



CONGREGATION OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION
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News Release

NOTE TO EDITORS: Pictures available upon request. Please e-mail Kelley Baldwin at kelley@bspa.us for photos and credits

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Benedictine Sisters meet with Pope Benedict XVI Lauded for ministry of altar bread production

CLYDE, Mo. – During a European trip in August, two members of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration met with Pope Benedict XVI, who lauded the congregation's long ministry of altar bread production and its discovery of the low-gluten altar wafer.

Clyde Prioress Sister Pat Nyquist and Prioress General Ramona Varela were excited to meet Pope Benedict XVI while in Rome. The sisters presented the pope with an update regarding their low-gluten altar bread production, an endeavor that was applauded by the pope when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and serving as prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 2003.

His approval paved the way for the low-gluten altar breads to be used during Eucharist by parishioners suffering from a wheat-borne allergen and unable to participate using regular hosts.

"The audience was arranged by Monsignor Dennis McManus as he thought the Holy Father would like to meet us to thank us for coming up with much-needed bread for those who have celiac disease," Sister Ramona said. "He thanked us for our service to the Church. It was an honor and historic moment for me to represent the Congregation."

The production of the low-gluten wafers has only enhanced the sisters' Eucharistic mission, which includes almost a century of altar bread production. As the largest religious producers of communion hosts, from which they earn their main source of income, their customers include thousands of people from a variety of faiths from around the world.

But the road to producing the low-gluten wafer was a long one. It took more than a decade of trial and error, along with support from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and approval by the Vatican to develop.



Clyde Prioress Sr. Pat Nyquist (left) and Prioress General Sr. Ramona Varela meet with Pope Benedict XVI during their trip to Rome this summer.

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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 invented the new wafer, parishioners with celiac disease were either unable to receive the Eucharist or did so with much risk to their own health since the Roman Catholic Church considers only wheat wafers as legal substance for the sacramental bread.

The process proved a little tricky since the sisters needed to make a wafer that would contain enough gluten to satisfy the Church's strict requirements but prove gentle enough not to harm those with celiac disease. They finally succeeded in 2004.

The sisters remain the sole producers of low-gluten altar breads, which are shipped to more than 2,000 customers across the nation, to Canada and several other countries around the world.

"We have a love and devotion to Christ present in the Holy Eucharist," Sister Ramona said. "Having the work that makes the bread that will become the Body and Blood of the Lord is indeed a privilege."

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration has four communities in Clyde, Mo., Tucson, Ariz., Sand Springs, Okla. and Dayton, Wyo. For more information about the congregation, please log onto www.BenedictineSisters.org.

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