

**SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD**  
**A Monthly Miscellany**

**December 2022**

**DECEMBER 2022 FEAST DAYS**

**Thursday 1 Weekday of Advent**

**Friday 2 Weekday of Advent**

**Saturday 3 St Francis Xavier, Priest memorial**

**Sunday 4 2nd Sunday of Advent**

**Monday 5 Weekday of Advent**

**Tuesday 6 Weekday of Advent, St Nicholas, Bishop**

**Wednesday 7 St Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor of the Church**

**Thursday 8 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary solemnity**

**Friday 9 Weekday of Advent, St Juan Diego Cuahhtlatotzin**

**Saturday 10 Weekday of Advent, Our Lady of Loreto**

**St John Roberts, Priest, Martyr (W)**

**Sunday 11 3rd Sunday of Advent**

**Monday 12 Weekday of Advent, Our Lady of Guadalupe**

**Tuesday 13 St Lucy, Virgin, Martyr memorial**

**Wednesday 14 St John of the Cross, Priest, Doctor of the Church memorial**

**Thursday 15 Weekday of Advent**

**Friday 16      Weekday of Advent**

**Saturday 17    Weekday of Advent**

**Sunday 18      4th Sunday of Advent**

**Monday 19     Weekday of Advent**

**Tuesday 20    Weekday of Advent**

**Wednesday 21 Weekday of Advent,**

**St Peter Canisius, Priest, Doctor of the Church**

**Thursday 22    Weekday of Advent**

**Friday 23      St John of Kanty, Priest**

**Saturday 24    Weekday of Advent**

**Sunday 25      The Nativity of the Lord      solemnity**

**Monday 26     St Stephen, the first Martyr    feast**

**Tuesday 27    St John, Apostle, Evangelist    feast**

**Wednesday 28 The Holy Innocents, Martyrs    feast**

**Thursday 29    5th day of Christmas Octave,**

**St Thomas à Becket, Bishop, Martyr**

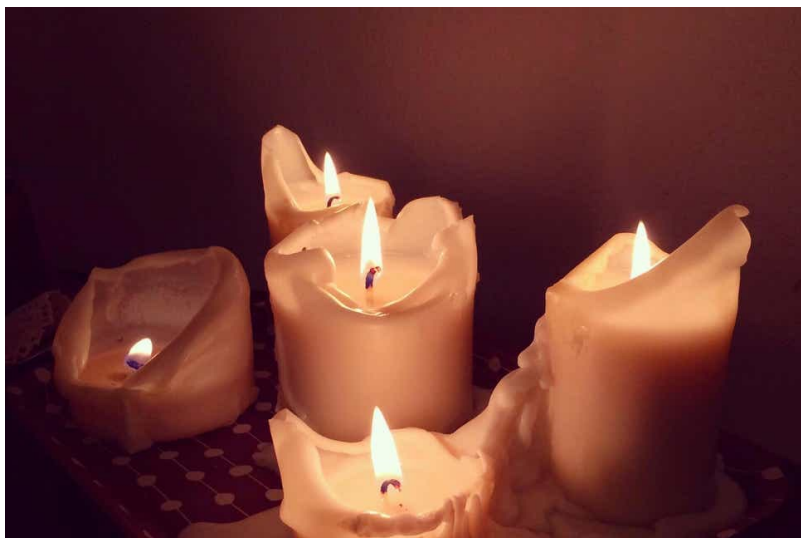
**Friday 30 The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph    feast**

**Saturday 31 7th day of Christmas Octave, St Sylvester I, Pope**

# How Blessed Candles Can Drive Away Demons



*The devil hates light, as it reminds him of Jesus, the "Light of the World."*



**There is an old tradition of distributing blessed candles on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. Candles can also be blessed by any priest on any day of the year.**

**The blessing makes these candles into “sacramentals,” an extension of the sacraments of the Church and a channel of divine grace.**

**One spiritual benefit of blessed candles is their ability to drive out the demonic. This is clearly shown in the blessing found in the Roman Ritual.**

***Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, bless + these candles at our lowly request. Endow them, Lord, by the power of the holy + cross, with a blessing from on high, you who gave them to mankind in order to dispel darkness. Let the blessing that they receive from the sign of the holy + cross be so effectual that, wherever they are lighted or placed, the princes of darkness may depart in trembling from all these places, and flee in fear, along with all their legions, and never more dare to disturb or molest those who serve you, the almighty God, who live and reign forever and ever.***

