

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish

1910 - 2010

No. 35 of a Series on Our Parish's First 100 Years



Dual ceremonies, with Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch presiding, were held in St. Charles church on Friday, June 8, 1934, at which time members of the 1934 graduating class received diplomas and a group of young men and boys were inducted into the Junior Holy Name society.

The ceremonies began with twenty-five eighth grade graduates escorting the Archbishop to the church in procession. After a hymn by the choir and another by the graduates, Archbishop Stritch delivered an address to the young people. The graduates, shown in the photo below, then received their diplomas.



ST. CHARLES CLASS OF 1934

First row (l to r): Edmond Klein, Patricia Partee, Raymond Cook, Patricia Sughrue, Frederick Pieters, Charles Warren, and Francis Dauben.

Second row: Robert Peeters, Rev. Raymond Miller, Victor Rossmiller, Virginia Rueter, Neal Sperhake, Eunice Hoyle, John Rudkowsky, Isabel Giannini, Leroy Weyrough, and Rev. Frederick Hillenbrand.

Third row: Herbert Koenen, Philip Krueger, Willard Tenwinkel, Mary Lou Stang, Louis Ketterhagen, Evelyn Linneman, Robert Wanasek, Charles Hopkins, Robert Chesick, and Charles Weiler.

Before receiving the boys and young men into the Junior Holy Name society, Archbishop Stritch explained the objectives of membership in the body. Together with youths throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, young men of St. Charles parish were to be united in a body for the purpose of attaining a fuller Christian character and developing their lives according to Catholic ideals of manhood. The services closed with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The following week the graduates were entertained at an outing at the St. Francis Seminary grounds. The Sisters of St. Charles, members of the class, and Rev. Frederick Hillenbrand and Rev. Raymond Miller made the trip. The graduates were taken through some of the historical buildings on the seminary campus and enjoyed a picnic dinner. Earlier in June, the graduating class had been awarded the grade prize in the Woman's Club's nature study contest for doing the most outstanding work at St. Charles school in that year's contest.

Shortly before the school year ended, the music pupils of St. Charles had given a very successful recital at the church hall. A large number of parents and friends attended and enjoyed the splendid talent displayed by the junior musicians. Individual performers included Aileen Zwiebel, Carolyn Pieters, Joyce Kresken, James Bennett, Eileen David, Gordon Schilz, James David, Richard Pieters, Jack Bennett, Patricia Sughrue, Richard Alby, Merle Scheibe, Robert Wanasek, Neal Sperhake, Dorothy Zwiebel, Betty Jo Block, Marion Weis, Janet Merrick, Patricia Tobin, Rosemary Rueter, Elaine Reinardy, Grace Winkler, Donald Ketterhagen, Helen

Stang, June Heintskill, John Wiemer, John Scheibe, Donald Pieters, Jean Schiller, Jane Wagner, Genevieve Steinhoff, Florence Steinhoff, Philip Krueger, Malcolm Alby, and Paul Steinhoff.

With 255 former members of St. Charles school present for the seventeenth annual reunion of the St. Charles Alumni Association on June 19, a congenial evening of fellowship was enjoyed during the banquet and social dance which followed. Guest of honor was St. Charles' former pastor, Rev. Philipp Dreis of Sheboygan, the association's founder and, for many years, its spiritual leader.

The evening started with solemn Benediction in the church with the alumni attending in a body. From there they went to the hall and assembled for the banquet. Edward Cook presided as toastmaster. He was introduced by Aloysius Vande Sand, president of the association. Catherine Itzin gave the welcome to the new graduates, and Raymond Cook of the class of 1934 responded.

Short talks were given by Rev. Hillenbrand, and by the visiting priests, Rev. Philip Rose of Fond du Lac, Rev. Dreis, and Rev. Herbert Wagner of Racine. The gathering then went to St. Mary's gymnasium and spent the remainder of the evening dancing.

