

MAAA

A West Central MN ACC
serving the parishes of

St. Mary's Catholic Church, Chokio, MN
Catholic Church of St. Anthony of Padua, Browns Valley, MN
Ave Maria Catholic Church, Wheaton, MN
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Morris, MN



Geographic location



We are a rural ACC with extensive agricultural ties. Browns Valley to Morris is 47 miles. Wheaton to Chokio is 30 miles and Wheaton to Browns Valley is 24 miles. Our parishioners hail from distances well beyond those listed.

Father Todd Schneider serves Assumption Parish as well as the Catholic School. Father John Paul Knopik serves the parishes of St. Mary's, St. Anthony's, and Ave Maria.

Who we are as an ACC

Father Todd states MAAA “in a sense is a prayer/a supplication if you will to our Blessed Mother, asking for her intercession to guide us closer to Jesus Christ our Lord and to the service of His Church, especially toward the members within our ACC.”



Father John Paul notes that we are the land of fertile ground, of skyscrapers in the form of towering grain bins, of lakes, of baseball, of community, and of faith.

Our ACC council members add that we are a pastoral commission of 4 rural parishes on the prairie with the purpose of strengthening and supporting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our ACC and beyond.

St. Mary's Parish, Chokio MN



Masses were first held in homes beginning in 1895 with a priest coming by train from Collis. The first mass in a new church was celebrated March 25, 1897, built

funds raised in a fund drive on land donated by 2 parish families.



The current church was dedicated on June 21, 1959 and the hall, which has a full kitchen, gathering space and classrooms below, was added in 1984.

Mass is held Sundays at 8:00a followed by fellowship and Faith Formation classes during the school year. There is Mass on Tuesdays at 8:30a

St. Mary's, a parish that worships and works together.



St. Mary's parish serves about 120 families whose members are involved in a variety of activities and vocations to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of the church.

Our members are active as council members, lectors, sacristans, choir members, servers, faith formation teachers and students, Christian Mothers, guild members, and youth group members.



The Fall Bazaar is a community highlight, drawing people from all over the area. Volunteers prepare a soup and sandwich lunch that sells out nearly every year. Come early if you want to take home a quart or 2 of soup!

Each Wednesday throughout the year a group of talented and dedicated volunteers spend hours creating a variety of seasonal craft and household items for the annual Fall Bazaar. Combined with our calendar raffle and Bazaar raffle with donated prizes and cash prizes, we provide for the financial needs of the church.

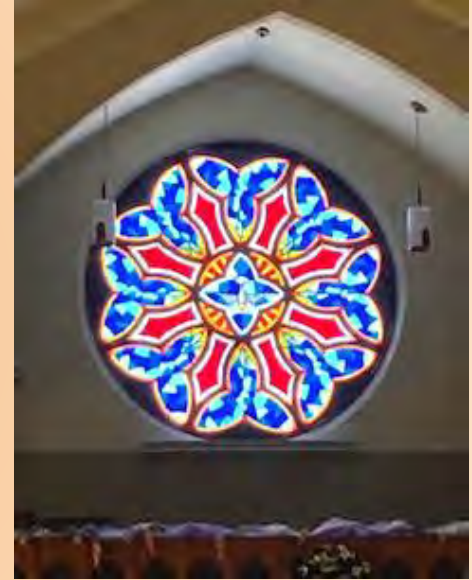
St. Anthony's Parish, Browns Valley, MN



St. Anthony's parish was started in 1896 with F. Camille Thiebaut presiding in a Baptist Church that was purchased. The first Catholic church was built in 1911 but an Easter Sunday fire destroyed that church in 1934. The current church was built largely by parishioners and the Rectory was added in 1969. The parish serves about 150 families.

Mass is held Sundays at 11:00a

St. Anthony's, a parish that honors faith and history



Over the years stained glass windows were added to the choir loft and near the altar but in 2022 stained glass windows were purchased by families in memory of loved ones from the convent in Little Falls. The windows were painstakingly restored to fit St. Anthony's Church. The project was a labor of love and over \$76,000 was raised for this project.



The beautiful Calvary Cemetery overlooks the city of Browns Valley and the head of Big Stone Lake. The cemetery is cared for by a committee of volunteers.



A Polka Mass is held every year for parishioners and visitors of all ages. Parishioners can also find their calling through the Parish Council, Christian Mothers, Women's' Group, and Knights of Columbus. Our youth group that hosts an annual Palm Sunday Brunch and faith formation classes are held during the school year on Sundays before Mass.

Ave Maria Parish, Wheaton, MN



The Ave Maria Parish became an organized corporation on August 11, 1899 and priests came from Dumont and Collis to hold Mass in private homes. The first Catholic Church was built in 1902. Because of growth in the area, in 1927 Bishop Busch requested that Fr. Steichen establish his residence in Wheaton.