**Candles have always been used in the Church in both a symbolic and sacramental way. From ancient times the lighted candle has been seen as a symbol of the light of Christ. This is clearly expressed at the Easter Vigil, when the deacon or priest enters the darkened church with the single Easter candle. Jesus came into our world of sin and death to bring the light of God to us. He expressed this idea clearly in the Gospel of John: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).**

**We should remember that the candle itself does not “drive out” demons, but it is Jesus, the “Light of the World” who does so. Since demons despise all light and dwell eternally in darkness, it is fitting that these blessed candles would have such an effect.**

**Ask your local priest about blessing any candles you may have, and use them when you pray, asking God to drive out any darkness in your life.**

# *Christmas is Coming*



*Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat  
Please to put a penny in the old man's hat;  
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do,  
If you haven't got a ha'penny then God bless you!*

That traditional verse, probably written in Victorian times, could very easily be updated by replacing the goose with turkey and the old man with young woman selling the Big Issue. The Victorians were drawing attention to the inequalities that exist between families that could afford a goose for Christmas and the poor who were begging in the street. Over 100 years later there are still people who will be dreading Christmas because they have nowhere to go.

Unlike Victorian times there are now well-established charities that are trying to help the homeless and marginalised in society. Crisis set up shelters to help the homeless get off the street if only for a few days. There are drop in shelters where vulnerable people can get a meal and find some company. There are outreach workers actively trying to find the street homeless before they come to harm from malnutrition and adverse weather.

However, people can still fall through the cracks. They may not be street homeless but sofa-surfing or even have their own home but don't earn enough to cover their bills. This is where a caring community can be very helpful. You can be our eyes and ears, let us know of people who are struggling to feed themselves and/or their family. We may be able to help.

St Paul's Christmas outreach programmes are supporting The Catholic Workers Farm and Help the Homeless Hillingdon. There will be a 'giving tree' for the Farm. Scott and Berthe have several Ukrainian women and children living in the new house as well as the ladies resident in the main house. This year there are also young volunteers staying for Christmas. Please take labels from the tree and buy an age- appropriate gift. It would be helpful if you could return the gifts by 18<sup>th</sup> December to give us time to deliver them. We will also be using the Caritas Advent Calendar again this year to gather food and other items for Help the Homeless Hillingdon. Please do consider taking one to guide your giving during advent.

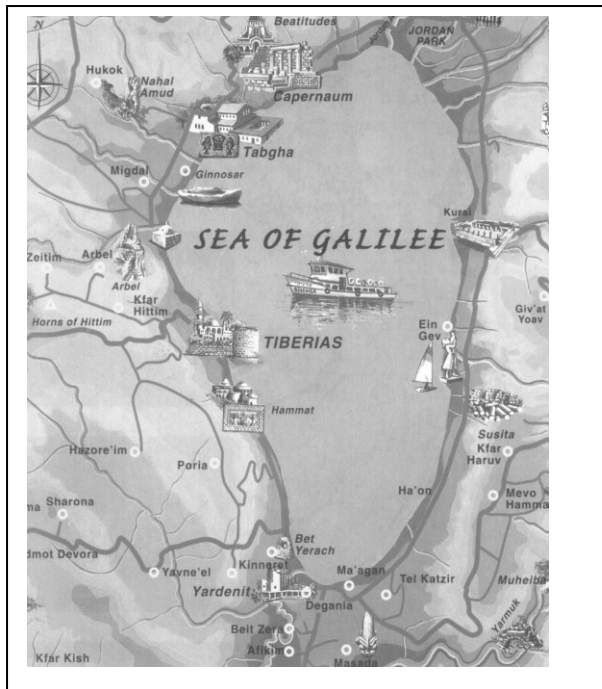
# The Sea of Galilee



The Sea of Galilee is Israel's largest freshwater lake. The sea is about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, but only 150 feet deep, and it lies 650 feet below sea level. The Sea of Galilee is currently surrounded by Israel from about the 3 o'clock position to the 12 o'clock position, and by the Golan Heights from the 12 o'clock position to the 3 o'clock position. It's a primary source of drinking water for Israel as well as a popular area for recreation and tourism. It is fed by the Jordan River, which then drains to the south and flows to the Dead Sea (aka: Salt Sea). Lately, a lack of rain has threatened the water level in the Sea of Galilee and induced the proliferation of desalination units. The Sea of Galilee is also a significant site in the Bible. Isaiah 9:1 says, "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations." Isaiah goes on to prophecy more about the Messiah. This prophecy, quoted in Matthew 4:15, promises that joy, a broken rod of oppression, and a child called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace will come to the Sea of Galilee. Some 700 years later, Jesus began His ministry there, in Galilee, by the sea. In the time of Christ, the region of Galilee sat to the west of the Sea of Galilee, Decapolis to the southeast, and Bashan to the northeast. The Sea of Galilee went by different names in the New Testament: the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) and the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1); in the Old Testament, it was called the Sea of Chinneroth (Joshua 12:3). The Sea of Galilee was known for fishing, trade, and

