

Interracial marriages not rare in Nebraska

By JOAN KORINEK

Interracial and intercultural marriages in Nebraska may be more common than some people think.

In 1982, 371 of the 14,350 marriages that took place in Nebraska involved interracial and intercultural couples. In comparison, there were 215 interracial and intercultural marriages out of 13,957 in 1973.

Lincoln churches and clergymen generally are supportive of interracial and intercultural marriages.

The Rev. Leonard Kalin of the Newman Student Center, the Catholic church on the UNL campus, said interracial and intercultural couples are two people who have a right to be married. However, at least one spouse must be Catholic in order to be married in the Catholic Church, he said.

"The church is really interested in the stability of the marriage," he said.

Interracial marriages are not that unusual or unique, said the Rev. Charles Stephen, minister of the Unitarian Church, 6300 A St. He said his church has few rules and allows anything that is not illegal or immoral. He said his church marries a lot of couples that other churches will not marry.

Society has mostly accepted interracial and intercultural marriages, Stephen said.

Rabbi Kenneth White of the South Street Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, 20th and South streets, said marriage criteria have nothing to do with race.

Each rabbi has his own personal criteria based upon his philosophy and theology, he said.

If the couple is Jewish and wishes to be married, White said, he would marry them.

According to Lee VanHam, associate pastor at Westminister Presbyterian Church, 2110 Sheridan Blvd., the national church would not disapprove of interracial and intercultural marriages.

The Rev. G.L. Collins of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, 1205 F St., a predominantly black congregation, said his church supports interracial and intercultural marriages.

Changing traditions . . .

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"People are more concerned about tuxes and how they match bridesmaid gowns," Deahl said.

Deahl said he has noticed some common themes in most of his weddings. He said only one of the couple usually belongs to the church they are married in. More Protestant women are marrying Catholic men now, he said.

The Rev. Richard Deonise from Blessed Sacrament Rectory said he sees quite a few mixed marriages. He said this is because Catholics are a minority in the Lincoln area. Mixed marriages aren't forbidden in the Catholic Church but he said he "tries to discourage them because of different religious backgrounds."

Couples look at what they each bring to a marriage during pre-nuptial preparation with the father, he said. The threesome starts meeting up to eight months before the service takes place.

"It helps me to get to know the couple," Deonise said. "That way, on that (wedding) day, there is a deeper relationship between the couple and the priest."

During this eight-month period, the couple is given material to help in planning for the ceremony. These guidelines include approved church music.

"The church music has to be expressive of the holiness and beauty of God himself," Deonise said. "We use a lot of contemporary church music."

Every parish has its own musicians who can play for the wedding but couples can provide their own, he said.

Increased family involvement, larger weddings and pre-nuptial dinners are current trends, he said.

"Nothing has changed in terms of doctrine," Deonise said.

The traditional nuptial mass includes a declaration of public consent, an exchange of vows and the blessing and exchange of rings. Prayers, scripture, a sermon and communion round out the service.

Deonise said different traditions are worked into the service.

"The word 'catholic' means universal," he said. "Different ethnic groups each have different traditions. People are bound to bring in their own traditions."



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