

Mother Richarda Peters

Prioress from 1949–1961



Mother Richarda (Lucille) Peters was born in Minneapolis on October 2, 1895, the daughter of Hubert and Mary Igel Peters. She entered Saint Benedict's Convent, St. Joseph, Minn., on September 3, 1912, became a novice in July, 1913, and professed her first vows July 11, 1914. Before her final profession in 1917, she had already begun her long career as an educator. Between 1914 and 1939, while living at Holy Angels Convent in St. Cloud, Minn., she taught in the parish elementary school and at Cathedral High School. She served as principal at Cathedral High School from 1928–39 and again from 1946–49. In the interim, she completed doctoral studies in psychology and psychiatry at The Catholic University of America and served as a member of the faculty and dean of residence at the College of Saint Benedict.

Mother Richarda was elected prioress of Saint Benedict's Convent in 1949. Her primary concern for the next 12 years was the welfare of the sisters. The same skill in loving, efficient teaching and administration that had won the admiration and love of several generations of students came into fruition as she met the challenges of her community's expanding apostolates in the church at home and abroad. Mother Richarda had a deep appreciation for the tradition of the Consecration of Virgins, an ancient sacramental rite made available to American Benedictine sisters by Pope Pius XII in 1950, upon the request of the American prioresses during their Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome. After prayer and study, the first group of sisters of Saint Benedict's Convent was consecrated in 1954.

In 1954, Mother Richarda was elected president of the Congregation of Saint Benedict, a position she held until 1966, five years beyond her term as prioress. She was deeply involved in the work of renewal and adaptation within the church, within the Congregation and within her own community. Her diaries and notes attest to her intent to keep informed, as well as her interest in continuing education both professionally and spiritually. In 1961, at the end of her term as prioress, she received a deeply-cherished tribute, the Mother Richarda Peters Scholarship. It was established in her honor by hundreds of her former students and her friends, in appreciation of her care for them.

From 1961–67, Mother Richarda served as superior of the St. Cloud Hospital Convent. On the occasion of the golden jubilee of her profession, she was awarded the Bishop's Medal of Merit, the first sister to be so honored. After 1967, she returned to Saint Benedict's to coordinate the care of the aged and infirm in the motherhouse. In time, she herself became a patient, suffering from lung cancer until her death on July 5, 1972.