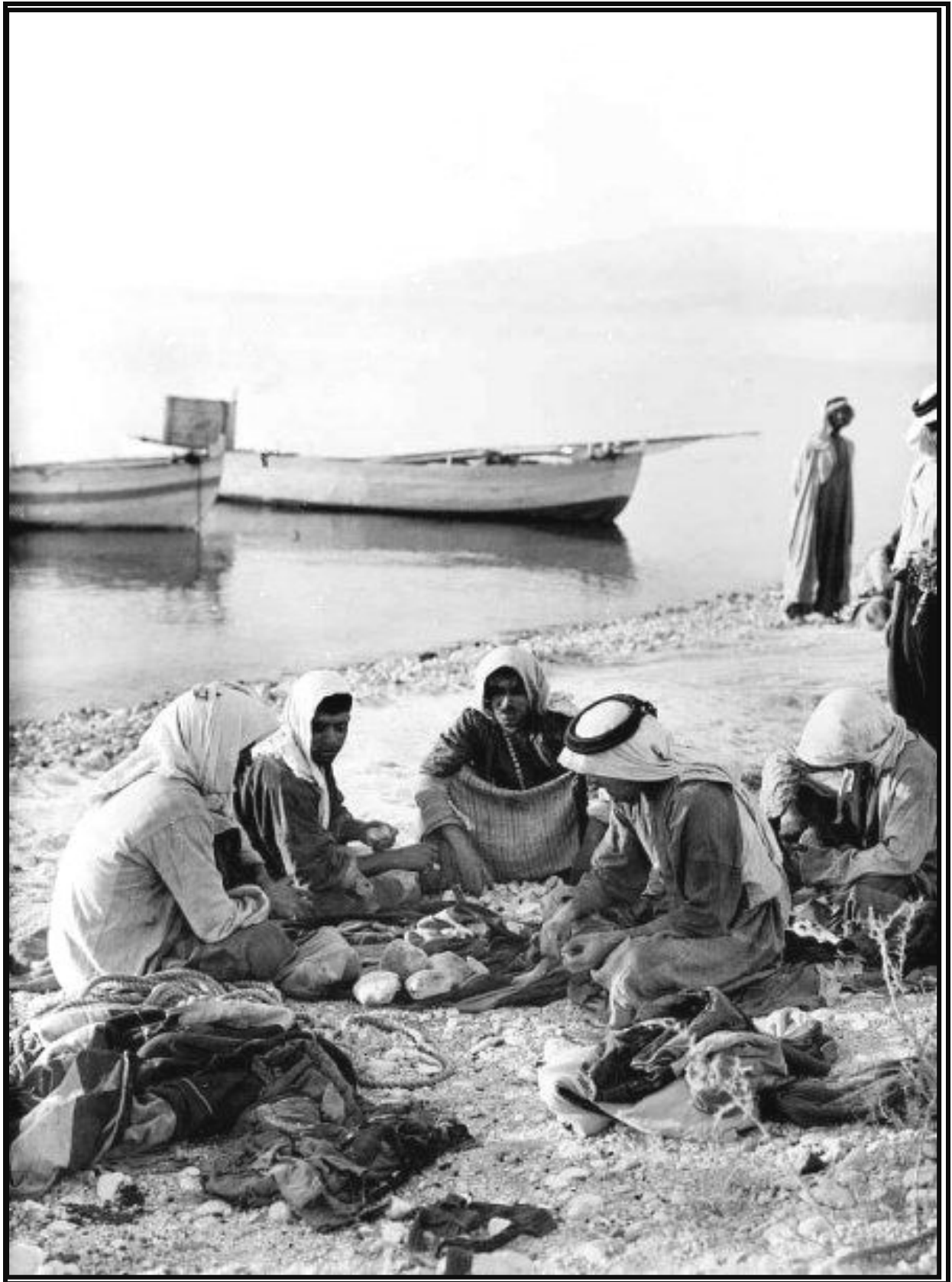
sudden, violent storms. The differences in climate and elevation between the sea and the eastern mountains cause strong winds comparable to those on Lake Erie in the United States.



