



## News Release

February 27, 2008

### Benedictine Sisters help answer soldier's prayer

**CLYDE, Mo.** - David Mann sensed he was drifting from his faith.

His search to find it again landed him in the middle of a war zone. The very place where one's faith can be challenged each minute of each day.

Amazingly, it was the very place he felt a strong presence from God. And with a little help from a group of Benedictine sisters half a world away, he found a way to help others feel the same.

The 23-year-old spent a year at St. Charles Barromeo Seminary in Pennsylvania before bouncing from jobs at a fast food restaurant, a thrift store and a large department store. But it was a strong family history of military service – his mother and father served in the Air Force – and a desire to help others that inspired him to follow in his parents' footsteps and join too.

David, an Airman 1st Class who recently completed a tour with the 332<sup>nd</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing at Balad Airbase in the Iraqi desert, was a long way from the snow-covered mountains of his home in North Pole, Alaska.

As a chaplain assistant, he helped council staff and patients at the base's hospital, a facility that hustles to tend to thousands of victims – soldiers, civilians and insurgents alike – that are brought through its doors. It's a job that could bring mightier and older men to their knees. But David drew on his faith and those around him for strength.

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**AFC David Mann (above) was serving as an assistant chaplain in Iraq when he reached out to Sister Cathleen Marie Timberlake (left) and the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration for a little divine inspiration.**



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“Prayer is where I turn to but also talking about experiences with the troops helps,” he said. “We all see the same thing and in the end, all we have is each other.”

It was his desire to help his fellow soldiers find comfort during their hospital stay that started an e-mail correspondence with Sister Cathleen Marie Timberlake, a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Mo. Recalling how he’d been inspired by a video he had seen years ago about a contemplative community nestled among the rolling hills of northwest Missouri, he wrote to ask them for CDs featuring the sisters’ music.

“I was very moved by their singing the Liturgy of the Hours and felt the music would be important to offer the soldiers,” he said.

His e-mail message asking for a donation of CDs found its way to Sister Cathleen Marie, the driving force behind Monastery Scents, the Congregation’s line of handcrafted soaps. Knowing that customers (comforted by the fact that she adds a drop of holy water to each bar) routinely send her soaps to soldiers overseas, she mailed several bars along with David’s requested music CDs.

The music and soaps were well-received by the soldiers, whose hospital stays can be brief or last up to several days, David said.

“When an injured soldier comes in, they only have two things on their minds – family and God,” he added. “This music allows them to listen to something beautiful and relaxing, knowing that the very individuals who made the music are the ones praying for them back home.”

For David, who is inspired by the troops who remain strong after experiencing trauma and his fellow staff members who work tirelessly to support them, this experience has brought him closer to his faith and to others whose lives are devoted to God.

“The Benedictine Sisters are modern women who look and live as today’s women but dedicate their lives to a very sacred and profound tradition,” David said. “They have opened their hearts and prayers for all the soldiers. They have given comfort and peace. This shows the peace and balance of the sisters and flows from their genuine life of prayer.”

For more information, please contact Sister Cathleen Marie Timberlake at (660) 944-2221 or e-mail [soap@bspa.us](mailto:soap@bspa.us).

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