

St. Joseph's Catholic Cathedral, Dunedin

The first Catholic clergy to visit Otago took place on 17 November 1840 when Bishop Pompallier sailed into the Otakou Heads in the schooner *Sancta Maria*, celebrating a Mass on 22 November 1840 at the Otakou Heads. It was just over a decade later before the first Mass was held in Dunedin, with Fr Antoine Seon SM holding the service in a private house on 30 November 1850.¹ The second occasion was in a far stranger place - a skittle alley.² There was only sporadic missionary visits from Catholic Clergy until 1861, when the first priest was based in Dunedin, Fr Moreau SM opened the first Catholic Church in Dunedin (St. Joseph's) on 20 July 1862.³ The Diocese of Dunedin was created on 26 November 1869, and the first Bishop, the Right Revd Patrick Moran, DD arrived on 18 February 1871. He found the brick church of St. Joseph's could only contain one-sixth of the Catholic Congregation of Dunedin, and in a pastoral letter to the Diocese of 3 March wrote: "This Diocese is almost entirely destitute of the necessities of Divine Worship, such as altars, vestments, chalice, and suitable altar ornaments, etc. etc. In fact, so great are our wants, so almost entire the destitution that prevails—a destitution, so far as a sufficient number of missionaries is concerned, likely to increase, at least for a time—that it has become a serious question with us if we should not at once inform the Holy See that the representations made in order to secure the erection of this See were almost entirely without foundation, and that there is no provision here for a Bishop or religious institution."⁴

Yet within seven years a start was made on the foundations of the Cathedral of St. Joseph. The site for the Cathedral was purchased for £59 in September 1868 from the Crown, and consisted of a deep gully with underground streams. The architect F. W. Petre, in coping with the deep gully, designed forty concrete foundations ranging from four foot to eight foot square and thirty to forty feet deep, resting on the bluestone bedrock. The public work of reducing the Dowling Street cutting provided the backfill for the gully. Near the surface, the foundations were linked together with concrete arches, providing the level base for the walls. The foundations were started in May 1878, and on 26 January 1879, Bishop Moran laid the foundation stone.⁵ The Bishop did not wish to see the Diocese burdened with debt, so the Cathedral was built as the funds were to hand. Even so, only the nave of the Petre design was built. It was to be a cruciform French Gothic building (222 feet by 102 feet), with a central tower 220 feet high.⁶ If the Cathedral had been built to plan, there would have been 84 foundation piles.

The building is built of Water of the Leith bluestone above the foundations, then two courses of Melbourne stone, followed by Port Chalmers stone and Oamaru limestone. The entrance steps were to be of New Zealand marble, but finances dictated concrete being used in 1891, the swing gates were designed by Petre and built by Barningham & Co. The timber roof consists of Oregon trusses and roof framing of Rimu and Kauri. The roofing of the nave and aisles in 1884 was required to be done in one stage, and the Bishop had to appeal to the wider diocese and go into debt to finance the roof. In January 1885, Bishop Moran announced the intention to have a temporary sanctuary and leave the facade without the two towers, however sufficient donations came in to have the south tower completed in January 1886, before the opening day on 14 February 1886. Four months later the north tower had been completed. The building cost £20,000 and all debts cleared within three years.⁷

The building has had various repairs over the years. The tower pinnacles became dangerous and were removed in the 1950s, being replaced with concrete replicas in 1975 when work was done on the facade and towers. The Oamaru stone flying buttresses were replaced with concrete in 1967, and the roof slates of the aisles replaced with iron in 1955 and 1972.⁸ In one sense the building was completed in 1997 when the architects McCoy & Wixon were contracted to re-roof and re-clad the sanctuary and tie the brick structure to the bluestone nave.⁹



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL AND DOMINICAN CONVENT – F. G. RADCLIFFE (COLLECTION OF C. T. TEMPLETON)