During the business meeting, which preceded the after-dinner program, the alumni elected Aloysius Partee as president for the coming year, with Richard Beix as vice president, Grace Moe as secretary, and Millicent McCarthy as treasurer. The Sister Mary Hermana trophy, awarded to the class having the largest percentage of membership present, was won by the class of 1929.

In their July meeting, members of the St. Agnes Sodality unanimously voted to adopt a resolution joining the Legion of Decency. The Legion had recently been initiated by Catholic clergy and laymen in an attempt to restrain the showing of salacious and unsocial motion pictures. The resolution was adopted and the pledge of the Legion of Decency (see box at right) signed by the members present after a thorough discussion of the subject. Discussion leaders were Mary McCourt, Ruth Beix, J. Russell Beix, Rev. Raymond Miller, and Rev. Robert Heller of Hartford.

The sodality's business meeting followed a dinner and party, a dual celebration given in honor of Father Hillenbrand and Father Miller as a birthday and name's day event.

The Legion of Decency

The action taken by the young women of the St. Agnes Sodality of St. Charles to join the Legion of Decency was the first group action in Burlington to enlist in the crusade against undesirable motion pictures. The crusade, which had been launched among church and social life groups throughout the nation, had as its underlying idea forming a critical public opinion among movie goers averse to pictures depicting ideas opposed to Christian morals and conduct.

The pledge that the sodality members adopted, which had been drawn up as a guide in forming a public opinion for a general higher type of motion pictures, was as follows:

I wish to join the Legion of Decency, which condemns vile and unwholesome moving pictures. I unite with all who protest against them as a grave menace to youth, to home life, to country, and to religion.

I condemn absolutely those salacious motion pictures which, with other degrading agencies, are corrupting public morals and promoting a sex mania in our land.

I shall do all that I can to arouse public opinion against the portrayal of vice as a normal condition of affairs, and against depicting criminals of any class as heroes and heroines, presenting their filthy philosophy of life as something acceptable to decent men and women.

I unite with all who condemn the display of suggestive advertisements on billboards, at theatre entrances, and in newspapers, and the favorable reviews often given to immoral motion pictures in the daily press.

Considering these evils, I hereby promise to remain away from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality. I promise further to secure as many members as possible for the Legion of Decency.

I make this protest in a spirit of self-respect and with the conviction that the American public does not demand filthy pictures, but clean entertaining and educational features.

With enthusiasm aroused by the success of the boys' and men's softball leagues, the girls of St. Mary's and St. Charles organized a two team league in July to play slow pitch ball at St. Mary's playground. The tentative lineups, each with a mix of players from the two parishes, included Cele Busher, Mary Jo McCarthy, Mary Keough, Dolores Spiegelhoff, Mary Weiler, Rose Vandenboom, Mary Moe, Mona Eckert, Clara Vandenboom, Blanche Johnson, and Marcie Partee on one team, and Betty Eisenbart, Donna Kappes, Mary Epping, Rosemary Beix, Ruth Wagner, Rosemary Forge, Ruth Beix, Evelyn Krug, Marg Weiler, Marie Vandenboom, and Ruth Zabler on the other.

In August church societies throughout the city launched a canning project by which families in Burlington on relief would have an opportunity to put up a supply of fruits and vegetables at small expense. George Weiler of St. Charles was in charge of organizing the project.

Each of the women of families on the relief list did the canning for her own family and supplied her own materials. The church societies furnished the kitchen and supplied the gas for cooking. The county relief agency furnished the sugar and spices. To further aid those in need, a call was made for donations of fruit jars and garden produce for canning. Every family on the relief list was entitled to this opportunity and the women were urged to take advantage of the canning days.

The women met the first week at St. Charles with Mrs. Charles Beix and other women of the parish assisting them. Fifty-seven quart jars of produce donated by several Burlington stores, besides the produce brought in individually by the women, were put up in St. Charles kitchen. Canned were carrots, tomatoes, peaches, plums, applesauce, pears, and jelly. St. Mary's kitchen was to be used the next week and the other churches in the city were to cooperate in the following weeks. The project continued for about six weeks.

