

## Parish, Project, and Organ Description & History

Building a new church to support the life of a congregation relies on a strong foundation of unwavering belief—the kind of faith that supports the community well beyond the building project. We had the privilege of witnessing this first-hand with the creation from the ground up of the house of worship for St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The faith necessary to build this church took on several forms: Faith in the spiritual sense—that the Holy Trinity, St. Bernadette, and Mary our Mother would guide those involved to design an appropriately inspirational and prayerful worship space. Faith in the leadership of the parish to work tirelessly in bringing the building to completion. And finally, faith in the worshiping parishioners to support and foster such a grand endeavor. To travel this path, the parish needed belief, action, and resolve.

The Peragallos were first introduced to St. Bernadette's as we were installing the new organ at the nearby Cathedral of Ss. Simon and Jude in Phoenix. At the time, the new building for St. Bernadette's was still in the groundbreaking stages, and Mass was being celebrated at the adjoining parish school. We were able to supply a temporary instrument to support the music ministry.

As you approach Scottsdale from the highway atop Paradise Valley, you can see the sun's rays reflected off the dome of St. Bernadette's—a symbol of the light that the church provides to the surrounding community. The classical design of the building was inspired by the Mediterranean architecture in Arizona, as well as the churches of France, where St. Bernadette lived. As is traditional in Catholic parishes, the proportions are vertical, expressing transcendence.

After the initial phases of construction, the building was structurally complete but lacked ornamentation. The major elements left to finalize the church were an ambitious beautification proposal by Conrad Schmitt Studios of New Berlin, Wisconsin, and a new pipe organ. One of the most notable features of the beautification project is a series of vignette paintings following the Blessed Mother's life of faith that adorns the Romanesque barrel vault above the nave. The decor of this space serves as a wonderful teaching tool for the laity. In whichever direction you look, the origins of our faith—and the stories of those who shaped what it means to be a Catholic—are intelligibly and meaningfully represented. The stained glass, custom tile work, and beautiful lighting design all harmonize to provide an ethereal space in which to worship. "When we walk into the church building," the current pastor, Fr. Don Kline, told his parishioners as the renovation was revealed, "we should be filled with a longing for our true heavenly home and a sense of awe in the presence of God."

Given the level of work accomplished by the artisans, architects, and liturgical designers, the organ needed to be thoughtfully unified with the overall aesthetic. The casework's iterative design was crafted with direction from Fr. Kline. It would "draw one's eyes upward to the murals on the ceiling and proportionately fill the rear wall of the loft, appearing as if it was always designed for this space." The tonal design, by John Peragallo III, is an aural reflection of this aesthetic upwardness, with enough quality and power to adequately fill such a vast room.

Falling into place, as faith would have it, was the intersection of a trinity of pipework resources that would make the envisioned project viable and provide a trajectory of success. The first of these founding resources came from Peragallo Opus 399, at the First Reformed Church of Ridgewood, New Jersey. Designed by Foster Freeman and built by John Peragallo Sr. and John Peragallo Jr. in 1960, it would acquire an acclaimed status in the North Jersey organ world, with Carl Weinrich dedicating it and many other artists, including Virgil Fox, performing on it. This instrument had a wealth of varied scales and stop architectures, resulting in a warm tonality that would serve well in a large-scale room. The pipes were sourced from Jerome B. Meyers & Sons, A.R. Schopp's Sons, and Durst Organ Supply.

The second resource was a vintage organ from the Church of the Epiphany (Episcopal) in New York City. The congregation had decided to relocate, and the 50 ranks of the 1962 Joseph Whiteford Aeolian-Skinner (No. 1412) were not coming along. Rev. Roy Cole, interim rector, had an affinity for the instrument and was hoping to find it a nice home. Its solid choruses made it a perfect choice for the foundation of the St. Bernadette organ. It is said that Virgil Fox was given a church key and loved to practice on the instrument at all hours of the night.

The third portion of pipework came from an unlikely source in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Second Presbyterian Church, having closed its doors, was looking to demolish its church interior. The 110-year-old Hook & Hastings organ was available, and the Peragallos agreed to purchase and extract assorted ranks, knowing that the piquant Gambe and broad chorus Trumpet inside the crumbling case were the perfect pieces to complete the tonal scheme.

What do you get when an Aeolian-Skinner, a Peragallo, and a Hook & Hastings walk into a bar? A tall order—35 feet to be exact. The custom-designed freestanding casework of the instrument was built entirely in our workshops in Paterson, New Jersey. The structural timbers and expression boxes are made purely of hardwoods. The case is divided into three stories, with the expressive Swell at the peak serving as a nod to the famed organ at St. Sulpice in Paris. Standing atop the casework, one can touch the constellation ceiling, peering clear across the barrel vault. The organ includes two complete expressive divisions, a Swell and a Positif, with the Great fronting each box with its massive principal chorus. The facade of the instrument is entirely of speaking bass pipes. The Pedal division includes a true 32' reed and five 16' stops. Other notable ranks include the wooden 4' Flûte venitien on the Great, the Jerome B. Meyers Salicional and Voix céleste in the Positif, and the full-scale open-wood 16' Flûte ouverte that adorns the back of the case and moves lots of air. The Positif also features a unique and completely mechanical Vibra Harp that was original to the Ridgewood instrument. The one and only rank of new pipes is the Trompette en chamade. This signature Peragallo stop is a true commander, so useful for celebrating feast days and weddings.

In order to ensure longevity for the organ in this Southwestern climate, the entire chassis, casework, console, and control system had to be new. The pipework from all three instruments was cleaned, reassessed, rescaled, restored in our pipe shop, and re-racked on the new windchest pipe sills in our Paterson factory.

Completion of the organ required just one year, in total, from the signing of the contract to its installation on-site. The casework was designed by Frank Peragallo and John Peragallo IV. Direct design-build communication with the craftsmen, led by project director Anthony Peragallo, resulted in a textbook example of how faith in one another's abilities, workmanship, and work ethic can produce an impressive result.

The fully loaded tractor trailer made its way to Scottsdale in early November 2021, and with a team of twelve craftsmen the instrument was fully assembled in just two weeks' time. The next month saw the process of meticulous on-site tonal finishing by the Peragallo family. The resulting seamless crescendo of tonal resources, from gentlest pianissimo to thunderous fortissimo, was carefully crafted pipe by pipe, rank by rank, division by division.

The organ's sound reflects the best aspects of more than a century of organbuilding—with pipes being touched by four generations of the Peragallo family. Wondrous elements of the old Hook & Hastings, vintage Aeolian-Skinner, and nuanced Peragallo organs happily coexist in a new body of work in this inspiring worship space. Peragallo Opus 770 is a testament to the faith this parish and its leaders showed in us as builders and as supporters of their mission to bring all closer to God.