



## **Hospital Sisters of St. Francis**

4849 La Verna Road • Springfield, IL 62707

217-522-3387 • [hospitalsisters.org](http://hospitalsisters.org)

**From:** Brian C. Blasco

**Director of Communications and Archivist - Assistant Coordinator of Community Life**

**Date:** April 10, 2025

**RE:** Mother Angelica Ratte, OSF

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Birth</b>                    | <b>November 25, 1832, in Altenruethen, Germany, and named Theresia</b> |
| <b>Entered HSOSF</b>            | <b>March 30, 1855</b>  |
| <b>Profession of First Vows</b> | <b>July 14, 1857</b>   |
| <b>Missionary to the USA</b>    | <b>October 1875</b>  |

### **Assignments**

|                          |                            |                         |                        |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Alton, IL</b>         |                            | <b>November 6, 1875</b> | <b>Mother Superior</b> |
| <b>Springfield, IL</b>   | <b>St. John's Hospital</b> | <b>December 9, 1875</b> | <b>Mother Superior</b> |
| <b>Muenster, Germany</b> |                            | <b>1880</b>             |                        |

### **Entered Eternal Life**

**January 4, 1895, and buried in the Motherhouse Cemetery (Muenster, Germany)**



G.s.J.Chr.

November 4, 1875

Dear Reverend Mother,

God be praised and thanked a thousand times over. After a long and arduous sea voyage, we are now only 2 hours away from New York. This morning at 1 o'clock, we could see land and everyone rushed to the deck as quickly as possible. The joy and elation cannot be described. All the discomfort of the journey suddenly seemed to be forgotten. At first, we only saw the lighthouses on the coast, then gradually more and more land. At 6 o'clock, the ship stood still. We will sleep on the ship again this night. Tomorrow morning a doctor from America will come on a boat and examine us, and then we hope to be able to disembark around 9 o'clock.

Dear Reverend Mother, if only you could see the glorious sight. It's like a sea of light. We were on the deck for a long time. We couldn't get enough of the Litany of the Saints and the Te Deum sounding much more joyful than usual. We sang it this evening on the deck.

Dear Reverend Mother, we have endured a lot on the journey - storms and illness - but with God's grace we made it through. Mary guided us safely. During the last storm, some of the Sisters were very anxious. Sister Henriette was so afraid. At the moment, I still have sleepless nights. I still can't shake off the reluctance to take on the office that the superiors have given me. In the Motherhouse, I abstained so as not to make the dear superiors' hearts heavy. I often cried in the church there too.

Sea travel cannot be described well, it can only be felt. Because of the constant rocking and bumping, you are always nauseous, which also causes vomiting. You can prevent vomiting a lot if you lie down immediately after eating. We have certainly got a different stomach. We can eat potatoes with vinegar and herring in the morning. We can use the vinegar bottle with every vegetable. I used to live on coffee and now I can hardly smell it, not even tea. Water tastes best. That's how many Sisters feel.

No matter how things go in Germany, you will not be able to endure the journey across the ocean. Some Sisters think it is so easy; but those who are so concerned about their health in the convent, who cannot stand a breath of air, who do not even care in which cell they sleep, will not endure the discomfort of the sea voyage. He who goes to the ocean must first sacrifice his health and his life.

Dear Reverend Mother, we have lost my bag. I didn't realize it until you were gone from us.

We looked for everything on the ship. No Sister remembers carrying it and some think it was left in the Motherhouse in the little house. In the bag were Katharina Ernmerick's books, the letter folder which you my Reverend Mother had filled to the brim, my written book with pictures, prayer cards, photographs, my new cord, Sister Zosima's habit, the forms for the books, pottery, varnish, and other little things. The other Sisters gave us stationery.

If you write to us, I would like to ask you to send us the forms for the letters. I will stop for today. We will certainly sleep well this night. We are often defeated, the ship stands still, it is 9 o'clock.

Dear Reverend Mother, we did not sleep well although it was very quiet on the ship. This morning an American doctor is coming to examine the passengers. Then our luggage will be checked, so we probably won't arrive in New York before noon. We intend to travel this evening, if possible, or tomorrow morning. The priest does not have to go with us as far as Cincinnati. If our travel on the train goes smoothly, we will arrive in Alton on Saturday night. The priest wants to take us to a monastery. The two clergymen have taken good care of us. Reverend Mother, see how the good Lord has provided for us so far? I hope he will continue to do so. We have left everything out of love for him, our dear superiors and fellow Sisters so he must be all the more our Father and Mary is our Mother.