After Mary and Joseph returned from Egypt, they settled in Nazareth, about twenty miles west of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 2:19–23). Jesus spent a significant amount of His ministry around the sea. Capernaum, Tiberias, and Gergesa are all on the sea, while Bethsaida is very close. The sea and its immediate environs were the setting for Jesus' paying the tax with a coin from a fish (Matthew 17:24–27), the healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1–12), the deliverance of the man possessed by a legion of demons (Mark 5:1–

20), the healing of the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:40–56), the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1–10), and the feedings of the four thousand (Matthew 15:29–39) and the five thousand (Luke 9:10–17). It's possible the Sermon on the Mount was also preached near the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 5–7). But the Sea of Galilee played an even more direct role in a handful of Jesus' life events. It was the Sea of Galilee on which Jesus walked (Matthew 14:22–33). After Jesus fed the five thousand, He sent His disciples across the sea while He withdrew from the crowd. The sea became rough, and the disciples had only rowed three or four miles when they saw Jesus walking on the water, set to overtake them. Peter asked to join Him on the water, but once out of the boat Peter became frightened and started sinking. Jesus saved him, and they both climbed into the boat. Instantly, the winds died down, and they were across the water to the other side. On another occasion, again when Jesus wanted to cross the Sea of Galilee from west to east, He was so tired that He fell asleep in the boat (Mark 4:35–41). A great storm rose up, and the disciples woke the Lord, afraid for their lives. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and then rebuked the wind and calmed the sea. The disciples were amazed that even the sea obeyed Him.

The Sea of Galilee was a key place for Jesus' disciples. Jesus called Peter (Simon), Andrew, James, and John to be His disciples while they were working as fishermen (Matthew 4:18–22). Later, Jesus found Levi (Matthew) sitting at a tax booth beside the sea and called him (Mark 2:13–17). A short while after, Jesus went to a mountain above the sea to appoint the twelve apostles (Mark 3:13–19). Finally, at the end of it all, after the resurrection, Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee and found Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other disciples fishing. There on the seaside, Jesus cooked them breakfast, and reconciled Peter to Himself (John 21). Today the Sea of Galilee is a popular site for Christians to visit. There, they can walk the paths Jesus walked and even see a boat from His time that was discovered in 1986. When standing beside the Sea of Galilee, it's easy to imagine how Jesus' followers must have felt when they finally saw the prophecies of Isaiah 9 come true. The Sea of Galilee played a direct role in a handful of events in the ministry of Jesus.



Fishermen on the shore of the Lake of Galilee 1930





**'FEED MY SHEEP' ... a bronze sculpture by the shores of the Lake of Galilee**

# Communion wafers instead of loaves: A history



*The custom is certainly ancient, but not from the early Christian era.*

The Gospels are clear, after all: At the Last Supper, Jesus “took bread.” Of course, we know full well that what Jesus used must have been unleavened bread, a symbol of the Passover (a piece of information which, however, has not stopped numerous artists from painting the Last Supper imaginatively depicting an ordinary leavened loaf in Christ’s hands). Yet, unleavened bread and Communion wafers are not exactly the same thing, nor do they look exactly the same. So when (and why) did the custom of using those small, light-colored wafers during liturgical celebrations arise?

The custom is certainly ancient, but not from the early Christian era: Priests in the early centuries consecrated ordinary leavened loaves, which were then distributed to the faithful in small chunks. But then, when did modern wafers originate?

To answer this question, we could resort to a silly legend or some historical consideration. And since legends are always captivating, we will begin by giving space to the first option, before turning to the second for a more rigorous answer.

## **The wafers: Invented by a monk who had made a resolution for Advent (says the legend)**

The protagonist of our story is St. Wandregisel, the monk who eventually founded the French abbey of Fontanelle. At the time when our friend lived (i.e., in the first half of the 7th century), the noble family that had given him birth was considered important, but no more so than many others: In hindsight, it might be interesting to point out that Wandregisel's paternal uncle was the progenitor of the Carolingian dynasty. But, unaware of the honors with which his family would one day be covered (and frankly disinterested even in those he could already benefit from), Wandregisel had opted for a life of penance and mortification, donning the monk's habit.

The legend tells how the cleric had been charged with preparing the loaves that would be consecrated during the Christmas Mass. It was the middle of winter, and it was the coldest December in memory. A few weeks earlier, at the beginning of Advent, Wandregisel had made a resolution to endure the frost without doing anything to warm himself, offering that mortification for the expiation of his sins and for the sake of the Holy Church.