When the 1934-1935 school year opened in September, St. Charles school showed a total enrollment of 171 pupils, divided by grades as follows: first - 25, second - 15, third - 30, fourth - 24, fifth - 19, sixth - 17, seventh - 23, and eighth - 18.

In October, with the Depression growing, the archdiocese held an emergency charities relief drive requested by Archbishop Stritch seeking to gather a minimum of \$250,000 to meet the heavy emergency demands on the major Catholic charitable organizations and institutions throughout the 17 counties of the archdiocese. Among the institutions in need of financial help were the Catholic orphanages in the archdiocese, which housed about 2,500 boys and girls; two homes for delinquent youth; a Catholic charity hospital; St. Coletta's home for the feeble minded, with 300 children; the home for the aged conducted by the Little Sisters of the Poor; and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, whose special work was keeping families together. It was also hoped that St. Bernard's home for working men could be re-opened if sufficient funds were available. Every dollar collected was to be turned directly to charity relief, the Archbishop announced, as all expenses for conducting the drive had been underwritten by a group of interested men and women.

On Sunday, October 28, sixty members of the St. Agnes Sodality made a pilgrimage to St. Charles and St. Mary's churches for the purpose of gaining the Jubilee indulgence that had been announced by Pope Pius XI. The "Holy Year of Human Redemption," celebrating the 1,900th anniversary of Christ's death, had begun in April 1933. During the next year, 1,200,000 pilgrims had visited Rome, gaining the full Jubilee indulgence for their sins by visiting Rome's four great basilicas. For the rest of the Catholic world, the Pope announced in April 1934 that until the

following Easter the faithful at home could gain the same plenary indulgence by visiting three local churches and a cathedral picked by their bishops, praying for “the return of all dissidents to the unity of the fold of Christ,” and making solemn reparation for “the injury done His Divine Majesty” by the godless. The sodality’s pilgrimage was made in a body led by their spiritual advisor, Father Miller.

In December the members of the St. Ann’s Society, along with members of two other groups, the Women’s Catholic Order of Foresters and the St. Mary’s Sodality of St. Mary’s parish, made the pilgrimage to St. Mary’s and St. Charles churches accompanied by their spiritual advisors, for the purpose of gaining the Jubilee indulgence.

Some of the other activities of parish groups during the fall included

-- a Communion Sunday for the Senior and Junior Holy Name societies followed by a breakfast meeting ;

-- a wiener roast and outing on the grounds at St. Mary’s school for all who participated in the Junior Holy Name Society’s summer playground program, including members of the high school indoor league, the grade school indoor league, the slow pitch league, and the girls league;

-- the observance of the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, its patroness, by the St. Agnes Sodality, with each member bringing an article for the mission box as a birthday gift;

-- a stag card party put on by the Young Men’s Club which made all arrangements for the party, prepared the lunch, and acted as hosts to nearly 200 guests who attended; and

-- a bake sale held by members of the St. Ann’s Society at three sites simultaneously, William T. Cook’s meat market, A. T. Spiegelhoff’s grocery store, and St. Charles’ hall.

On Armistice Day the school children of Burlington joined with the Legionnaires and citizens in a ceremony of tribute to departed veterans of the world war, which was held at the square at Chestnut and Pine streets. One group marched to the square from the American Legion rooms at the city hall. Leading the procession were the Legion color guard and firing squad. Then came a memorial group, consisting of fifty-seven little girls marching in formation, with a central group carrying white crosses bearing the names of Burlington’s departed veterans. They were surrounded by others carrying flags. Following in the procession were the Legionnaires and the school children and teachers from the Conkey Street school, Burlington high school, and St. John’s Lutheran school. The St. Charles and St. Mary’s students, accompanied by the assistant pastors, marched to the square from the opposite direction. The short ceremony at the square consisted of a prayer by the post chaplain, a memorial and dedication by the post commander, the singing of “America” by the assembly, and the blowing of taps.

