

# Big Stone City St. Charles

# Waverly Holy Rosary



**HISTORY**  
**ST. CHARLES BORMEO PARISH**  
**BIG STONE CITY, S.D.**

In 1879 seventeen Catholic families from Green Bay, Wis., started their migration to the West. It is very probable that they came on the Milwaukee Railroad as far as Ortonville, Minn., which was the end of the Milwaukee line at that time. Some of the pioneers in Big Stone City and surrounding area were the Heffernans, the Browns, the Van Erens and the Van Houts, the Jurgens and the DeGreifs.

Since Big Stone City was the County seat of Grant County, Bishop Martin Marty, O.S.B. directed the Catholics to build a church in Big Stone City, S.D. The exact time of the organization of the parish and building the church is difficult to ascertain with any degree of accuracy. However, a copy of the Big Stone Headlight, a weekly newspaper, for one week in July, 1882, carried a story which told of the church having been in use for some time. It is assumed that the construction of the church must have begun in the Fall and finished during the Winter and Spring of 1881 and 1882.

Some of the pioneer priests that served this community were Father Christison, Fr. Toner, Fr. Kelly and Fr. Eugene O'Keefe. Two of the pioneer priests are buried in the St. Charles cemetery, a Father Weiss and Fr. F. H. Delaigis. The only information available regarding Fr. Delaigis is that he was ordained in 1860 and died in 1890.

At the time of the completion of the church Father Hermeling was resident pastor at Big Stone City, S.D. One of his first duties was to perform the baptism of Anton Jensen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Anton Jensen on Oct. 8, 1882. On December 11, 1882, Fr. Hermeling performed his first marriage, between George Henry Boyd and Bridget Meehan with witnesses Frank Eldridge and Nellie Buckley.

Father Hermeling promoted the building of a residence in 1883. In 1884 the parish secured the cemetery overlooking the Whetstone Creek, West of Big Stone City. The first burial in this cemetery following the funeral Mass in the church in 1884 was that of Mary Theresa Sagers, wife of John Sagers, age 70. On February 8, 1888, Fr. Hermeling performed a double wedding of James Heffernan to Bridget Walsh and Mary Walsh to C. W. Martens.

While Big Stone City was the County seat of Grant County, the pastor of St. Charles Parish established a Mission Church in Milbank. Later, when Milbank became the County seat and grew rapidly, the order was reversed. The Pastor of Milbank for some years served Big Stone City as a mission until the year 1900, when Big Stone City again had a resident priest. Father Hermeling was pastor of Big Stone City and Milbank from October, 1882 to August, 1890. He moved to Milbank from Big Stone City at the time Milbank became the County seat.

St. Charles has been a flourishing parish. During the years of its existence there have been vocations to the religious life. We can boast of three priests and four sisters. Fr. James Wolf, present pastor of St. Mary's, Aberdeen, S.D., was born and reared in this community. He also has a sister who is a Nun, Sister Mary Martine, with the Benedictine Sisters of Crookston, Minn. We also have the Val and Kathryn Rausch Family blessed with vocations. Father Ervin Rausch and Father Jerome Rausch who are at present at the Crosier Fathers House of Studies in Fort Wayne, Ind. Sister Karen Rausch and Sister Rose Mae Rausch are Nuns of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minn. Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Erbe were the parents of Sister Frances Mary Erbe of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, Milbank, S.D.

Although not in its entirety, this information was compiled by Rev. A. Arthur Weber for the July 11, 1972 Historical Society Meeting.



Waverly (Codington County) St. Joseph

Hardship of winter travel induced 18 families living north and northwest of Kranzburg to separate from Holy Rosary Parish and organize one of their own. These people lived at considerable distances from the church and after the experience of traveling in box wagons over almost impassable snowdrifts in winter and high water in the Willow Creek area in spring, they took action to worship God nearer to home. Bishop Marty understood the situation; and Father John N. Wernick of Watertown helped them establish a parish on Nov. 23, 1890. By 1892 there were 23 German and three English families in the parish.

Times were too hard to build a new church, so the parish rented two upper rooms in the village public school. At a meeting on July 15, 1896, the parishioners agreed to acquire lots and put up a modest church edifice. The parish bought six lots and erected a frame building 46x32 ft. On Oct. 29 of the same year Bishop O'Gorman dedicated the building. He was assisted by Fathers Peter Rosen of Madison, Minn., Benedict J. Birkle of Eberly and Peter Lauer of Watertown, the pastor. Waverly continued as a mission of Watertown until 1903.

