

## St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish

1910 - 2010

No. 14 of a Series on Our Parish's First 100 Years



The middle and latter months of 1911 continued to be as busy and eventful for St. Charles congregation as the first few months had been. Two events involving the school children, which continue to occur each year, started in 1911. These are, of course, First Communion and graduation.

Prior to 1911 the Catholic Church required children to be at least 12 years of age in order to receive First Holy Communion. In an August 1910 decree, however, Pope Pius X (canonized in 1954 as St. Pius X) recommended that children be admitted to the sacrament when they attained the necessary intelligence and knowledge of their religion regardless of age. Archbishop S. G. Messmer promulgated the necessary instructions for the archdiocese of Milwaukee in early 1911, and on Sunday, June 11, 1911, thirty-five children - eighteen boys and seventeen girls - made their First Communions at the 8 o'clock high Mass sung by St. Charles' pastor, Rev. Philipp Dreis. The children in St. Charles' first First Communion class were:

Everhard Alby	Warner Ketterhagen	Wilhelmina Paulson	Margaret Sweeney
Mabel Anderson	Marie Kleinkopf	Leo Prasch	Cordella Terhorst
Henrietta Baumeister	John Kortendick	Eleanor Reinardy	John Trier
Carl Beller	Leon Litzler	Louis Rewald	Clarence Wagner
Dorothy Christien	Frances Maag	Francis Rose	Leo Warren
Rosa Grossman	Laurence May	Lauretta Schierman	Hildegard Weinman
Lorraine Henningfield	Marie Meyers	(Loretta Sherman)	Henry Wisnefski
Cecil Hurtgen	Florence Mutchler	Mildred Stallman	Stephen Wisnefski
Elmer Isferding	Katherine Partee	Ernest Stradinger	Louis Zwiebel

St. Charles school closed for summer vacation on Thursday, June 22, with the scholars holding a grand picnic at Brown's Lake to celebrate the event. On the following Tuesday, a large crowd of relatives and friends gathered in the church hall to watch the school's first graduation exercises. The first graduating class consisted of five young ladies: Irene Kortendick, Helen Prasch, Martha Leber, Celia Rose, and Florence Reuschlein. They were among the 139 students who had attended St. Charles school in the 1910-1911 school year. Irene Kortendick won the honors and delivered the valedictory address while Helen Prasch gave the salutatory address. The exercises also included musical numbers and recitations. The class selected blue and white for its class colors; "To Excel in Virtue and Learning" as the class motto; and the white rose as the class flower.



Martha Leber as a  
Novice - 1913

Two of the graduates later married - Irene Kortendick to Myron Emmons and Florence Reuschlein to Lawrence Daniels; two remained single - Helen Prasch and Celia Rose; and one - Martha Leber - entered the convent of the School Sisters of St. Francis, becoming Sister Mary Lewine, St. Charles' first religious vocation. An interesting characteristic common to the 1911 graduates was their longevity. Their ages at death ranged from 85 (Sister Lewine) to 100 (Celia Rose). The other three died at 92 (Reuschlein), 93 (Prasch), and 94 (Kortendick).

Martha Mary Leber, the daughter of Louis and Anna (Dallinger) Leber, was born in Burlington on July 1, 1897. She attended St. Mary's grade school before graduating from St. Charles. She entered the convent of the School Sisters of St. Francis on August 13, 1913, and

professed her first vows on July 2, 1917. Taking the name Sister Mary Lewine, she taught in schools in Chicago Heights, Spring Grove, and Franklin Park, Illinois; Little Canada, Minnesota; Farmer, South Dakota; and Stevens Point, Middleton, Milwaukee, Nekoosha, Brighton, and Lyons, Wisconsin. She was the librarian at Cardinal Cushing College in Boston, Massachusetts, for many years. She celebrated her 60th year as a nun in August 1977 with a Mass and reception at St. Charles. A nun for 66 years, she died June 29, 1983, two days before her 86th birthday.



Sister M. Lewine - 1961

The early part of 1911 also saw St. Charles congregation planning for Burlington's Fourth of July celebration. In March Rev. Dreis had announced that St. Charles had decided to take the lead in a big Fourth of July and homecoming celebration for the City. In May the congregation decided not to attempt a homecoming, but to put all its energies into a large picnic. A general oversight and arrangement committee was appointed, consisting of Louis Rein, Fred F. Itzin, Peter J. Strassen, Edwin Moe, and Casper Maag. Other committees appointed were: games - Joseph M. Christien, Dr. Louis A. Forge, and John Cunningham; and stands and grounds - Henry Pihringer, Joseph Block, and John Grueter. The ladies' and young ladies' societies were to combine in serving a big picnic dinner.

The picnic was held at Steinhoff's grove of old oak trees north of Burlington. (The Steinhoff farm was at the intersection of what is now Grove Street and Milwaukee Avenue.) Despite temperatures hovering around the 100 degree mark, the hundreds of people who flocked to the celebration had a good time. Following a concert by the Burlington Harmony Band on the downtown streets, the band marched to the picnic grove after first stopping at St. Charles where the school children joined them. At the grove, the crowd found the concession stands and amusements set up by Frank Stang's Burlington Amusement Co. The usual Fourth of July program - highlighted by the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Andrew Verhalen and a patriotic address by former Burlington resident Thomas Kearney - followed the dinner, as did a baseball game between East Troy and Burlington. The parish ladies' and young ladies' societies served lunch all afternoon and supper after the ballgame. After expenses were paid, the congregation realized a balance of \$722 for the building fund.

In August Burlington Council No. 1578, Knights of Columbus, with some fifty members, was formally launched when a "jollification" was held and the officers were installed. The officers included Rev. Dreis as one of the trustees and several St. Charles members, including Grand Knight John T. Prasch, in other leadership posts. In October St. Monica's Court No. 936, Woman's Catholic Order of Foresters, was organized with twenty-two charter members. Among the officers installed were Rev. Dreis as Chaplain and several St. Charles members in other posts, including Mrs. John McCarthy (nee Edna Perkins) as Chief Ranger and Mrs. Frank Beller (nee Mary Cunningham) as Vice Chief Ranger.

In September school opened for the second year with 125 pupils in three rooms with the following teachers: upper grades, Sister M. Hermana; intermediate grades, Sister M. Dolores; and lower grades, Sister M. Claudia. On November 5, the congregation celebrated the feast day of St. Charles Borromeo and the first anniversary of the dedication of the church and school building. The Standard Democrat observed that "The year has been a most prosperous one to the church and most gratifying to Rev. P. Dreis, whose untiring efforts have been responsible for the good accomplished."

*(to be continued)*