On the last Sunday in November, St. Charles Alumni Association presented an entertaining three act comedy, “The Eighteen-Carat Boob,” at St. Mary’s auditorium under the direction of Father Miller. A matinee performance of special interest to the children was given in the afternoon with the main performance in the evening. The play involved a summer house party at which one of the guests was a raw and gawky country cousin of another guest. At the same time, an extended search was being made in the neighborhood for a mysterious jewel thief known as “The Crow.” A marked characteristic of “The Crow” was that he was always clearing his throat. Many embarrassing situations arose as various members of the cast, who were also in the habit of clearing their throats, were accused of being “The Crow.”

The roles in the production were played by Catherine Itzin, Glory Reynolds, Rosalind Steinhoff, Francis Sommers, Harold Lang, Joan Kenney, Mary Moe, Walter Riel, William Rewald, William Pieters, Helen Zabler, and Joe Weyrough. Between-act numbers were presented by the younger alumni members. “Love in Bloom” was the name of a singing and

dancing chorus, with Carroll Vos and Patricia Partee taking the leading parts and supported by chorus members Bernice Schiller, Helen Reesman, Marcella Vos, Mary Lou Stang, Rosemary Beix, Jeanette Eckert, Charles Eckert, Alex Rose, Martin Itzin, John Ammon, Aloys Schmitt, and Eugene Bauman. Jane Wagner played the accompaniment. Serie Newell also appeared in a tap dance number with Delos Hoffman as accompanist.

On the Friday before Christmas, the school children presented an afternoon Christmas program for their parents and friends. The program consisted of readings, recitations, and Christmas songs and music, with all the grades taking part. Special numbers were performed by Ruth and Robert Reynolds, Jerry Block, Jean Coughlin, Joseph Conlin, Phyllis Vos, Rita Hopkins, Aileen Zwiebel, Mary Mangold, David and Ellen Brehm, Robert Clausen, Rupert Kuhn, Charles Brook, Walter Schiller, Edward Siehoff, and Phillip Newell. That evening, the St. Agnes Sodality's caroling group called at the homes of shut-ins and greeted them with Christmas carols.

On Christmas day a solemn high Mass was celebrated at midnight, with a prelude of Christmas carols before Mass and the music of the Mass sung by the choir, under the direction of Laurretta Uhen. Parish son, J. Russell Beix, who had received the order of deacon earlier in the year, preached his first sermon at his home church at the midnight Mass. He also preached at the solemn high Mass at 9:30 the next morning at which the children's choir sang the music. Low Masses were read at 7, 7:30, 9, and 11 o'clock Christmas morning.

Christmas day was also a special day for Rev. Philipp Dreis, former pastor of St. Charles, when it was announced at the midnight Mass at St. John's Cathedral that he was one of eight priests of the Milwaukee diocese upon whom the title of Monsignor was being conferred by the Holy See. Rev. Joseph F. Barbian, archdiocesan superintendent of schools and brother of Mrs. Theresa C. Schmitt of St. Charles, was also named a Monsignor at that time. The formal ceremonies at which the eight priests were invested with the ecclesiastical dignity of Monsignor were held in January. The title is bestowed by the Pope and carries with it social and domestic rank at the papal court.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Philipp Dreis, in the purple robes signifying his office, celebrated his elevation to Monsignor on Sunday, January 27, with a solemn high Mass at Holy Name Catholic church in Sheboygan in the morning and a dinner in Holy Name auditorium at noon. These ceremonies at which Msgr. Dreis was honored formed an occasion of special joy and satisfaction to his many Burlington friends and former parishioners. Burlington people who attended the celebration were Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wagner, Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Spiegelhoff, and Miss Laurretta Uhen. He thanked all who attended the dinner and asked those from Burlington and Milwaukee, where he formerly held pastorates, to extend his regards to the people in those cities unable to attend.

