

## SANTA RITA ABBEY

The Santa Rita Abbey is a small monastic community of the Trappistine branch of Cistercian nuns under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Tucson. It is located about 4 miles north of Sonoita, Arizona on a mesa in the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains just to the west of Fish Canyon Road (FR-163) and to the north of Gardner Canyon Road (FR-92). The monastery was established in 1972 by six nuns from the Mount Saint Mary's Abbey in Wrentham, Massachusetts with Sister Cecile Jubinville appointed as Mother Superior. In 1978, the monastery was elevated from a foundation status to autonomy as a major priory. The monastic family of Santa Rita Abbey has remained relatively small, usually from eleven to nineteen nuns. In April 2019 there were eleven nuns.



Santa Rita Abbey

The primary work that supports the abbey is the production of whole wheat altar breads. The Abbey prepares six different forms of altar bread: three different sizes of People's Hosts (a 1 1/8 inch, a 1 3/8 inch and a 1 1/2 inch diameter Host), 2 1/2 inch diameter Priest's Host and two 5 1/2 inch diameter Concelebration Hosts (Unscored and Scored). These wafers are distributed throughout the country. In addition, one of a kind sculptures of crucifixes, madonnas and other scriptural pieces are prepared by Sister Esther on an individual commission basis. Also, a book of scriptural poetry titled "*Neither be Afraid*" that was written by one of the sisters is available for sale.



Sister Esther with a Crucifix  
Photo by Lillian Monson

The abbey also provides a retreat house that is available to anyone seeking a quiet place to reflect on their life. The retreat house opened in 1995 and consists of six private rooms with bath and one double occupancy suite consisting of a bedroom, sitting room and kitchenette. The house also has a small kitchen and dining room where guests prepare their own meals from food provided by the abbey. The rooms are simple and attractively furnished.

The abbey originally used an old trailer as a guest house for the families of the sisters and other special visitors. In May 2018, a new Family Guest House was completed and the old trailer was demolished.

For additional information, refer to the Santa Rita Abbey website:  
<http://www.santaritaabbey.org>

Summary prepared by T. Johnson and updated in May 2019. Sources were the Santa Rita Abbey website, the Santa Rita Newsletter, Wikipedia website, and the 3 March 2003 issue of the Arizona Daily Star. The abbey photo was from the abbey web site.

Additional Material: GVRHC Library File 64