At this time (c.1905) many pastors moved from rented rooms, from the lean-to of a church or from a cramped rectory into more comfortable dwellings. Waverly received Father Benedict J. Birkle as first pastor. Since the parish was in no position to erect a priest's residence, it rented a house one-half mile west of the village. This proved unsatisfactory. Therefore, when the Waverly Hotel was for sale, the parish purchased and remodeled it to serve as the priest house. This transaction did not please a number of parishioners who expressed their displeasure by withdrawing from the Waverly parish and returning to Holy Rosary in Kranzburg. This was a severe blow to the little parish encumbered with a heavy debt arising from the hotel purchase and an addition to the church building. Moreover, the crop failure of 1911 aggravated the financial strain. This was the condition in Waverly when Father William Eckl arrived in 1911 from Hillsview. He was confronted by creditors who demanded that the Waverly parish pay its debts. The pastor spent December collecting from the parishioners but netted only \$112. Fortunately he was able to negotiate a temporary ban to stave off foreclosure. He won back some of the lost parishioners to achieve a more sound financial footing. Following a mission preached at the end of May, 1912, a united parish gave support to building a rectory next to the church. Excavation was begun in June, and on Nov. 6, the completed attached mission and could give his entire attention to the parish. Father Eckl did not neglect the instruction of the children. Every Saturday at 10 a.m. from September to the end of May all children from seven to 16 years were expected to attend religious instruction. (GD)

# Wilmot St. Mary



**BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S PARISH**  
By Fr. John McMullen, O.S.B., Pastor

The town of Wilmot was staked out in 1880 and was chartered on June 3, 1881. A few Catholic settlers began to locate here in the following years. By 1886 Father John Hermeling began offering Mass in the schools and in private homes. He had been born in Germany in 1848 and was ordained a priest at St. Meinrad, Indiana, on June 11, 1881, for the vicariate of Dakota. He was stationed at St. Charles Parish in Big Stone City from 1882-1887, and visited the neighboring towns on a regular basis. He was stationed at St. Lawrence Parish in Milbank from 1887-1890, and continued his missionary labors in surrounding towns. He died in the southern part of the state in 1905.

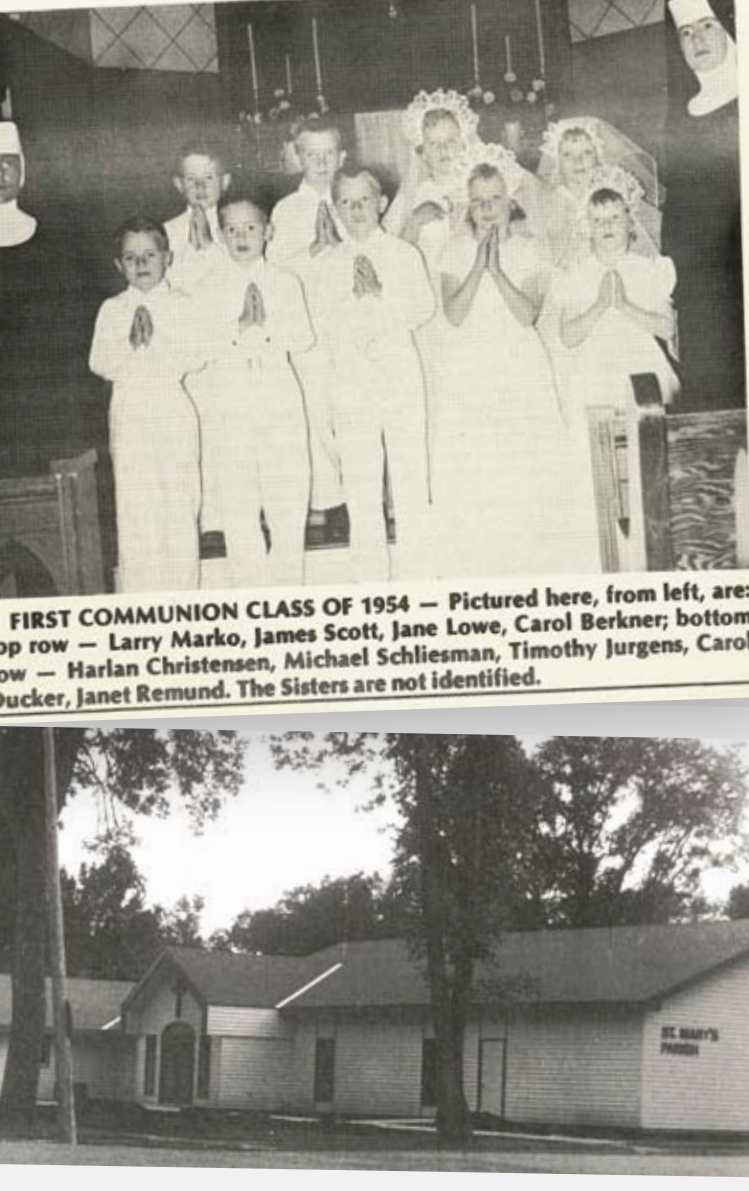
Catholic families continued to settle around Wilmot and were visited by priests from various places. Father John Vogel was assigned to St. Peter's Parish at Sisseton on December 4, 1898. He had been born in Switzerland in 1871 and was ordained priest in Rome on June 4, 1898. He died near Rapid City in 1953, after serving many years in the West River Indian Missions. In 1901 the Catholic families of the area began to build a church. Father Vogel worked with the McNerneys, the DeGreifs, the McKennas, the Cummins, the Gormans, the Porters, the Wrights, and others, to build this first church in the summer of 1901. Mary DeGreef and other ladies raised money, going from house to house in a buggy, while the men contributed their labor. It is said that the church was named after the Blessed Virgin in honor of Mary DeGreef. The church was enlarged in 1912, and renovated and redecored several times after that, most recently during the time of Fathers John Mulvaney, Odilo Burkhardt, O.S.B., and Paul McHarness, O.S.B. It was this church that was torn down and replaced by the present structure in the summer of 1992. The new church has been joined to the parish center. This center was built in 1968 during the pastorate of Father Boniface Armbruster, O.S.B., by the George Huff Construction Company with help from Arnold Jurgens, Hurley McKenna, Jim Croymans, Harry Scott, Leon Jurgens, Everard Opsal, and other parishioners.