Internally and externally the carvings were done by Louis John Godfrey & Sons. Some of the carving was completed after the Cathedral was opened. The high altar was designed by Petre and carved by Godfrey. With the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the altar was deemed obsolete and was secured by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. When the Art Gallery was moved in 1996 to the Octagon site, the altar was returned to the Cathedral. The entrance porch floor is made of Villeroy & Boch tiles, and the 1896 Bishop Moran memorial altar was designed by Petre and carved by Lewis Godfrey jnr. The plastered groined ceiling was cleaned and repaired in December 1982.¹⁰



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL, DUNEDIN – FINCHAM NAMEPLATE (C. T. TEMPLETON 2016)

The first musical instruments to be used in St. Joseph's were provided by a band, run by A. Fleury. Later on a harmonium was purchased by Father Moreau.¹¹ A meeting in the Shamrock Hotel on 1 February 1866 started a fund for purchasing a pipe organ,¹² and one was subsequently ordered from George Fincham of Melbourne. This was on view to the public in his Richmond factory on 17 November 1866 before being dismantled and shipped to Dunedin.¹³ In Dunedin the organ was erected by Charles Begg, (piano-maker and seller)¹⁴ and opened on 1 February 1867. The report noted that there had been not enough time to thoroughly tune the organ beforehand.

This organ, one of George Fincham's earliest, was built concurrently with the organ for the Exhibition of 1866.¹⁵ It would seem that the St. Joseph's organ was the first instrument that Fincham fitted caps onto the reed tubes.¹⁶

GREAT			SWELL		
Open Diapason large	8		Double Diapason	16	TC
Open Diapason small	8		Open Diapason	8	TC
Stopped Diapason	8	CC-BB	Stopped Diapason	8	
Clarabella	8	TC	Principal	4	
Dulciana	8	TC	Fifteenth	2	
Principal	4		Trumpet	8	
Flute	4	TC	Oboe	8	
Fifteenth	2				
Sesquialtra	III		COUPLERS		
			Swell to Great		
PEDAL			Swell to Pedal		
Open Diapason	16		Great to Pedal		

Compass: 56/29

Mechanical key and stop action

In 1876 St. Joseph's Church was enlarged, with a new organ gallery, and the organ was dismantled and re-erected by Mr Litolff who also undertook extensive improvements to the organ.¹⁷ In 1886 the organ was installed in the new Cathedral, in time for the opening.

During 1893 Fincham & Hobday quoted £2,000 to provide a three-manual pneumatic instrument of 39 speaking stops for the gallery.¹⁸ This was to have a divided case, with the console under the rose window facing the altar. The console would have had four thumb pistons as playing aids along with one thumb piston that bought on full organ. How exactly the instrument would have fitted in the gallery would have been interesting, with two full length 16ft stops on the pedal and Swell and Choir boxes, as it was not until 1897 that the gallery was lowered two feet. This was because the loft opening was too restrictive in egress of the sound, and the loft was lowered to provide a larger tonal opening. There was further work done on the instrument in the early 1930s, probably including electric blowing.¹⁹

In May 1974, a contract was signed with the South Island Organ Company to rebuild the organ, with Maxwell Fernie as consultant and reference officer.^{19,20} The pipework and Pedal Bourdon chest were the only parts of the old instrument retained for the new instrument. The organ was designed as a three-manual, with the Great and Swell divisions occupying each side of the gallery, and the Positive Organ built under the rose window. The soundboards were built with schwimmer reservoirs, and the Great Trumpet was prepared for. The organ was dedicated on 1 June 1976.²¹

GREAT			
Quintaten	16	A	†
Open Diapason	8		
Claribel Flute	8		
Quintaten	8	A	†
Dulciana	8		
Principal	4		
Flute	4		
Twelfth	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	†	
Fifteenth	2		
Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV	†	
Trumpet	8	†	
SWELL			
Open Diapason	8		
Stopped Diapason	8		
Salicional	8	†	
Celeste	8	TC	†
Principal	4		
Fifteenth	2		
Mixture 26.29.33	III	†	
Trumpet	8		
Oboe	8		
Tremulant			
PEDAL			
Open Diapason	16		
Bourdon	16		
Quintaten	16	A	†
Quint	10 $\frac{2}{3}$	A	†
Principal	8	†	
Bass Flute	8		
Quintaten	8	A	†
Quint	5 $\frac{1}{3}$	A	†
Octave	4	†	
Quintaten	4	A	†
Trumpet	16	†	