On the Tuesday after New Year's, the Young Men's Club of St. Charles held a successful stag party in the church hall when 120 men and boys enjoyed a card party, refreshments, and a short program of talks. After awarding prizes for the card games, Father Miller introduced George Weiler, a director of the city kittenball league, who made the award of the C. Roy McCanna trophy to the St. Charles young men's team which won the city championship the previous summer. Richard Beix, captain and director of the team, accepted the trophy in the name of his team. Mr. Weiler then called on Mr. McCanna to address the group. Mr. McCanna expressed his continued interest in city athletics and said there would be another trophy offered next summer for competitive sports. Father Hillenbrand congratulated the boys of his parish for their success and offered his interest and co-operation in city-wide sports activities.

Later in January, the St. Agnes Sodality held its installation of officers at special services in the church before its monthly business meeting. The meeting night fell on the feast of the sodality's patron saint. As part of the special services, Father Miller presented to the members for veneration a relic of St. Agnes which Rev. John P. Pierron, former pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas at Waterford, had secured in Rome and given to the sodality.

A number of card parties and other social events were held in the pre-lenten period of 1935 by the various parish societies and groups, including the Young Men's Club, the St. Ann's Society, the St. Agnes Sodality, and the choir. On the first Sunday of Lent, members of the St. Agnes Sodality and their fathers received Holy Communion in a body and attended a breakfast in the church hall, the fathers being guests of the sodality. Father Hillenbrand addressed the breakfast group on choosing proper guidance throughout life.

During the third week of Lent, a mission was conducted by two Redemptorist fathers, Rev. Andrew F. Browne, C. SS. R., and Rev. Anthony J. Jung, C. SS. R. Services were held in the morning and again in the evening each day. At the evening services on the closing Sunday, a congregation that taxed the capacity of the church attended to hear Father Jung preach the final sermon and to receive the mission blessings bestowed at its close. The special blessing of the Redemptorist order and the papal blessing were given, and services closed with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On Saturday night Father Browne had preached his final sermon on the subject, Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and led the congregation in services of dedication to Mary.

On the last Sunday in March, nineteen members of the St. Mary's and St. Agnes sodalities attended a convention for the Young Ladies section of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women held at Messmer high school in Milwaukee. Donna Kappes and Betty Eisenbart represented St. Mary's Sodality and Eleanor Eckert and Rosemary Forge were the St. Agnes Sodality's delegates. The convention opened with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Stritch. The afternoon program consisted of talks and entertainment numbers. Two resolutions were passed by the convention: one a resolution that the Mexican government should return the right of religious freedom to the Mexican people, and the other endorsing the activity of the Legion of Decency.

During Holy Week at St. Charles, a twenty-four hour vigil before the Blessed Sacrament was held beginning at 9 o'clock Friday morning. Groups of worshippers kept vigil every hour during the day and night. All Catholics of the city were invited to take part. The way of the cross was made at 1 in the afternoon, and again in the evening at 7:30, with sermon and veneration.

On Easter, Father Miller was the celebrant of the solemn high Mass at 8 o'clock, with seminarian J. Russell Beix as deacon and Father Hillenbrand as subdeacon. Rev. Beix, who was to be ordained to the priesthood in June, preached the sermon.

On the first Saturday in May, James Bennett, 9 year old son of Dr. and Mrs. J. F. Bennett, brought added music laurels to St. Charles and to Burlington when he won first place in Class A, piano, in the state-wide music competition conducted by the Wisconsin Federation of Music Clubs. He scored 95 per cent. The finals were held in Music Hall on the University of Wisconsin campus at Madison. James, a student of St. Charles' music department, had taken piano lessons since he started grade school. Mrs. Bennett accompanied her son to Madison, together with his music teacher, Sister Cordula; Sister DeSales of St. Catherine's convent, Racine; and his brother, Jack Bennett.

(to be continued)