

# St. Rose of Lima, Novinger, MO

By Maxine Montgomery

The Catholic church at Novinger was organized by Father O'Hearn in April, 1901. Father O'Hearn had been celebrating mass in the Miners' Hall in Danforth, but when the big coal boom came in the Novinger area and miners from southern Europe began streaming into the Novinger mining fields, Father O'Hearn seized the opportunity to serve these people by setting up Catholic services in the newly-constructed K.P. Hall.

Father O'Hearn began immediate plans for a Catholic church and bought a lot in the north part of town. When Father O'Hearn moved to a new church field, Father William McCormick succeeded him. Father McCormick supervised the work on the building which was begun in October 1902, and the building was dedicated on October 18, 1905, by the Right Rev. Bishop Burke of St. Joseph.

The Novinger Catholic church has never been strong enough to maintain a priest on the field and was a mission of St. Mary's in Milan until 1925-26. Then it became a mission of the Catholic church in Kirksville, which had in turn been a mission of Adair. When the Kirksville church became independent it supplied the priest to Novinger and Connelsville. Mass was said once each month. The priest came twice a month at first, arriving at 3:30 Saturday evening and spent the night with the Traylors. Then he held mass on Sunday morning and returned to Milan on the 10 p.m. train.

One of Novinger's priests, J.J. Jermain, was killed by electrocution in July, 1922. He had conducted the funeral for John Sullivan, victim of the Novinger Drug Store explosion, which story will be detailed in another article. After conducting the funeral services, Rev. Jermain boarded the train at 10 p.m. for Milan. While he was walking from the station to his home near St. Mary's church his umbrella touched a power line that had fallen during the storm, and he was killed.

Celia Polovich Corrigan, one of eight children, was born in Lingo, where her father, Joe Polovich, worked as a coal miner. Celia attended the Baptist church at Midland I (east of the John Orek place). She recalls that Emma Nimmo took her to the Baptist church at Novinger when the missionary sisters, Minnie and Alice Matthews were serving there in 1910. She remembers going 25 Sundays straight and getting a book and a card, which were signed by J.J. Wells. When Celia married Emmett Corrigan in 1918, she converted to the Catholic Church.

The Corrigans did not attend church regularly until September, 1930, when they rededicated their lives to God in order to give their two children, Bernard and Mary Anne, a Godly background. At that time Emmett Corrigan drove Father Jermain to Connelsville in a buggy and was the altar boy for the services. The he would bring the priest back to Novinger and take him to his train. Celia and Emmett's son, Bernard, attended St. Berchman Seminary in Marion, Iowa, and then Atchinson Academy at Maur Hill, Kansas. Mary Anne attended St. Mary's Academy in Cedar Rapids. She would come home on the train, and her parents met her in Ottumwa. She went on to Notre Dame Academy in Quincy later. The Catholic Church has changed since she became a member. The confessional booth is still used, she says,

but not as often as formerly. A Catholic goes to confession about once a year now.

Most of the immigrants from southern Europe were Catholic. Mrs. Corrigan says that the Croatians have been notably more faithful in church attendance than other nationalities. Among the families who have been pillars of the Novinger Catholic church are those of Vance Kauzlarich, John Kruljac, Matt Grgurich, A.P. Charitino, and Emmett Corrigan.

The members of the Catholic Church contribute to the upkeep of the building. In 1948 St. Rose Church at Novinger was remodeled. When the church was first built benches were used for parishioners to sit on during the services. The church now has new pews. When one enters the door of the St. Rose church, he walks on red carpeting down a wide aisle with stations on the cross on either wall. These ceramic plaques depicting the condemnation and the journey of Christ toward the cross were donated to the church by Albert Tomich in memory of his wife, Lenora (Giachino). There is an electric organ on the floor in front of the church. Formerly the organ was on a balcony. A beautiful white altar of the tabernacle, housing the Host (holy bread) is the predominant fixture in the church. The priest stands in front of this altar to preach and to make his announcements.

On the old altar, also white with a figure of a lamb on the front, are two brass candlesticks with candles and a small crucifix. Formerly the church had only a back altar, and the priest performed the mass with his back to the people. More recently the old altar has been placed in front of the dais so that he faces his people during the services.

