

A Brief History of St. Germaine Catholic Church

The Catholic Mission of Prescott Valley began on June 10, 1979, when about 60 people attended the first mass at the Prescott Valley Community Center. In a copy of a letter to Bishop James Rausch dated August 12, 1980, Fr. Reiser described the process of choosing the patron saint for the Catholic Mission of Prescott Valley. On one Sunday the parishioners submitted potential names for this new mission, and on the following Sunday the top five names were voted on. The three receiving the most votes were: St. Bernadette 36 votes, St. Germaine 35 votes, and St. Rita of Cassia 32 votes. The voting on those three names was so close that Fr. Reiser did not want to disclose the tally to the parishioners, and left it up to the bishop to choose from the three. In his letter to the Bishop, Fr. Reiser wrote, "In conclusion, I believe any one of the three would be a good patron and each one has something in her favor. There is no question about it, St. Bernadette and St. Rita are the most well known and honored, but perhaps St. Germaine also needs to become more known, loved, and honored. We will be grateful for whomever you choose."



In a letter from Bishop Rausch to Fr. Reiser dated August 18, 1980, Bishop Rausch wrote, "Regarding the Patron Saint for the new mission parish – the vote certainly was mighty close. If we add your vote and mine, St. Germaine has it. That's what I would like to do. I only hope St. Bernadette and St. Rita won't take offense."

An article in the *Extension Magazine* over 50 years earlier called St. Germaine the "Forgotten Saint." She is the Patron Saint of abused women and children. A pamphlet describing her life was obtained and submitted to the Bishop. A copy of this pamphlet is sealed inside the cross on the roof of the Church.

On November 23, 1980, the first shovels full of dirt were turned over at the groundbreaking for the first Catholic Church in Prescott Valley, Arizona. Fr. Philip Reiser, the first Pastor, had written a letter to all charter members challenging them to form a Catholic Parish Community Center to share the love of God with all. A small number of parishioners, working together, formed a building committee, pledge committee and publicity committee---then they all went to

work! Rummage sales, bake sales and bazaars were among the many efforts of these hardworking parishioners, determined to raise money for the building. Some things are still

done the same way, yes? Thus came to be a functional facility, simple in design that inspired and lifted hearts and minds to God.

The first Mass was celebrated in the new church on June 14, 1981. Dedication of the church was held on March 28, 1982. The reason for the delay in dedicating the new church was probably due to the fact that Bishop Rausch died May 18, 1981, and Bishop O'Brien wasn't installed as bishop until January 18, 1982.

The parish continued to grow, so in 1984 the Religious Education classrooms were built. On October 15, 1984 St. Germaine Mission became St. Germaine Parish. The growth of Prescott Valley and the number of people attending mass warranted the elevation of St. Germaine from a Catholic Mission, to a Catholic Parish.

Fr. Michael Martinez arrived July 1, 1985, working especially well with the youth of the Parish. Fr. Philip Reiser returned in 1986. In 1987 construction began on the Parish Hall. It was dedicated on May 21, 1989 and officially named "Reiser Hall", in honor of the "Builder Priest". In 1993 Fr. Reiser left due to poor health. Fr. Michael Shay arrived July 1, 1993, bringing humor and instructive homilies. He was also very instrumental in updating the décor of the Church. July 1, 1994 brought Fr. Gerald Yaeger to St. Germaine along with plans to build a new rectory. In November of that year, Fr. Jerry, his mother, and their two dogs moved into the completed rectory. The parishioners helped Fr. Jerry celebrate his birthday, and then on May 28, 1996, his 30th Ordination Anniversary. A blue spruce tree was planted near the mosaics at the church to commemorate the 10th anniversary of St. Germaine Parish. As it grows, so grows the Parish...spiritually and in family members!

On July 1, 1998, upon Fr. Yaeger's retirement, St. Germaine Parish was blessed with the arrival of Fr. John Shetler, -- the Cowboy Priest". He brought a bundle of energy and enthusiasm to the parish! Fr. John dug in his "spurs" and began working diligently to get to know the members of his "flock", as well as to assess the needs of the Parish and the community at large.

