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### In Their Own Words

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### Weddings at St. Theresa Church

*The month of June kicks off the summer wedding season. In this week's reflection, we take a look back at ceremonies held at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Eagle through the years, going all the way back to the 1800s, in this newsletter article written by Mariangela Pledl in the summer of 2000.*

In January, 1865, Dine Obrine and Mary Ann McCabe were married at St. Theresa's. Theirs is the first recorded marriage.

We tend to think that years ago, people married in their teens. In the case of St. Theresa's, most of the men were in their late twenties and thirties, and the women were in their early to mid-twenties. Then as now, young people usually waited for marriage until they had a financial start in life.

In the early years, a large number of parish members were farm families. Marriages usually took place in fall and winter months, when farm work was less demanding. Except in unusual situations (pregnancy or the young man going off to war), Catholics were not allowed to marry during the seasons of Lent and Advent. An "old-timer" observed that he thought early spring was the best time for a farm lad to marry. His new wife could plant and tend a garden, help with haying, and "put up" enough fruits and vegetables to see them through the winter. The young man who married in fall had to feed his new wife for almost a year on the last year's crop!

Traditionally, a Catholic marriage is celebrated during Mass with the couple and their family and friends receiving Holy Communion. Before the 1960s, this required a "fast," with no food or drink taken after midnight. For this reason, Catholic marriages were usually scheduled on a Saturday morning at a 10:00 or 11:00 am Mass. It was not unusual for someone in the wedding party to feel faint or experience weakness – marriage is a big step to take on an empty stomach. This was especially difficult for young men who had been up since 5:00 am doing farm chores.



Those morning marriages also made for a long day for the bride and groom, who usually invited family and friends to a wedding dance in the evening. The bride's parents had the added expense of providing dinner and supper for visiting family members and close friends. In the early years, much of the partying following the wedding took place at the home of the bride, weather permitting. However, by the 1930s the wedding dinner and dance were often held in St. Theresa's church hall or in halls located in Genesee Depot or North Prairie.

The church's rules regarding fasting before receiving Holy Communion were relaxed in the 1960s. Since then, most couples have been married at an afternoon Mass.

In the 1970s, concerned about the increasing number of marriages ending in divorce, all Catholic parishes in Wisconsin adopted guidelines for couples preparing for marriage. They are expected to contact the pastor at least six months before the wedding so that serious marriage preparations may take place. At a series of meetings, couples discuss the major issues that lead to failure in marriage, in order that they may reach an understanding in these areas before they marry.

During the past 135 years, as our area has changed from farms and villages to towns and suburbs, marriage customs have changed. What changes will this century bring?



*Mike and Agnes (Bazen) Kramer*