Understanding that Ave Maria would continue to grow on the western section of the diocese, the Building Fund was started and after 7 years of contributions, permission was granted to construct the new church. The cornerstone was laid on November 11, 1953 and a dedication Mass was held a year later on October 7, 1954.



Mass is held on Sundays at 9:30a and on Wednesdays at 8:30a. The Traverse Care Center holds a Mass on Fridays at 10:00a.

Ave Maria, a parish that connects through faith



We currently have 194 family units, and 45 students enrolled in our Faith Formation classes. Students kick off the year in September with activities for all, a Children's Mass and program followed by a potluck dinner takes place in December and they end the year in the spring with a bowling and pizza party, all while growing their faith.

We have bible study, a beautiful choir, ladies quilting group, intercessory prayer group, ladies guild, funeral committee, and Eucharistic Ministers who take communion to our homebound. A spring luncheon is enjoyed by all.

Ave Maria also maintains 4 area cemeteries from former parishes.



Totus Tuus = All Yours

Totus Tuus was a summer Catholic Youth Program held at Ave Maria June 9-14, 2024. In the evenings, team members Kelly, Cassidy, Nicolas and Zachary met with the high school students and during the day they had groups with the elementary students.



Team members shared the Gospel and promoted the Catholic Faith through catechesis, evangelization, Christian witness, and Eucharistic worship. Students experienced a deeper connection with their faith, and with each other.

Assumption Parish, Morris MN



In 1870, one year before the founding of the city of Morris, Assumption parish was formed. When the first resident

pastor was installed in 1876, Assumption served all of Stevens, Pope, Traverse, Wilkin, Big Stone, and Swift counties. The first framed church was constructed in 1877. Fire destroyed a brick veneered church in 1905, and on May 20, 1906 the cornerstone was laid for the church we enjoy today.

Over the more than a century since, continuous projects have made Assumption a

welcoming spiritual home to many. Mass is celebrated 3 times on weekends, one of which is a Spanish Mass for the growing Hispanic population in the MAAA-ACC. Daily mass is also celebrated.



Assumption, a parish with a place for everyone



built. It

In 1914 the present St. Mary's school was initially housed 140 grade school children on the 1st floor and 78 high school students on the 2nd floor. No tuition was charged.

Today, the school holds classes for grades K-6 and has an enrollment of about 98 students. In 2024, St. Mary's School graduated 9 6th graders.

St. Mary's boasts small class sizes, affordable tuition, and dedicated teachers. Parents are involved at every turn in their child's education and they with the students and teachers work diligently to keep the faith-based education affordable.

The St. Mary's Auction and the St. Mary's Endowment Golf Tournament are yearly favorite events for the Morris community at large.





In the 1970s the Newman center took over the location of the convent in Morris. The current building was opened in 1998. Scott Crumb, current director states the the Newman Center of the UMM campus is “focused on creating a foundation for college students both in their faith life and their future beyond college. Our ministry is built off Peer Ministry Coordinators who interview to live a the Newman Center and provide different events for the student body as a whole. We are able to run bible studies, movie discussions, large campus events, communal prayer of the rosary, communion services, as well as working ecumenically with other Christian groups on campus.”

For parishioners of all ages and backgrounds, there is daily Mass, small group bible studies, small prayer groups, book studies, speakers, homebound visitation of the sick and elderly, gifted choirs, cantors and pianist to enhance the liturgy, an active Knights of Columbus Council, mission groups, helping hands fund for those in need, faith formation of children and youth, youth events, vacation bible school for children, and a wonderful Catholic School.

Since it's beginning in 1963, St. Francis Health Services not only provides for the physical care of its residents but also their spiritual care.

Successes and initiatives of MAAA

- Greater communication between parishes through the MAAA members.
- Sharing of bulletins and special events.
- Continued combined Confirmation Mass
- Invitations for youth and parishioners to attend events like the Shroud of Turin and Confirmation Retreats
- Opportunities for visiting deacons like Deacon Lorenzo and guest speakers
- Information and coordination of Diocesan events like the Eucharistic Revival
- In all our parishes, we have passionate and faithful people willing to “make it work”.

Challenges for MAAA

- Distance between parishes, especially in adverse weather conditions
- Individual parish identity and pride
- Tight Mass schedules for shared parishes
- Difficulty in planning combined activities due to existing parish and personal schedules
- Outreach to current, past, and new members to welcome into the fold, as well as population shifts out of rural areas
- The multiple “hats” worn by our clergy and ACC members affecting the ability to dedicate extensive time and energy to new ACC activities
- Misinformation or lack of knowledge about the ACC and its purpose

Future plans for MAAA

- Continuance of the MAAA-ACC quarterly meetings and adherence to the bylaws
- Increasing communication of events and opportunities
- Continue to share the Confirmation Mass, potentially rotating sites
- A youth event or retreat to bring students together
- ACC council social event that could become an MAAA-ACC annual picnic

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