Saint Mary's has been served as a mission church for most of its history. There were resident priests in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Priests have come from Big Stone City, Milbank, Sisseton, Waubay, Revillo, and elsewhere. Two religious orders of priests have served the parish: first, the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate from Sisseton; and then, since 1956, the Benedictine Fathers from Blue Cloud Abbey.

Father Odo Gogel, O.S.B., Father Al Kryzypolski, and Bishop Paul Dudley have noted and remarked about the lively zeal and spirit of Saint Mary's Parish. This shows in its daily activities, and in the building of this present church.

We are very proud of our new parish home. It has been built with the idea of gathering the people, who are the church. The worship area, the social area, and the teaching area are all joined together with flexible partitions for optimum use for these three purposes.

As we enter the building we are greeted by the image of Mary, the Mother of God, the patroness of our parish. At the doors of the worship area we meet a reminder of our baptismal entrance into the church by water and fire. The altar and crucifix are the focal point of our worship gatherings. They are reminders that we meet our loving Redeemer, and one another, around the holy table of the Eucharist. The pulpit reminds us of the Word of the Lord present in the consecrated bread and wine, reserved for communion to the sick and private adoration. The reconciliation chapel reminds us of our meeting with our Redeemer as we receive his tender love and compassion in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The pews remind us that we are the church, the gathered people of God.



FIRST COMMUNION CLASS OF 1954 - Pictured here, from left, are: top row - Larry Marko, James Scott, Jane Lowe, Carol Berber; bottom row - Harlan Christensen, Michael Schlemmer, Timothy Jurgens, Carol Ducker, Janet Remond. The Sisters are not identified.

# Kranzburg Holy Rosary

Kranzburg (Codington Co.) Holy Rosary

Kranzburg was platted in 1876 and named for John, Mathew and Charles Krage, the chief promoters of the colony. Immediately after completion of the town, the parishioners began raising funds for the erection of a house of worship. Before the spring of 1879, they had collected \$750 and work was begun. Holy Rosary Church was the only Catholic church in a radius of 100 miles. On Pentecost of 1879 the Kranzburg church was dedicated and Father Alexander Berghold of New Ulm, Minn., celebrated the first Holy Mass in it. The following May, Bishop Marty appointed Father Chrysestom Poffa, OSB as first resident pastor. Accustomed to privations, this former Indian missionary did not object to the inconvenience of living in the sacristy of the church. After he was recalled to the Indian reservation, June 1881, the 2nd pastor, Father A. Bergmann, built a small rectory. He also ministered to Big Stone City, Milbank, Watertown and Traverse City. By this time there were 100 families in Holy Rosary Parish.

