

The Kiene Sisters: Seventy Years of Faith and Service

Where were you seventy years ago? It may be a funny question for some of us, but three sisters in our congregation have been collecting moments to remember here at St. Michael's since 1948! Yes, that makes this their 70th year as parishioners! When asked earlier this year, Rose Anna, Mary Lou, and Alberta Kiene shared memories about being a part of St. Michael's Catholic Church.

It was a Saturday in the fall of 1948, when the Kienes, having left Kansas, arrived in Rudy to resettle nearer to family. The very next day, Sunday, October 2nd, the family of eight attended Mass at St. Michael's original location on North 13th Street, one of only 16 families at the time.

Making for an eventful transition, the following day, the children began school in the Alma district as the first and only Catholic family at the time. Mary Lou reminisced over a lesson that came a few years later playing basketball in high school. She wanted to attend a tournament in Little Rock over the weekend. Her parents, through their choices, impressed upon the family the importance of our Sunday devotion and obligation when they agreed to let her go only if the coach would ensure their daughter attended Sunday Mass. The coach asked a friend, and Mary Lou attended as promised! In their steadfast dedication in the simple things, like attending Mass faithfully every week- no matter the weather even, their parents instilled the importance of faith in the family.

Service, prayer, and formation were pillars of expectation in the Kiene family daily living as well. Their father was an usher and a member of the men's club; their mother was a member of the Altar Society. Mr. Kiene also attempted, with other members of St. Michael's, to start a Catholic school. The boys in the family offered their time as altar servers, the girls sang in the choir learning Gregorian and Latin chants, and Alberta and her brother, Don, were also involved in a youth group called the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization). The family participated in the Novena to the Miraculous Medal at church on Sunday evenings and Alberta also helped lead the rosary on Sunday evenings, live on KWHN Radio!

Seven decades allows for a lot of changes. Rosa Anna, Mary Lou, and Alberta remember visits at their farm with some of the fourteen different pastors through the years, transitioning the Mass from Latin to English, kneeling then standing to receive Communion, as well as the parish's change of location to its current home on Pointer Trail.

At the time the new location was considered to be a "crazy" idea by the sisters. There was nothing in the area but pastureland. There were no schools, other churches, Wal-Mart, or any other stores. The pastor at the time, Fr. Hlavacek, had a vision and St. Michael's officially moved in 1983. They have seen the church renovated three times now including this year's progress!

The ladies continue to put their faith into practice. As faithful members through the years, they have participated in the choir and assisted with meals and decorating as part of the Altar Society. Even today, they remain active with the Altar Society sharing their crafting talents. They helped design the Razorback quilt that was raffled at the Christmas Cookie and Craft Sale in December 2017. They share their decorating talents with the Golden Club as well as preparing for bereavement dinners and are proud to be able to help honor the deceased person's life in this way. They also sing in the funeral choir. Rose Anna, Mary Lou, and Alberta have made a lifetime of memories living as stewards of their faith, providing gifts that have helped to grow our parish, and making it the vibrant community that it is today.

When asked their vision or dream for St. Michael's, they said they would like to see our church grow even more and especially would like to see more opportunities for the youth to be involved through our youth ministry. Thank you, ladies, for such a beautiful example of living your faith!