



THE TRADITION CONTINUES...

It was at the beginning of the 17th century that Slav peoples began the custom of making pilgrimages to holy places or shrines, singing hymns and reciting prayers as they journeyed on foot. Because most foods would spoil during the long trip, they took with them cakes made of honey, a preservative ingredient. Honeycakes, or medovniks, were also obtained at the shrine and served as sustenance for the long journey home.

In 1934, the first Pilgrimage in honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was held at Mt. St. Macrina. Mother Macrina, the foundress of the Sisters of St. Basil the Great in Uniontown, brought the tradition and the recipe of the medovniki from Europe to become a part of this Pilgrimage.

Today, an average of 30,000 medovniks are sold at the Pilgrimage during the Labor Day weekend. The medovniki enterprise begins in mid-May. The baking, brushing, icing, decorating, packing, and storing are completed by late June. This production entails approximately 1900 pounds of flour, 315 pounds of honey, and 1600 hours of service by volunteers who are involved in all phases of the above-mentioned operation including the selling. Without their dedicated service, the medovniki undertaking would be impossible.

Traditionally, the most popular medovnik is heart-shaped and bears an icon of the Mother of God. The addition of an icon on the honeycakes is an innovation by Mother Macrina. Spiritual significance has been attached to the medovnik inasmuch as the heart shape, a symbol of love, and the sweetness of honey come together reminding us of Mary's tender love. This tangible symbol of love becomes a part of the pilgrim as it is eaten. This love is extended when the medovnik is displayed in the home as a sign of blessing or is shared with those who were not able to come in pilgrimage.

Perhaps this Pilgrimage has occasioned a turning point in your faith life, or it may have been a time for you to simply enjoy God's beauty of creation and to share time with friends and acquaintances. Whatever your experience, it is our prayerful hope that as you depart with these medovniki, you will take a part of Pilgrimage home with you as a remembrance of your sacred visit to this holy Mount.

The Sisters of St. Basil