Hardship of winter travel induced 18 families living north and northwest of Kranzburg to separate from Holy Rosary Parish and organize their own. They established a parish at Waverly.

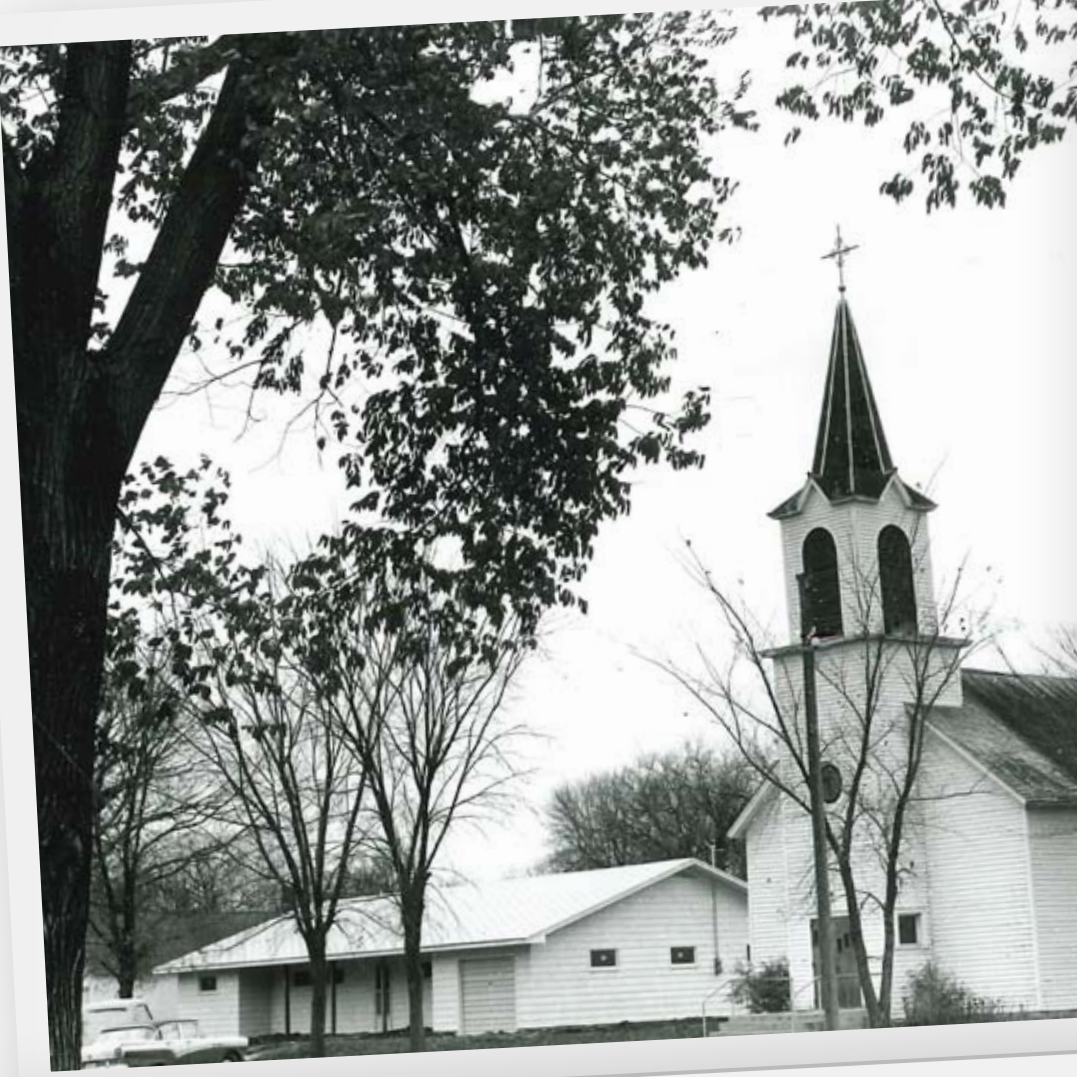
During Father Philip Albrecht's pastorate (1884-1887) Holy Rosary was enlarged raising its capacity to 600. He also improved the rectory and dedicated a cemetery. Father Jacob Schirra came to Kranzburg on Aug. 1, 1887. Death ended his service there on June 21, 1892. Holy Rosary was without a priest for several months. Father Michael Sack arrived for the celebration of Christmas of that year. 1892, when he was unexpectedly sent to Haven, he was replaced by Father Hugh Victor to carry on the ambitious plans of the parish. The completion of the brick church was laid in 1893, cost \$13,316. On July 1, 1902, Father H. H. Hansen succeeded him as pastor. In 1906 a frame school building, two stories, full basement and attic was erected at a cost of \$10,000. Father Hansen invited the Yankton Benedictines to staff the school -- lay teachers had been teaching there for nearly 20 years. In 1910, Father Anthony B. Conrad was sent to Kranzburg. Before the first year ended, serious differences arose between the pastor and the Sisters which led to their withdrawal from Kranzburg. Father Conrad's attempt to continue the school with lay teachers lasted only one year. The school closed in 1911. His successor, Father John A. Krebs made another attempt to open the school with lay teachers in 1912-13, but failed. He did succeed in getting the interior of the church redecored. Father Joseph Zimmerman came to Kranzburg in 1913. He found the rectory inadequate; so the parish built a spacious brick home for the pastor. In order to place it near to the church, the school building had to be moved across the road. Then, it was renovated and made ready for the opening of school.....