Compass: 61/30

Electro-pneumatic action

† - new stops

POSITIVE		
Rohr Flute	8	†
Koppel Flute	4	†
Gemshorn	2	†
Sesquialtera	II	†
Larigot	1 $\frac{1}{3}$	†

COUPLERS		
Swell Octave		
Swell Sub Octave		
Swell to Great		
Swell Octave to Great		
Swell Sub Octave to Great		
Swell to Positive		
Swell Octave to Positive		
Swell Sub Octave to Positive		
Swell to Pedal		
Swell Octave to Pedal		
Great to Pedal		
Positive to Pedal		

ACCESSORIES		
Five thumb pistons to Great		
Five thumb pistons to Swell		
Five thumb pistons to Positive		
Reversible thumb pistons for Swell to Great		
Reversible thumb pistons for Swell to Pedal		
Reversible thumb pistons for Great to Pedal		
Five toe pistons to Pedal		
Five toe pistons to Swell		
Great Pistons to Pedal pistons		
Swell Pistons to Pedal pistons		
Reversible toe piston for Swell to Great		
Reversible toe piston for Swell to Pedal		
Reversible toe piston for Great to Pedal		
General Cancel thumb piston		
Balanced mechanical action swell pedal		



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL, DUNEDIN – GREAT AND POSITIVE ORGAN (C. T. TEMPLETON 2016)

- 1 *Centennial Souvenir Dunedin Diocese*, (Dunedin, 1971), p.1
- 2 Moran, Cardinal Patrick Francis, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*. (Sydney: The Oceanic Publishing Company, 1895), p.948
- 3 *Centennial Souvenir*, op.cit, p.2
- 4 Moran, op. cit., pp. 950-951
- 5 Mee, Rev. Fr. Peter R., *St. Joseph's Cathedral Dunedin; New Zealand Centennial Year 1886-1986*. (Dunedin: Tablet Printing Co. 1986), p.13
- 6 Croot, Charles. ed., White, Helen Watson, *Dunedin Churches Past and Present* (Dunedin: Otago Settlers Association, 1999), p.69
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Mee, op. cit.
- 9 Croot, op.cit.
- 10 Mee, op.cit.
- 11 "I.S.T." *Liturgical Blessing of the Rebuilt Organ, Tuesday June 1, 1976*, p.9
- 12 *Otago Daily Times*, 2 February 1866, p.4
- 13 *Trove - The Age* (Melbourne), 19 November 1866, p.5
- 14 *Papers Past - Otago Witness*, 2 February 1867, p.11
- 15 The Exhibition organ was built and installed between 22 August and the opening on 24 October. At that stage it was only the Swell section (no reeds) and a Pedal Diapason 16' - *Trove - The Argus*, 27 October 1866, p.2
- 16 *Trove - The Age*, 11 November 1866
- 17 *Papers Past - New Zealand Tablet*, 1 December 1976, p.12. This was Francis Litolff, who was a Piano seller who moved to Dunedin from Melbourne the year before. His advertisement stated that *Church and other Organs erected, tuned, or repaired*. He was also a cousin to Henry Charles Litolff, piano virtuoso and composer.
- 18 Maidment, John, 'Fincham & Hobday's proposal for a new organ at St. Joseph's Catholic Cathedral, Dunedin, New Zealand', *OHTA News*, vol 33, no 3 (July 2009), pp. 27-31
- 19 Mee, op.cit.
- 20 Technically, with the amount of new work and new configuration, it should be designated a new instrument (recycling old materials).
- 21 Mee, op.cit.