

In 1870, the earliest Catholic settlers in the Ayrshire area were Henry and Edward A. Sanders, ancestors of the Paden family. Later that year Dan and Ellen (Brennan) Sherlock homesteaded 1 mile north and 1 ½ miles east of Ayrshire. These early Catholics had to depend on the services of the priest from Emmetsburg. The ground for Sacred Heart Church and school was purchased on October 18, 1889. In the summer of 1889, Father Timothy Sullivan was appointed pastor of Gilmore City with several communities along the railroad as mission parishes. Ayrshire was the farthest north. Father Sullivan was spiritual leader of the Catholics at Ayrshire until January of 1894. The first church building was started in the spring of 1890 as more families had moved into the area and children from the first settlers had married. Ground for the cemetery was purchased in 1894, with several more purchases occurring over the years as the parish grew. Sacred Heart Parish of Ayrshire, Iowa was incorporated under the title of Sacred Heart Catholic Church on March 4, 1912.

Ayrshire has been blessed with many fine priests. After Father Sullivan, Father Luke Carrol ventured from Ruthven to say Mass in January 1894. After completion of the rectory in 1899, Father Carroll decided to transfer to Ayrshire since the Ayrshire parish had progressed so much more than the Ruthven parish at that time. After his arrival, the congregation grew too large for the church, so the sanctuary was cut off from the body of the church and extended farther. Twenty five feet was added to each end creating a larger seating capacity. Total cost of project was \$9,000. Father Patrick Lynch succeeded Father Carrol and remained until the fall of 1922. Reverend Edward Smith became pastor in the fall of 1922 and then in November 1926, Reverend Edward Dunn became pastor and remained until May 1931. At that time, Father William Mason came and remained until July of 1936. Father Leo McCoy was then pastor until May 1945. He was loved by the young and the old and sponsored dances for area kids of all faiths. After Father McCoy went to the service, Father William Hyland was pastor until July of 1950. The Rev. Laurence Schoeppner remained at Ayrshire until 1953. In the fall of 1953 Father Thomas Parle came to Ayrshire to spend seven years. In June of 1960, Father George Benjamin came and was pastor until July of 1968. Father Benjamin spent many, many hours working at the cemetery and making vast improvements. He had it surveyed and then steel plate corners were made for each lot. All records were brought up to date and the first cemetery board was appointed. We can be very thankful today for his foresight. In July of 1968, Ayrshire was blessed with Reverend Patrick Nooney. Father Nooney loved to sing and was a great advocate of congregational singing. Father Everette E Apt was our pastor from 1972-1979. He loved Ayrshire and called it "The Garden Spot of America". He and his mother, Velma, are buried in our cemetery. In November 1979, Father AJ Loeffelholz was assigned to Sacred Heart Ruthven, with Ayrshire as a mission. He resided in Ayrshire until a new rectory in Ruthven was completed in 1981. Our new church was built under his guidance. Dedication took place on July 12, 1981. Joseph Thompson of our parish was ordained a permanent deacon in May of 1980. He served the Ayrshire and Ruthven parishes until his death in March of 1987.

In November 1983, Father Henry Weimer became pastor at Sacred Heart Ayrshire and Ruthven. He helped us celebrate 100 years as a parish in 1988. Father GERAL Zeman was our pastor from 1988 to 1995. He was the proud owner of a couple of Cadillacs and generously loaned them to many high school students for proms and homecomings. From 1995 to 1997 our pastor was Father Allen Reicks. Father was very good about visiting the care center and the sick at home. Father Donald Staven was our

administrator from 1997-1998. We hated to see him leave us. Father Benjamin Jansen served us from 1998-2002. Father Daniel Guenther then became parish administrator and Father Verne Stapenhorst was our sacramental administrator. Father Verne's love of God and nature shined through in his sermon. Father Peter Duc Nguyen, a Vietnamese refugee, became pastor in 2002. His story of escape and coming to the United State was a harrowing adventure and helped us appreciate our faith and freedom. When Father Peter left in July 2011, Father Clem Currans of Emmetsburg became our priest and we were included in the cluster with Sacred Heart of Ruthven and Holy Family of Emmetsburg (RAE of Light Cluster).

Sacred Heart has been blessed by giving many young men and women to God's service. Some of them are as follows: Father Harry Dailey, Father Albert Conlon, Father Phil Dailey, Father James Duhigg, Father John Kelly, Father Emmett Farrell, Father Steven Broderson, Sister M Agnes (Kathryn O'Brien), Sister M Hilda (Julia Carroll), Sister M. Pierre (Loretta Kollasch), Sister Anita (Ann Carroll), sister M. Paschal (Lucinda Hand), Sister M. St Jude (Mary C. Haywood), Sister Bertille (Margaret Donavon), Sister Salome (Mary Antoine), Sister Maureen (Merle Fay), Sister Irenita (Marie Malloy), Sister Domina (Nelly Higgins)

The convent and school were started in 1920. Deflated values of farm commodities caused suspension in the building operations. School work was resumed in September 1922 and was finished and ready for opening in the fall of 1924. The school was started with the intention of having a high school, but the 9th and 10th grades were discontinued with the end of the 1949-50 school year. It started as a boarding school but this was discontinued in 1929. The grade school continued until the fall of 1968.

In 2003 Ayrshire Sacred Heart was blessed with the gift of a farm from the Kennedy family. We can be forever grateful to them for their generosity.

Our Ladies' Altar Society remains active. We hold two annual community social functions. We have a Sandwich, Salad Bar, and Pie Supper in the spring and a Christmas Cookie Walk the beginning of December. For years and years, our Altar Society provided coffee and Rolls the second Sunday of each month after mass. This was an event that was very well attended by our parish and looked forward to each month. When we lost our Sunday morning Mass, we decided to hold a Saturday Night Social after our Saturday evening Mass. The menu had to change but it is still a wonderful time to visit with fellow parishioners and guests!