So, when the monk was instructed to set himself at the stove to prepare the loaves for Communion, he found himself in a difficult situation: How could he do so, without enjoying the warmth of the oven, which he had promised to give up? Certainly, he couldn't refuse the assignment he had received (for mortifications must have an effect on those who choose them without affecting the unfortunates who live with him, creating a chain reaction of logistical problems); yet, Wandregisel would have preferred to find a way not to have to break that Advent resolution, which was bringing him so many benefits.

After turning the problem over in his mind, the monk had the idea of equipping himself with long iron tongs, similar to those blacksmiths used to handle glowing-hot objects in the forge. He attached to the tongs two metal plates suitable for holding the mixture of flour and water; and thus, wielding the long handle of that instrument, and standing at a safe distance from the fireplace, the ascetic managed to bake hundreds of loaves of bread without getting even a little warm.

There was one complication: Rather than loaves of bread, crackers emerged from the oven. Compressed by the tongs, the bread was crushed to become round and flat, resulting in a crispy wafer. But the result didn't displease the monks of the abbey at all, who in fact greatly appreciated that new type of bread, which kept for a long time and was easy to store. Within a few years, Wandregisel's discovery had gained such acceptance that it became the norm for the whole of Catholicism: and all because of a monk who had been unwilling to break his Advent resolution!

## **The spread of hosts in Carolingian Europe**

The story of Wandregisel is just a legend – one that, however, has a basis of verisimilitude, at least from the point of view of chronology. The French monk died in 665, and it was precisely at the end of that century that the idea that the bread to be consecrated during Mass should preferably be flat and unleavened slowly began to take hold in French dioceses. Most likely it was not Wandregisel who invented the first Communion wafers, but rather some of his “colleagues” who lived at about the same time and in the same area who devised them.

During the 8th century, the custom of consecrating hosts began to spread gradually but inexorably. In 798, Alcuin of York spoke in their favor, emphasizing their resemblance to the unleavened bread that Jesus had consumed at the Last Supper. A few years later, St. Rabanus Maurus pointed out that the Old Testament explicitly forbade, in no uncertain terms, the use of leavened bread for sacrifices. Of course, the New Covenant had enabled Christians to leave behind many Old Testament prohibitions, but the saint from Mainz was still of the view that Communion wafers, being free of leaven, were to be preferred in that context.

By the 9th century, the custom must have been well established: Numerous liturgists seem to take it for granted, and ecclesiastical archives begin to keep track of the massive purchase of wafer molds, often decorated in such a way as to imprint sacred-themed images on the wafer. Even more significantly, the writings of the 10th and 11th centuries record for us the protests of some “traditionalists” (the most ardent of whom was Eccard IV of St. Gallen) who did not appreciate this innovation and would have liked to continue to consecrate the usual leavened loaves; and it is precisely these isolated criticisms that allow us to guess how widespread the new practice was already at the time.

Eccard notwithstanding, wafers established themselves with ease throughout the Western Church. They were prepared exclusively by clergymen, in a solemn ritual that some might even describe as having a “sacred flavor”: Grains were selected grain by grain, poured into

sacks specially created for this use and ground in religious silence by monks who took advantage of those moments to pray. The cooking, by contrast, was accompanied by the chanting of prayers and sacred hymns: and then the wafers were ready to be taken to the abbey and distributed to the churches that requested them.

## **Like little white coins to enrich the soul**

These were not yet the wafers we know today: judging from what the period sources write, everything leads us to imagine that those first wafers for liturgical use still retained the diameter of the loaves to be brought to the table. We know, for example, that it was customary to stack them on top of the Mass chalice (which evidently assumes that the wafers were wider than the cup); some sources tell us of Eucharistic breads that were even large enough to provide fragments for entire weeks from the time they were broken.

Soon, however, they realized that the consistency of the wafers made them extremely crumbly: to avoid the possibility that, in breaking the bread repeatedly, small fragments might be accidentally dispersed, the monks felt the need to switch to a single-portion format, so to speak. Thus were born the small round wafers that we still receive today at Communion; and even in this case, some moralists arched their eyebrows: seen from a distance, those wafers looked like coins, more suited to a money-changer's counter than to a place of prayer.

But that criticism was soon reinterpreted in a positive light. In the 12th century, the theologian Honorius of Autun pointed out that the comparison was entirely appropriate; and indeed, it was symbolic that the name of God was imprinted on the hosts, in the same way that the name of the reigning king was imprinted on earthly coins. The analogy was perfect and full of symbolism, in the theologian's judgment: even the hosts, in their own way, are coins, which are generously dispensed by the heavenly King. They are coins for real, and among the most precious ones: the only ones through which one can enjoy the privilege of being face to face with God.