The captain from America said that several ships were wrecked in the great storm - especially 2 ships from England. One captain is said to be under care. My dear mother must have heard about it from the newspapers and must have been very worried about us. We have already regretted it. We would certainly not have fared so well if we had not had such a cautious captain. If the big storm had come a day later, we would have been in even more danger because we would have had to pass sand cliffs. The dear superiors and Sisters certainly prayed a lot for us. I cannot write more now, more in Alton.

Many thousands of greetings from my fellow Sisters. Also greetings to Mr. Director Plehler. We remembered his words during the storms. Also, greetings to my father. Dear Reverend Mother, the great and cruel sea has distanced us so far from each other, but in the Sacred Heart of Jesus we want to be very close, and our mutual prayer must meet all the more at the throne of God.

Your most submissive daughter commends herself and her fellow Sisters to your prayers.

Sister Angelica

Port of New York, 4.XI.1875

9.1.9.27.

LA 705

Liebe Vierzehnjährige Mutter!

Gott sei Dank und das sind Tante. Auf einer  
langen und beschwerlichen Reise sind Sie  
jetzt mit 2 Kindern nach ganz klein  
französischen Bergen. Sie sind mit einem  
Land-Land. Alles will so schnell abhandeln  
auf dem Land. Die Leute sind die Götter sind  
nicht zu beschreiben. Alle beschreiben das  
Wasser beschreiben mit einem sehr großen zu sein.  
Genug sagen wir mit den Land-Land, den  
von Land, dann allmählich immer mehr  
Land. Es ist sehr schwer das zu sein, wir  
sind mit 2 Kindern ganz klein. Die  
Wasser beschreiben wir mit dem Land-Land.  
Wasser ist ein Mann in einem Land. Es ist ein  
Land mit Amerika und unter sich sind  
dann schon wir ganz 9 Uhr mit Augen  
zu sehen.

Liebe Vierzehnjährige Mutter! wir sind Mannen  
von Land den sehr vielen Land-Land. Es ist  
auf Amerika ist es wir in einem Land.  
Wir sind in einem Land mit dem Land-Land. Mit  
Wasser sind wir sehr sehr. Die Land-Land

Und das Adornen blaugenstichl'ner alt  
zu dir sehen ab dir und Abund'ner gesungen  
Lied' erwidern Mäthel, wie sie haben geseh'n  
der Kaiser die gestanden. Wieweil und Dorothea  
sich. Aber ab ist mit Gethab' stande, nicht stande  
Maria hat sich nicht geseh'n. Die ist dem  
letzten Wund' erwidern einige Adornen  
habe lange. Die Thonische ist so viel nicht  
nicht geseh'n. Ich habe gar keine Anstalt  
geseh'n. Geseh'n habe ich aber in tiefen  
Mäthel' nach oft. Der Mäthel' ist der dem  
Aber, das wird die Abund'ner geseh'n  
habe ich nach nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
habe ich nach nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
das long nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
habe ich nicht. Die Mäthel' ist  
Lied' erwidern Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist  
habe ich nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
erwidern Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist  
nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
dagegen Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist  
das geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
habe ich nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
Wieweil Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist  
Lied' erwidern Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist  
nicht geseh'n. Die Mäthel' ist  
dagegen Mäthel' die Mäthel' ist

[illegible]

Auf. Joviana ich hab'it die Sammlern zu  
 den Briefen, Post besuchend Lach und andere  
 Plausigkeiten. So wie das Aufgebot haben  
 und Briefgeheim gegeben. Man vergesse  
 nicht das es die Sammlern zu den Briefen  
 darf mit zu besichtigen, weil wir dann  
 das nicht zu besichtigen haben gegeben.  
 Das steht es in der Briefen. Wir werden  
 diesen Brief ganzig zu besichtigen. Wir werden  
 nicht vergessend, das es ist nicht still, es ist  
 9. 10.

