

A Gift of Christian Friendship

The pretzel was first invented by an Italian monk who lived between the fifth and sixth centuries. To remind his brother monks that Lent was a time of prayer, he rolled the bread dough in strips and then shaped each strip in the form of crossed arms, imitating the then-popular prayer position of folding one's arms over each other on the chest. The bread was then baked as a soft bread, just like the big soft pretzels one can find today. His fellow monks liked this new creation, and began giving them to the children they taught as a reward.

Because these breads were shaped into the form of crossed arms, they were called *bracellae*, the Latin word for little arms. In Germany, *bracellae* became *bretzel*, which has since become the familiar word *pretzel*.

The pretzel's success spread to monasteries far and wide, and soon the pretzel became an important symbol in church life. Pretzels were enjoyed by all people. They became a symbol of good fortune, prosperity and spiritual wholeness. They were also a common food given to the poor and hungry. The homeless didn't line up for soup or a sandwich, but for their daily pretzel. And those who gave the pretzels were considered particularly blessed. Best of all, not only were pretzels easy to give to someone in need, but they were also both a substantial food to satisfy hunger and a spiritual reminder that God knows a person's needs and that God answers our prayers.

We hope these pretzels will remind you of God's love and concern for you and your family, and also serve to remind you that you have friends at Saint John.

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