten altar breads – almost five years ago. The wafer is a God-send for people suffering from celiac disease, a digestive disorder where the body is intolerant to gluten-containing food, such as wheat or barley.

Until the Sisters developed the new wafer, those with celiac disease were either unable to participate in celebrating the Eucharist or did so with much risk to their own health. Along with support from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and approval by the Vatican, the Benedictine Sisters are the sole U.S. producers of low-gluten altar breads.

Most people learn about the Sisters’ altar breads through their Web site or by word of mouth as their profits are used to support their congregation and not spent on expensive advertising campaigns. It is because of this vast network of support that the Sisters are able to touch so many around the world.

“We pray for all those who receive the breads we make, and we pray for the parishes and their priests,” Sister Lynn said. “So even though we are in a rather secluded spot in the middle of the country, we reach a lot of people through this ministry.”

For more information about altar breads, please call (800) 223-2772 or e-mail altar-breads@benedictine-sisters.org.

###