[illegible]



Mündige Mütter setzen, wenn der liebe Gott  
hilft, gut für uns gesorgt. Ich sollte mir nicht  
als ein Mann sein: Mir stehen wir nicht  
zu ihm, sondern lieben Eltern und Mitmenschen  
verleihen, deswegen mag ich mir nicht mehr  
als Maria Mütter sein.

Liebe wird die Mütter der Dagehain mit Strenge  
soll angestrengt haben, dass in dem ganzen Mann  
manche Tische und Lücke gefüllt werden. In der  
2. Tische von England, die Dagehain sollte schon  
in der ersten Tische der Dagehain sein.

Mündige Mütter setzen, wenn der liebe Gott  
hilft, gut für uns gesorgt. Ich sollte mir nicht  
als ein Mann sein: Mir stehen wir nicht  
zu ihm, sondern lieben Eltern und Mitmenschen  
verleihen, deswegen mag ich mir nicht mehr  
als Maria Mütter sein.

Wenn der ganze Mann 1. Tag steht und stehen  
nicht mehr, fallen wir auf unser Gefäß zu  
sich, weil wir den ganzen Mann und den kleinen  
verleihen, deswegen mag ich mir nicht mehr  
als Maria Mütter sein.

Wenn der ganze Mann 1. Tag steht und stehen  
nicht mehr, fallen wir auf unser Gefäß zu  
sich, weil wir den ganzen Mann und den kleinen  
verleihen, deswegen mag ich mir nicht mehr  
als Maria Mütter sein.

Leibhaftigste Wille, das große  
und gütige Wille, das ich so sehr  
von mir aus auf mich habe und f. d. d. d.  
Gefühl, das ich so sehr auf mich habe und f. d. d.  
Gefühl, das ich so sehr auf mich habe und f. d. d.  
Gefühl, das ich so sehr auf mich habe und f. d. d.  
Gefühl, das ich so sehr auf mich habe und f. d. d.

Ihre liebste Tochter  
Hr. Angelica

Lebanon, den 4. 1893.

**Letter from Sister M. Angelika  
The First Superior in America**

**Praised be Jesus Christ!**

**Dear Reverend Mother,**

**This evening we are already in Alton, Illinois for eight days and before now I could not find time to report to you, dear Mother more details about our trip and our arrival here.**

**Already this morning the last Sisters left and we are now only three here. Dear Reverend Mother, first I want to share something about our trip with the ship. Thursday, the fourth of the month, (November 4, 1875) in the morning, about 9:00 AM we left the ship. Seven Sisters from New York were waiting already for one hour for us to welcome us. We went with those Sisters to their houses and stayed during the day with them. Already for several days a priest from Alton was (waiting) there to pick us up. The Sisters received us in quite a loving way and offered to have us stay with them for some days. However, because the priest from Alton was already waiting for us for a long time, we started [traveling again] in the evening, 7:00 PM. We were on the way two days and two nights. On Saturday evening, 6:30 PM, we arrived [in Alton]. The General Vicar, with several priests, took us from the train station and we went to the Cathedral. When we got out of the car, we already heard the sound of the organ. The whole Cathedral was filled with light. The Bishop welcomed us in a short talk then we sang the *Te Deum*, to give thanks for our happy arrival and then we received the blessing from the Bishop. The General Vicar and Pastor Sauer brought us to the house, which was prepared for us. Supper was prepared and waiting on the table for us. The Bishop had asked the woman who takes care of his household to take care of everything.**

**Saturday we went for Confession to the General Vicar in the Cathedral. Our house is near by. We received Holy Communion at the most Reverend Bishop's Mass. Already Sunday morning, at 10:00 AM, the General Vicar and Father Sauer, who picked us up in New York, came to visit us. In the afternoon, at 5:00 PM His Grace, the Bishop and the General Vicar visited. The gentleness, love, kindness and loving care of the Bishop I can not put into words. The Bishop told us then in which way he wants to divide us up, after we recover from the journey. In the morning, during his preaching he already told the people about the purpose of our being here and how he would divide us into his Diocese. We heard this but we did not understand. In the Cathedral, the preaching is always in English. We missed Holy Communion so many times therefore this week we received Holy Communion every morning except Friday. Every time we received Holy Communion, I had the Bishop. Only twice, on Wednesday and today, I received from the General Vicar.**

**Dear Reverend Mother, the Bishop has in mind six cities where we should go. The paper on which you have written is in the bag, which we lost. I put the Sisters together in the way I could remember.**

