

Mother Antonia Herman

Prioress from 1868–1877



Mother Antonia (Margaret) Herman (Herrmann) was born in Krautheim, Baden, Bavaria, on December 22, 1835. After coming to the United States, she entered the Benedictine Convent in Erie, Pa., on January 15, 1857, and pronounced her first vows on November 13, 1857. In 1861, she was sent with a group to establish a new convent in Chicago, where she pronounced her final vows on November 13, 1862. She served as superior there for two years.

In July 1868, Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch of Saint John's Abbey (without consulting the members of the community in St. Joseph) brought Sister Antonia from Chicago to St. Joseph, Minn., appointed her as prioress and deposed Mother Willibalda Scherbauer. Due to a strained relationship with the second abbot of Saint John's, Mother Antonia resigned from office of prioress in 1877 and returned to Chicago.

Approximately four years later, Mother Antonia responded to a plea from Bishop Martin Marty of the Dakota Territory to teach the Native Americans at Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota. There, she met the sisters from Yankton, S.D., and later applied for membership in the Yankton community. She served as a teacher until ill health forced her to retire. She spent the last period of her life in Saint Mary's Hospital, Pierre, S.D., where she died on January 30, 1912. She is buried in the monastery cemetery in Yankton.

Mother Antonia was firm about religious rules and customs, but lenient in matters of food and rest, so as to preserve the health of the sisters. Her untiring diligence served to establish the community on a sound financial base for the future.