

## Customers speak

### Dominican Nuns of Our Lady of the Rosary welcome Hildegard.

We love our machines, and we know our customers are affectionate toward them too. But rarely do we hear of customers naming their machines and using them as a means to support a life of prayer. But miracles can happen. Meet Hildegard.

The Cloister Shoppe is the online store of the Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, Summit, New Jersey. The Cloister Shoppe was gaining traction quickly and the nuns were surprised with the dramatic increase in demand for their handmade soaps.

Committed to using the highest-quality ingredients, the monastery's hand-crafted line of soap is made in small batches with love and care. All the soaps contain glycerin combined with Shea butter or goat's milk to moisturize and nourish skin. Offered in a wide variety of fragrances, the artisan soaps provide a great gift-giving option for practically any occasion. According to Sr. Mary Catharine, "Because the soaps are made and packaged by nuns, each bar is wrapped with prayer."

As demand for the products grew, the nuns realized they needed to investigate better ways of packaging their soaps. Not only did they require greater efficiency, they were concerned with the possibility of repetitive motion injuries as well. And frankly, Sr. Mary Catharine was quite annoyed by the sound of the heat gun they used to hand-shrink their packaging film. Not really knowing what they were looking for, they contacted other companies, particularly private label soap manufacturers and packaging companies for some ideas. Most used equipment that was far beyond what they needed and the cost exceeded the budget they could afford. Thanks to the patient listening and expert advice of PAC Machinery distributor Marci at Propac they purchased a Clamco Model 1614 L-Bar Sealer and a Clamco Model 61513 Heat Shrink Tunnel. The system arrived on September 17th, (the feast of St. Hildegard), and it only seemed right to honor the day by naming the machine accordingly.

The following few weeks were a learning experience as the nuns became "acquainted" with the system. As is often the case with learning a new way of doing something, they had to put aside their old ways in order to become efficient in the new one. Sort of like adapting to the spiritual life, as they saw it. Now, several hundred bars of soap later, the nuns are packaging pros. "Our new packaging also has some great benefits for our customers", noted Sr. Mary Catharine. "As we package the soap, a tiny wheel rotates to perforate the plastic film. We dubbed it the "Catherine wheel" after St. Catherine of Alexandria. What's so



*In very little time the nuns became "acquainted" with their new sealer system. The Clamco Model 1614 L-Bar Sealer proved very easy to use.*



*The handmade soaps are now wrapped using the Clamco Sealer and run through the Clamco Model 61513 Heat Shrink Tunnel.*

*Packaging production time has been slashed, plus the possibility of repetitive motion injury has been virtually eliminated.*

great about those tiny perforations (made to allow the air to escape as the film shrinks)? It means that now you can smell the fragrant soap through the packaging. We've caught a few sisters doing just that, by the way". Sr. Mary Catherine continues, "We now use polyolefin not PVC shrink film. It's got some great advantages, too; for one thing, it is a lot easier to unwrap the soap. And some people will appreciate that it is less damaging to the environment (PVC releases small quantities of hydrogen chloride into the air, which polyolefin doesn't). Probably, most companies wouldn't think twice about exploring new manufacturing possibilities. They wouldn't have named their sealer and shrink tunnel after the saint of the day, either. But at the monastery we are grateful everyday for each gift the Lord gives us, and we find the new challenges are an opportunity to grow – and have fun, too."

Our thanks to the wonderful nuns at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary. It is our sincere hope that Hildegard the shrink system blesses them with years of loyal service. ❖



*The nuns have integrated the L-bar sealer and shrink tunnel in their compact work room. The countertop system requires very little space.*