



CONGREGATION OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION

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## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Pronunciation guide: Gucwa – GOOK wah; Dohn – Don; Nyquist – NIGH qwist**

**Aug. 24, 2009**

### **Benedictine Sister Nancy Rose Gucwa makes First Monastic Profession**

**CLYDE, Mo.** - As the sun broke through the clouds and washed over the fields of rural Missouri, it was obvious that Nancy Gucwa had traveled a long way from her native Staten Island, N.Y., to embark on the next chapter of her life. It was a journey not only of great distance but also of the heart.



**Sister Nancy Rose Gucwa reads a proclamation during her first monastic profession as a Benedictine Sister.**

On Aug. 15, the West Point graduate and former finance professional made her first monastic profession as a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde. After serving in the military on active duty, she worked in banking and finance, most recently in the St. Louis area. She entered the Benedictine Sisters in 2006 and retired from the U.S. Army Reserves in 2008.

Before the ceremony began, the warmth of the summer sun spread into the sisters' monastery, reflecting the happiness within. Friends and family exchanged hugs in the hallway. Postulants and a novice were laughing as Nancy zealously guarded the paper that included the Benedictine name she would take, which would remain a secret until revealed during the ceremony.

Full of smiles and dressed in a bright red shirt and flowered skirt, Nancy moved through the crowd. When asked if she was nervous about the upcoming rite of passage, she smiled radiantly and answered in a confident voice, "No."

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The bells began to ring, and the sisters filed into the Adoration Chapel. Excited whispers could be heard as the years of Nancy's dedication and preparation were about to be rewarded.

"This day was the fulfillment of my heart's deepest desire," Sister Nancy Rose Gucwa, OSB said. "I am so happy to be a sister in this wonderful Congregation. Making a profession of vows to God and to this community of sisters is such a wonderful and grace-filled moment in my life. I am thrilled that my family could be here to mark this new and exciting beginning of life in my monastic family."

As her profession took place on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, celebrant Father Xavier Nacke, OSB, remarked during the homily, "May we see heaven as our final goal." He praised Nancy for her "graced determination" so like Mary's and said religious life was the "way of humility and obedience is the way of divine love."

Nancy was then presented by Formation Director Sister Rita Clair Dohn, OSB and formally asked for admittance into the Benedictine Sisters' Congregation. "We accept her. We welcome her," the sisters said in unison. "Thanks be to God!" echoed through the Adoration Chapel.

"You come to this monastery having been formed by a variety of life experiences through which you have developed a broad perspective and numerous friendships," Prioress General Sister Pat Nyquist, OSB addressed Nancy. "You have gracefully and admirably managed the transition from urban to rural, from self-sufficiency to interdependence and from positions of authority to last in rank."

She continued, "The walls of this monastery could begin to feel restrictive and stifling but for the fact that walls cannot contain the Kingdom of God, the power of prayer or the mystical union of the Body of Christ. So do not fall prey to thoughts that question the validity of the effectiveness of a life of prayer and community. Instead, keep your perspective broad, Nancy, and your love for people flowing outward to embrace all of God's children throughout the world, for that is the essence of a life of prayer."

Sister Pat ended her presentation by revealing the name Nancy would be given upon her monastic profession. "And so I confer on you the name of Sister Nancy Rose, under the patronage of Mary, Mystical Rose, to be celebrated on August 15," she said. "May she be your inspiration to continue to blossom like a rose coming to full bloom."

After making her Benedictine vows of stability, a commitment to God; *conversatio*, the rules of monastic life including poverty and chastity; and of obedience, Sister Nancy Rose was presented with her habit of a black smock and white shirt and left for a moment to change clothes.

"Changing from secular to monastic clothing is an ancient Benedictine custom," Sister Pat said. "It ritualizes dispossession, conversion, simplicity and incorporation into the community."

Upon her return to the Adoration Chapel, Sister Nancy Rose was presented with the emblem of the Benedictine Sisters.

"Sister Nancy Rose, receive this emblem, a sign of your profession and of our charism of dedication to the Holy Eucharist," Sister Pat said. "May the signs of bread and wine which you wear inspire you always to prefer nothing whatever to Christ and to live a life generous in love and humble service."

Sister Nancy Rose is now considered a member of the juniorate, during which she will follow her Benedictine vows. It will be at least another three years before she will be eligible to make her final monastic profession.

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### ***How does a woman become a Benedictine Sister?***

Women considering religious life are called in different ways from different backgrounds with different experiences. However, each must undergo the same rigorous process that will help them decide if a life devoted to God is for her. That process involves an application that includes interviews, health and psychological examinations and writing an autobiography.

If accepted, she then enters the postulancy, a chance to learn more about the vocation of religious life, to become acquainted with other members of the community, work in the monastery and take classes. Those who pass their evaluations and wish to continue then enter the novitiate for two years. They undergo an intense spiritual formation of prayer, instruction in Scripture and liturgy, guidance and living the Benedictine lifestyle.

Women then enter the juniorate and make their first profession. They follow the three Benedictine vows of stability, a commitment to God; *conversatio*, the rules of monastic life including poverty and chastity; and of obedience. After a period of three to six years, a woman can then take the final step and participate in the rite of final monastic profession.

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