

Mother Henrita Osendorf

Prioress from 1961–1973



Mother Henrita (Annetta) Osendorf was born in Richmond, Minn., on August 22, 1906. She entered Saint Benedict's Monastery on August 28, 1923, professed her first vows on July 11, 1925, and made her perpetual vows on July 11, 1928. Prior to her election as 10th prioress of Saint Benedict's Convent in 1961, she served as a teacher in Pierz, Minn., and Cold Spring, Minn., as librarian at the College of Saint Benedict (1938–43), as novice mistress (1943–60) and as subprioress (1960–61).

Mother Henrita served two consecutive terms as prioress. Her service as prioress occurred in the challenging years of renewal following Vatican Council II. The changes in the church and in religious life, while necessary and full of growth, caused anxiety and confusion for many sisters. She had a keen sense of the readiness for change in the community and met the need for change with instruction, compassion and a sense of balance. Her innate sense of timing guided the community through the troubled times with equanimity. Though a number of sisters discerned a change in their commitment to religious life, the community was able to withstand the departures and the many transitions that occurred in community prayer, work and life together. One of the most difficult, yet imperative, changes that Mother Henrita made was to guide the community through the process of separately incorporating its institutions of education and health care. After leaving the office of prioress, Mother Henrita continued working in spiritual direction, retreat ministry and counseling at St. Benedict's. She also continued to serve on the Board of Trustees of the College of Saint Benedict, the St. Cloud Hospital Board and on the Board of Directors of Catholic Charities of the St. Cloud Diocese. She died on February 12, 1992.