**Springfield, the capital of Illinois: Sister Cyrilla, Sister Basilia, Sister Crispina, Sister Ulrika**

**St. Louis: Sister Henriette, Sister Aurelia, Sister Cassiana, Sister Rolendis,**

**Litchfield: Sister Fridoline, Sister Rosa, and Sister Augustine.**

**Belleville: Sister Jovita, Sister Gerburgis, Sister Silvana,**

**Effingham: Sister Euphemia, Sister Fortunata, Sister Franziska,**

**Alton: Sister Zosima, Makaria and I (Sister Angelika)**

On Wednesday morning, the Sisters started for Litchfield. I went with the Sisters to the Bishop's house and we received the blessing of the Bishop for the trip. On Thursday morning, 9:00 AM, the Sisters went to Springfield. His Grace, the Bishop, asked me to accompany the Sisters and take this chance to see a house and a big compound in the middle of the city which the former Bishop of Alton bought in order to move his residence there. The present Bishop wants to remain in Alton because it is in the middle of his Diocese. The Bishop felt this could be a suitable place for a hospital. I went with the Sisters. The priests were with us. The compound may be the same big size like our Motherhouse - with out the enclosure. The house has five windows on the front side, one wing, I mean six windows. The place is very nice, in the middle of the city. The cities here are very different from Germany. Everything is not so close together and the streets are very wide.

During our tour through the house, a telegram arrived that the Bishop plans to come to Springfield in the evening at 9:00 PM.

Our Sisters will stay for several weeks with the Ursuline Sisters who will teach them the English language because they can't handle anything without that.

Friday morning the Bishop came to us asking if we like the place. He told us that our Motherhouse for America would be built there and there we would be able to have our home. The whole compound with the house will cost \$35,000.00. Springfield should pay 8 percent every year then after 10 years everything is totally repaid. The Bishop thinks that the Sisters could collect money in the city, and other people; when that happens then this will be accomplished. The Pastor, Father Lewe, born in Warendorf, who has the German Church, is appointed by the Bishop to be our Director. The Bishop told us Father Lewe is a holy man, like the Cure de Ars.

The Bishop said that after a short time I also should move to Springfield. I'm not really sure now if after that only two Sisters will remain in Alton or if someone must return there from Springfield. In Alton, there are already Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of St. Vincent from St. Louis. These Sisters do not go out to care for the sick. Therefore, the Bishop wants to keep some of our Sisters there. The people seem to be in favor of us and not so much for the other Sisters. I believe that the Sisters will be well here. Right away we started cooking for ourselves; the people brought so much to us we never were wanting for anything. Often some one comes from the Bishop's house to ask how we are and if we need anything. Especially the General Vicar cares for us. Reverend Mother you can't believe how simple and pious he is. The Bishop, the General Vicar and Father Lewe are seen as holy people here.

The Sisters traveled together to St. Louis and Belleville on Thursday morning at 10:00 AM. This morning, at 8:00 AM, the last Sisters left for Effingham. Yesterday evening, about 9:00 PM, the Bishop and I returned from Springfield.

Dear Reverend Mother I am sure you and the Director did not know what the Bishop planned to do with us, and therefore every day it is less and less comprehensible that the higher Superiors could put all of this on me. If I had know all this before, I don't think I would have had much courage to accept all of this.

Even if the journey were very hard for me, I would start it again, if I could be relieved from this office. The only thing that supports me is that I know I am here in Holy Obedience, and that I have never been longing for any office or higher position.

Dear Mother, the hardest thing for us is the language. We all have to learn English. The German language is not used much here. It is difficult to learn from books because almost all is spoken in a different way. Trust in our God will and must support us. In dark hours, I imagine the Apostles who were sent into the whole world totally uneducated and they converted the world. In me, the loving God again sent a poor instrument to America to do great things for His honor and the good of the people.

Dear Reverend Mother, it looks like next Spring we will need more Sisters to come to America; more than anything we need Sisters for the Pharmacy. We really want to have one here who has passed the exam. Here, in all the hospitals, they prepare the medicines themselves.