During his time with us, the new Healing Garden and Perpetual Adoration Chapel came to fruition, there was a tremendous growth in family membership, and an abundance of beautiful flowerbeds sprung up on the grounds of the Parish (not to mention 40 or so chickens, 3 HUGE rabbits, a turkey, a dog and a cat at the rectory!). Also under Fr. John's leadership, and with the continued hard work and sacrifice of the Parish families, the Church obtained land adjacent to its grounds for further expansion in the future.

July 1, 2005 brought another change in pastors. Fr. John accepted a move to St. Gabriel the Archangel Roman Catholic Parish. In his place, but without cowboy boots, the parish received Fr. Dan Vollmer. Ordained only three years, this was Fr. Dan's first assignment as a pastor. He was more than happy to leave the big city down south.

In the fall of 2006 the parish formed a Master Plan Committee, and began the process of planning for our future growth. The architectural firm BCDM from Omaha, NE was hired to complete the master plan (with lots of feedback from the parish), which they finished in June 2007. In the summer of 2008 the parish hired the Steier Group to conduct a feasibility study for a capital campaign. They estimated the parish could raise 1.0 to 1.5 million dollars in a three year capital campaign. However, shortly after the feasibility study was completed, the economy entered a severe recession, so the capital campaign was placed on hold.

To help accommodate our future growth the parish purchased the house at 7920 E. Long Look in October 2006, two mobile homes on the east side of the church property on Dowling Street in the summer of 2008, the house at 7900 Long Look in June 2009, and the mobile home at 8014 E. Dana in October 2012.

Some of the growth in our parish has been from our Spanish speakers, so on Sunday October 1, 2006 the parish began celebrating a Spanish mass at noon each Sunday.

There have been a few cosmetic changes around our campus. The inside of the church was painted in October 2006 (thanks to a donation from a parishioner), votive candles were placed in the church in February 2007, and the planters in front of the church were redesigned

with statues of Jesus and Mary in the spring of 2007. In June 2012 the walls of the social hall, kitchen, and mini-hall were painted, and sound absorbing panels were installed on the walls of the social hall. The paint was selected by and paid for by the Ladies Guild. Parishioners provided the labor to prep and paint the hall and mini-hall. In May 2013 air conditioning was installed in the social hall and mini-hall. Prior to this, there was no cooling in the mini-hall, and the church hall was cooled with an evaporative cooler. In July 2013 most of the cabinets in the kitchen were replaced. The Ladies Guild and Knights of Columbus paid for the new cabinets.

In October 2012 the parish kicked off its first capital campaign, and decided not to use an outside firm to run the campaign. The theme of the campaign was "Building Our Future in Christ," and the pledges for the three year campaign totaled \$1,002,573. We began the capital campaign with about \$625,000 in our building fund account, and in June 2016 we had a little more than \$2.1 million dollars on deposit.

On October 2, 2013 (Feast of the Guardian Angels) a ground breaking ceremony was held as construction began on the new food pantry for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. They paid for the construction with money they raised themselves, and were excited to finally have a decent pantry from which to serve the poor of Prescott Valley. On Sunday February 2, 2014 (Feast of the Presentation of the Lord), Bishop Olmsted blessed the new pantry.

In July 2015 after interviewing three architects to review and revise our master plan, and to design our new church, the parish hired Johnson Walzer Associates of Flagstaff, AZ. If all goes well, and that rarely happens with building projects, construction should begin the summer of 2017.

In April 2016 a parishioner found on a website a 125 year old, 42 inch tall statue of St. Germaine for sale in Amsterdam. It was immediately decided to purchase it, and after a few delays it arrived at our parish on Thursday May 12, 2016.

In June 2016 the parish had 840 registered families. The future looks exciting for God and his parish family here at St. Germaine Roman Catholic Parish!