

Brief History – St. Mary’s Parish

The town of Armstrong was incorporated about the year of 1890. St. Mary’s parish began as a mission in 1893.

From 1893 to 1895, Father J. Taken from Forest City came about once a month from Forest City to offer Mass in some of the private homes or in the schoolhouse. In the meantime, the first Catholic Church to be built here was under construction, and on September 24, 1895 Mass was celebrated for the first time.

In 1918, the church of St. Mary’s was destroyed by fire. While the new church was being built and the damaged rectory repaired, Mass was offered in the John Korreck home and in the rectory on week days, and in the local theater until the church was finished in 1921. The cost of the new brick church, which is still being used today, was about \$19,000. A new rectory was built and finished in 1975. Before constructing the new rectory, the old one was moved to Ninth Street and is now the home of Jerry and Nancy Steinberger.

A parish center was built in 1967 with classrooms to be used for catechetical classes for all grades of school. Also included were a kitchen and all-purpose room that can be used for parish gatherings.

From 1995 to 2011 St. Mary’s was a clustered parish with St. Patrick’s Catholic Church of Estherville. At that time until June 2000, Pastoral Minister, Carol A. Anderson, was hired to assist the pastor and St. Mary’s parishioners. No longer would there be a resident priest at St. Mary’s. A few years after the clustering, the rectory was sold.

In the spring of 2001, St. Mary’s underwent a new project to lower and attach the church to the parish center. The inside of the church was remodeled to make more room and be more handicapped accessible. A new gathering area where the two buildings connect is now a beautiful place to welcome parishioners. While the church was under construction they held Mass in the all-purpose room of the center until Christmas time of 2001.

In August 2009, Deacon Candidate John Rudd was employed part-time as Parish Life Coordinator. In 2011, Father Paul Bormann, Pastor of St. John the Baptist Bancroft and Sacred Heart Ledyard, was assigned St. Mary’s Armstrong. Deacon Candidate, John Rudd was hired by the Three Parish Cluster as Parish Life Coordinator. Father Sunny Dominic was appointed in July 2012 to serve as the Parish Administrator.

Deacon John Rudd, the Parish Life Coordinator was ordained to the Holy Order of Deacon on Saturday, June 9, 2012 at the Cathedral of the Epiphany in Sioux City. Four Permanent Deacons were ordained. St. Mary’s celebrated his ordination at a Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, June 10, 2012. Following Mass, a roast pork dinner was served in the Parish Hall.

July of 2017 brought a change in the groupings of the Sioux City Diocese under the Ministry 2025 plan. St. Mary’s and St. Patrick’s in Estherville were once again grouped together with Father Merlin Schrad serving as pastor.

Members of the parish who have entered the religious life as sisters are: Sister Mary Vita (Florence Weis), Sister Mary Blasé (Clara Weis) in the Order of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sister Leah (Betty Kennedy) in the Order of St. Joseph, and Sister Sharon (Sharon Sullivan) in the order of Sisters of St. Francis.