The first organ was bought by the altar society. The Altar society of the St. Rose Catholic church in Novinger has been a viable organization for many years. Maggie Sandretto taught the women in this group to weave. They were Mathel Peska and Elena Fallina. The women's group met in the loom room and cut rags and rolled them into balls. Father Addleman came to the building one day to watch the women work and to commend them for their industry. Later the ladies sold orders for mail-order dresses, sold candy, had bazaars in the city hall and held Easter food sales. Included in the group were Mrs. Bill (Emma) Taylor, Ethel Perry, Kate Ruddy, Josephine Kriner, Ethel Peska, Mamie Elsea, Mamie Baiotti, Hazel Nardini, Mary Airale, Antonia Cuculich, Maggie Sandretto, Norma Ronchetto, Carmileta McVay, Mary Cunningham, Joyce Sharp, Trisa Gasperi, Elena Fallini and Celia Corrigan.

The organ the ladies bought was purchased in 1976. The chimney, which was formerly on the south side of the church, is now located on the north. Originally coal stoves were used to heat the building. Then a coal furnace was installed. The church is now heated by a gas furnace.

Priests who have served the Novinger Catholic Church include: Father Connie Curry, 1920; Father P. J. Barrett from Kirksville, 1935; Father Bestgen, and Father Michael Flanagan of Kirksville, who came six years ago this summer.

Rev. Michael Flanagan hails from Ireland, as one might surmise from the lilt of his voice and his name. His family lives on a farm there, raising livestock. Michaels's work as a boy was to feed pigs and

chickens and take care of the cows. There were eight of his family in Ireland—five brothers and three sisters. His father was a full-time farmer, grazing cattle on a 120-acre farm, which is a large estate for that country. His brother has taken over the management, although his mother is still living. Father Flanagan left Monday, July 10 for Ireland to visit his family and homeland for three weeks. His associate, Father Flanagan attended school in a rural two-teacher parochial school. He says that the school system in Ireland is good, and the smaller schools are now consolidating. He took his seminary training in Waterford, Ireland, and then was enlisted in America because he was trained for an English-speaking parish. A priest completes four years of college majoring in philosophy and four years of seminary.

His first parish was at Lynn, 20 miles east of Jefferson City, where he served four years. Then he went to the Sacred Heart Parish in Columbia for a year. Later he taught religion in St. Thomas seminary at Hannibal and was consequently assigned to St. Roberts church near Waynesville for a year. He is now working out of Kirksville, living at the parish rectory on East Washington street. He takes turns at Novinger and Kirksville and cares for the Newman Center, the Catholic student center on campus. When school is in session he holds five masses on Sundays and one on Saturday evening for students.

Novinger services are normally held at 9 a.m. on Sunday, but temporarily are being held at 7:30 Saturday evening. He celebrates the Saturday evening masses at Kirksville at 5:45, three masses on Sunday, at 8 o'clock, 10 o'clock and 11:30, and at the Newman Center at 7:30.

His parish includes 320 families, some of them transplanted from Adair, and 800 students. He baptizes their babies and new converts, visits the hospitals, does counseling, and buries their dead.

Marital and Pre-Cana (prenuptial) counseling is sometimes done in worship-type sessions for eight hours at which a doctor, psychologist, priest, two married couples and an accountant are on hand to advise and listen. These sessions require two Sunday afternoons. Father Flanagan and his church demonstrate a concern for the modern home. He states that according to statistics there are as many divorces among Catholic couples as protestant and non-denominational.

I visited the Novinger Catholic church Saturday evening, July 8, and came away feeling that God was there. The participation of lay readers and the audience responses during the mass and the reverent coming forward to partake of the Lord's supper struck me as being true acts of worship. The pastor delivered a vigorous sermon on the needs of Catholics in Peru and suggested a special offering from the Novinger Church to alleviate the suffering. Father Flanagan in his priestly vestments, his rich, lilting voice, and his forceful delivery prompted my personal observation: "This must have been the type of service the young Jesus attended in Jerusalem."

**[Back to St. Rose of Lima](#)**

**[Back to Mary Immaculate History](#)**