Holy Rosary Parish made steady progress under the supervision of Father Francis S. Gruenbeck. In 1950 a new school building replaced the one destroyed by fire (when???) Two years of high school were dropped 2 years later. In 1953 the Sisters moved into a new frame convent. Father Gruenbeck died May 4, 1976 after giving 49 of the 55 years of priestly service to Holy Rosary Church. The school was closed in 1977.



Holy Rosary Church, Kranzburg, S.D. Built in 1893 at a cost of \$13,316.00

# Revillo Annunciation



Revillo (Grant County) Annunciation

Revillo replaced the church built in 1890 with a better one in 1900 under the direction of Father Peter Lauer who served at Watertown (1894-1903). Driving a horse and cart, Father Lauer made the trip from Watertown to Revillo periodically. On the way he stopped at Catholic homes to tell them that Mass was to be celebrated the following day in some home. After the church was built, he slept on such occasions in the sacristy which was heated in winter by a small pot-bellied stove. Father Lauer had previously directed the construction of church at Orient and Waverly.

Father Joseph Duffy took up residence in Revillo in 1914. Father Francis Cronin, son of the parish, was the first priestly vocation from Grant County.

The small parish of the Annunciation was entrusted in 1961 to the Benedictine monks of Blue Cloud Abbey. A catechetical center adjoining a rectory was provided in 1964 under the direction of Father Gregory Kinkel, OSB. After 1970, Father Timothy Sexton, OSB, chaplain of St. Bernard's Hospital, Milbank, ministered to Annunciation parish. The 40 Catholic families erected a new church in 1977. (GD)



This is the first Catholic Church built in Revillo in 1889 It is now the home of Mrs. Mabel Mogard.

