

A longtime neighbor—

St. Mary's Cemetery

By Sue Filbin, Communications Committee

One of the busiest intersections in our neighborhood – 46th and Chicago – is also among the most quiet. Since 1873, long before traffic became plentiful, the north-east corner of this intersection has been occupied by St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery.



Photos: Sue Filbin

One distinctive memorial in the cemetery honors firefighters from the City of Minneapolis.

With its location near the center of Field Regina Northrop, St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery is geographically part of the community. Its 65 groomed acres provide a resting place for more than 66,000 people, and a quiet space for neighbors and visitors.

The sole full-time employee, Baltazar Cardoso, who speaks English and Spanish, lives nearby. From April through October, seasonal employees help Baltazar maintain the grounds, prepare sites for burials, tend and install markers, repair equipment, clean up storm damage, and place flowers and wreaths.

St. Mary's is dedicated to being a good neighbor. When pedestrians remarked that it was inconvenient to walk on the 46th Street sidewalk because of the heavy snow flung onto the sidewalk by Hennepin County plowing crews, St. Mary's purchased a special plow attachment to clear that extra-heavy snow.

Welcome

Neighbors are welcome to walk on the paved roads and to take in the tranquility of the site. Artists sometimes sketch the rolling landscape and historic, sculptural markers. School children rub tennis balls on rubbing paper to transfer decorative images from grave markers to paper. Dog walkers are welcome when they keep their dogs leashed and pick up after their dogs.

Each year, St. Mary's hosts a Memorial Day celebration that includes a parade, recognition of veterans of past wars, Mass, and refreshments. This special observance is part of a long partnership between the Knights of Columbus and the cemetery.

History

St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery was originally established as the parish cemetery for the Basilica of St. Mary (located in downtown Minneapolis). It is now one of five cemeteries owned and operated by The Catholic Cemeteries, an independent, self-sustaining religious corporation. In the Archdiocese of Saint Paul & Minneapolis, 110 cemetery properties are owned and maintained by their respective parishes.

The cemetery's designation as a Catholic cemetery means that it is considered by

Catholics to be sacred ground due to its having been blessed by a bishop. Catholics are welcome to be buried at St. Mary's, as are their non-Catholic spouses and family members. Friends and neighbors who live nearby have also been buried in the cemetery over the years. Between 100 to 125 burials now take place annually.

In the fall of 2015, one of the less-used paved roads was closed to make space for 100 conventional graves and 100 cremation spaces. In addition to traditional burial plots, 600 crypts and 300 cremation niches are available in St. Mary's Garden Mausoleum that opened in 1994. One of the most striking markers in the cemetery is a tall memorial to firefighters who served in the City of Minneapolis.

The dedication to the cemetery and neighborhood from those responsible for St. Mary's became apparent during a conference-call phone conversation with John Cherek, director of Catholic Cemeteries, and Jon Louris, operations manager for the Catholic Cemeteries and supervisor at St. Mary's Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul. John Cherek said, "If any neighbors have any ideas as to how we can be a better neighbor, please let us know." (651) 228-9991 ❖