In Quincy, Illinois, there are the Sisters from Aachen. In America, they have their Motherhouse in Cincinnati. The Bishop does not seem to be too much in favor of these Sisters. The home of the Housekeeper of the Bishop is there. The former Superior created a debt of \$1,400.00. The Housekeeper of the Bishop said something like, if he were asked, the Bishop would not care if these Sisters would leave.

Dear Mother, the Sisters at home will be surely very happy because they will receive a big gift from America – six Holy Communions. I hope everyone will receive them eagerly and will pray a lot for us.

Now I will close my letter, it is almost midnight.

I can't send my address to you. I am not sure how long I will stay here. In addition, the Sisters probably will not stay in this house. The Bishop's plan is that we should stay close to the German church.

If you, dear Reverend Mother, do write to us, please send the mail to the General Vicar then we will receive it.

Many, thousands, of greetings from all my Sisters.

I remain your obedient daughter,

Angelika

P.S. Reverend Mother, I ask to send the enclosed letter to my brother. Sister Agnes has the address.





[illegible]



[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]



## MOTHER ANGELICA

First Superioress, 1875-Sept. 12, 1880

*"When my eyes are slowly closing*

*"And I fade from earth away*

*"And when Death the stern destroyer*

*"Claims my body as his prey—*

*"Claim my soul, and then, sweet Mary*

*Ora pro me,"*

It is generally admitted that the best traits in our lives and characters are derived as an inheritance, from our good mothers. One of the decisive motives that inspires a young maiden to take the step of forsaking the world and assimilating herself with cloistered life is in great measure due to the inspiration and training received from a good mother. From earliest childhood the daughter beholds in her the rarest flower of faith, piety, and charity. She becomes the daughter's sublime ideal which in its fruition causes her not infrequently to consecrate her life to God.

Of such a family in which a good mother's gentle sway and luminous example had become paramount, our future Sister and first American Mother Provincial was born. Her birthday occurred November 25, 1832 in the small Westphalian village of Altenruehen. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Rotte, and received the baptismal name Therese. Reared amid the best of influences that a model christian home could bestow, young Therese showed already in the early days of her girlhood marked signs of her future religious vocation which manifested themselves in various pious practices and commendable habits, such as love of prayer, frequent reception of holy Communion, tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and an implicit obedience to the wishes and commands of her parents. When twenty-two years and four months old, March 30, 1855, Therese Rotte became a Postulant in the then still young Community of Franciscan Hospital Sisters of St. Mauritz. She was invested with the habit May 10, 1856 and made Profession of Vows July 14, 1857. From the day of investiture the world knew her as Sister Angelica.

When in 1875 the German Kulturkampf threatened the expulsion of all religious orders and Communities from the Fatherland and the Superiores had determined upon America as a safe and secure haven where to transplant the Order, a call for volunteers was made to serve as the advance guard for the community that was supposedly to follow. The number of these pioneer Sisters was restricted to twenty, among them being our Sister Angelica who was appointed, by reason of seniority, superioress of the emigrating band which position over the American community she retained till the day of her recall to Germany, September 12, 1880.

It is difficult to conceive today the multitude of perplexities and discouragements, sacrifices and difficulties that confronted the beginnings of this new undertaking, all of which rested mainly on the shoulders of poor Mother Angelica, just arrived in this country. There were moreover a number of factors which materially handicapped the good Sister's activity. Her rather circumscribed view of things American and her advanced age that prohibited her from adequately adapting herself to new conditions and surroundings combined to convince Mother Angelica that she was unable longer to cope with the multiplied requisites and requirements of the young Order and its branch-houses, hence she begged the Mother General to be relieved of her growing responsibilities as Superioress. In consequence she was recalled to Germany in the fall of 1880.

Mother Angelica was a devout and pious Religious, an eminent woman of prayer and self-denial. Whenever at work—generally 18 hours a day—she was saying her prayers aloud. The laundry, of which she never tired, was her favorite place, a strict disciplinarian herself, she served as a model unto others, especially to the young novices.

After her recall to the general Motherhouse in 1880, Sister Angelica was given charge of the children's 'hospital-ward' where she rendered splendid service, enjoying the love and respect of all who knew her. Her memory is kept in profound reverence by her former companion-sisters, and many a prayer is offered up for the erstwhile Superioress of Springfield, the leader of the twenty pioneers of 1875. She peacefully expired, January 4, 1895. R. I. P.