# Milbank Sacred Heart



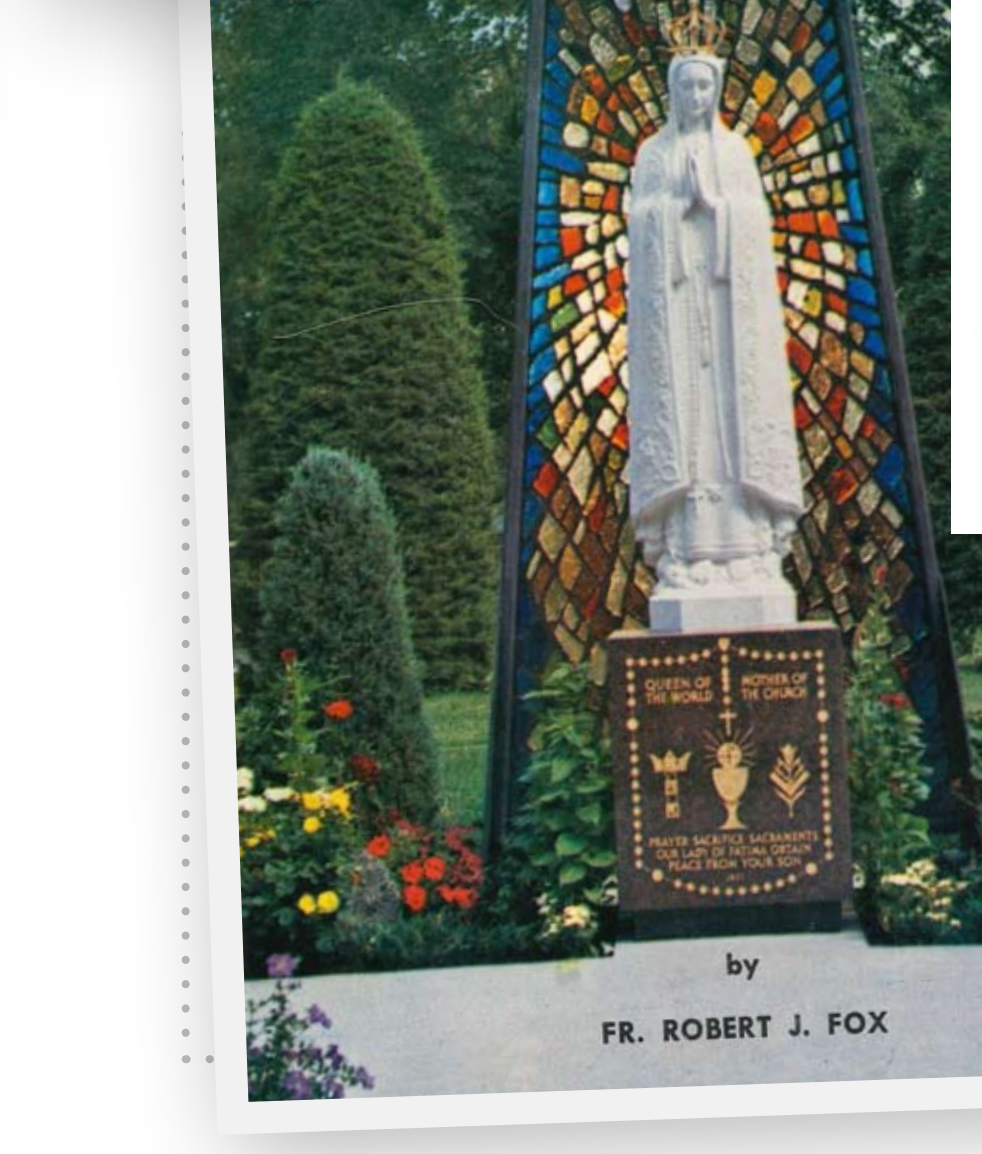
Acts et Dicta, IV (July, 1915) Dedication Milbank

The new church of St. Lawrence, which was informally opened for divine worship some months previously, was solemnly dedicated on Wed., May 19, 1915, by the Rev. Bishop O'Gorman. At the completion of the dedication ceremony Solemn High Mass was celebrated by Mr. T. Heusinger of Webster, assisted by Rev. A. F. Airmault of Andover as deacon, the Rev. W. R. Lebecka of the De Smet as subdeacon, and the Rev. C. H. Walsh of Sioux Falls as master of ceremonies. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Joseph F. Duffy of Revillo, S.D. The service was witnessed by a large number of priests from different parts of the Diocese of Sioux Falls.

The new parochial school was blessed by the Bishop in the afternoon. The sermon for the occasion was preached by the Very Rev. M. J. Breen, OSB, F.S.C., of Columbus College, Chamberlain. The ceremonies of the day were brought to a close with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The first Mass in Milbank was celebrated by Father Ryan of Graceville, Minn. on Nov. 29, 1879, in the house of John Martens. Father Ryan came in response to an invitation extended by a committee of four men representing a colony of about 15 Catholic families which settled along the Whetstone Creek in Grant Co. in the spring of 1878. Two years later Father Toner was sent to Big Stone City to take charge of the Catholics of Grant Co. and immediately planned the erection of a church at Big Stone with Milbank as a mission.

On Oct. 3, 1883, the parish of Milbank was incorporated under the name of the Church of St. Lawrence, and Father Hermeling was appointed pastor; he began the erection of a church and school which served the congregation until 1911 when it became necessary to erect a larger building. The old location was considered out of the way and the present site near the center of the city was donated by the citizens. In March 1911, the Rev. J. J. O'Neill was appointed pastor; he immediately began the erection of the new church, a parochial school and a pastor's residence. The structures are built of brick, are commodious, and equipped with all modern conveniences.



by FR. ROBERT J. FOX