



## **The history of St. Mary's Catholic Church**

*August 11, 2018 - By CAITLIN NEARHOOD, Sandusky Register*

It's considered the largest church building in the city.

Property for St. Mary's Catholic Church was purchased June 20, 1855. Later that year, the parish's original church building was finished. Although German immigrants in Sandusky first attended Holy Angels Catholic Church, they decided to move to St. Mary's Catholic Church, according to the church's website.

The parish's first leader came soon after. "Appointed by Rt. Rev. Louis Amadeus Rappe, Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland, Father Dolweck began serving the people of Sandusky in 1853, while still at Holy Angels," the parish's website states. "Father Dolweck was succeeded by Father James J. Hamene, who completed construction of the first Church and a rectory. In 1857, St. Mary's built their first school."

More pastors led the parish before the current St. Mary's Catholic Church was built. "In 1873, under the direction of Father Nicholas Moes, the parish embarked upon a huge construction project, a new church." Noted architect Franz Georg Himpler was employed to plan and oversee the construction. Seven years later, the beautiful new church was dedicated by Bishop Ignatius Horstmann to Mary, Mother of Sorrows.

Some pastors made a lasting impact. Father Joseph Widmann, for instance, led the construction project of the three-story school, which is still used today and was also in charge when the Diocese of Toledo was created.

In the coming years, more improvements would follow.

"Under Monsignor Zierolf, St. Mary's continued to grow and develop, keeping up with the times and leading the Christian contingent in the city. Monsignor Zierolf inaugurated the four-year secondary education program at St. Mary's and stayed with the parish when transfer to the Toledo Diocese was completed in 1922. He also purchased land for Calvary Cemetery and added classrooms to the school."

In 1955, the parish commemorated its 100th anniversary by undertaking major renovations to the church and constructing a new elementary school two years later.

During Father Robert Donnelly's leadership in the 1970s, St. Mary's High School expanded to include Holy Angels and Sts. Peter and Paul parishes, sacrificial giving was adopted and additions to the elementary school were completed.



By the early 1990s, St. Mary's Catholic Church again saw major changes.

In 1991, Father Feltman was instrumental in major additions and renovations to the parish: mausoleum and chapel at the cemetery, reviving Christ Renews His Parish, renovation of the rectory, stained glass window project, renovation of the church interior, maintenance of the church exterior, consolidation of Catholic

education in the city, purchase and installation of a new organ for the church, a year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of the parish, air conditioning the church and a new baptistery.

In St. Mary's Catholic Church's lengthy history, it's hosted a multitude of important life events and has had a strong line of leadership. "More than 20 pastors and 74 associate pastors have guided and directed the growth, conformity to and understanding of our Catholic faith." Also, "more than 20,000 baptisms have been commemorated, 7,000 weddings consecrated and 9,000 funerals celebrated at St. Mary's."

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