


Parish Churches, Patrimony of the Community or of the Diocese? Community Interventions and Supervision of the Dioceses

*Las iglesias parroquiales, ¿patrimonio de la comunidad o de la diócesis?
Intervenciones comunitarias y supervisión de las diócesis*

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ABSTRACT

My intervention was born as a reflection on the *Census of churches* of Turin diocese, organized by the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference). Through my studies, I've observed the case of Turin ecclesiastical heritage built in the second half of the 20th century. A great number of places of worship have changed their historical validity due to arbitrariness of choices and interventions.

I've always supported the thesis that this religious buildings are an important patrimony for the urban history and expression of the pastoral liturgy of the diocese in Italy and that the community is fundamental to the birth and the management of a parish centre. Now I think that it is necessary to consolidate project strategies and fix best-practices to preserve the ecclesiastic heritage from everyone's action.

Generally speaking, what contemporary buildings can be part of the Church heritage? How far can priests and communities decide, independently, to intervene?

KEYWORDS

Community, Heritage, Parish Churches, Arbitrariness, Ecclesiastical Legislation

RESUMEN

Mi intervención nació como una reflexión sobre el *Censo de las iglesias* de la diócesis de Turín, organizado por la CEI (Conferencia Episcopal Italiana). A través de mis estudios, he observado el caso del patrimonio eclesiástico turinés construido en la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Un gran número de lugares de culto han cambiado su validez histórica debido a la arbitrariedad de las elecciones e intervenciones.

Siempre he sostenido la tesis de que estos edificios religiosos son un patrimonio importante para la historia urbana y expresión de la liturgia pastoral de las diócesis en Italia, y que la comunidad es fundamental para el nacimiento y la gestión de un centro parroquial. Ahora pienso que es necesario consolidar las estrategias de los proyectos y fijar las mejores prácticas para preservar el patrimonio eclesiástico de la acción de todos.

En general, ¿qué edificios contemporáneos pueden formar parte del patrimonio de la Iglesia? ¿Hasta qué punto pueden los sacerdotes y las comunidades, de manera independiente, intervenir?

PALABRAS CLAVE

Comunidad, patrimonio, iglesias parroquiales, arbitrariedad, legislación eclesiástica

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Fig. 01. Luigi Pratesi, San Nicola Vescovo, Turin (Italy), 1960-63.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is proposed to read the phenomenon of the relationship between architecture and legislation: from Liturgical Reform to heritage protection as it's today through a reading that has taken place over time. It proposes reasons of the *modus operandi* of the Christian communities (episcopal conferences, dioceses, parishes, religious institutes) without the presumption of giving resolution tools.

This question was consolidated during a work of collecting data for a database organized by CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) and by the steady eye on the interventions on architectural religious heritage. My communication will focus on the heritage built in Italy from the second half of the twentieth century in the city of Turin and on reflections born from other interventions on ecclesiastic heritage. I decided to divide this article in thematic nuclei (cores), trying to identify the factors that contribute to the transformation of the religious architectural building.

CENSUS OF CHURCHES: KNOWLEDGE AS THE FIRST FORM OF PROTECTION

The *Census of churches* organized by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) has become an important tool for cataloguing the heritage of the dioceses. The *National Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural*

Heritage and Building of Worship (from now called UNBCE) «promoted the systematic (computerized) census of the existing churches in the Italian dioceses and the first step of the inventory of architectural goods which, over time, will have to involve the whole heritage in real estate owned by the dioceses and subjected to the diocesan Bishop (churches, seminaries, bishoprics, etc.)» (Chiesa Cattolica Italiana 2019). This project concerns all the Italian Dioceses (219) and isn't obligatory; it has «the purpose of delineating a minimum cognitive framework of places of worship of ecclesiastical property through an essential cataloguing to facilitate the programming activity of interventions on goods and for their management and protection» (Chiesa Cattolica Italiana 2019) (Fig. 01).

In August 2019 the result is about churches of 219 Dioceses. Only about a third (28,327 churches) of 212 Dioceses can be consulted with a complete schedule. In the case of Turin, the whole action carried out by various experts, often organized on different historical periods, has allowed us to integrate studies made with the existing heritage together with information on the current state. This proceedings allowed the filing of famous parish churches together with unknown ones, giving them visibility through an institutional procedure that is configured as the first step to monitor the existing one.¹



Fig. 02. Michele Berardo, San Giovanni Maria Vianney, Turin (Italy), 1962-70.

The first form of protection is built through knowledge. Even if we have little details, it's important to witness the existence of an architecture and to relate its history through a testimony of the state of affairs, the transformations along the time. The photographic investigation returns the real state of preservation (Fig. 02-05).

This concept cannot be ignored. These different stories of a heritage are the expression of local communities, an integral part of the whole community so it's possible to rebuild a proceedings.

During the conference *Dio non abita più qui? Dismissione di luoghi culto e gestione integrata dei beni culturali ecclesiastici* (Doesn't God Dwell Here Anymore? Decommissioning Places of Worship and Integrated Management of Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage) (Fig. 06), held in Rome at the Pontifical Gregorian University 29-30 November 2018, were approved Guidelines for ecclesial communities. Don Valerio Pennasso, director UNBCE, underlined that

the goods of ecclesiastical property carry out an important task in the perspective of evangelization and far beyond the simple juridical belonging owned by and referred to the communities not only as main recipients but as a reference [...] Christian communities (parishes and dioceses) that preside the territory and represent historical memory. (Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura 2018)

Therefore

knowing is at the base of responsible attention to heritage and it must be remembered that among the first tasks of knowledge, there is a systematic list of documentation of archives that link it to things, people, communities, places that have operated in social tale to safeguard heritage and to support cultural acquisition. (Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura 2018)

Throughout my studies, I've observed the case of Turin ecclesiastical heritage built in the second half of the 20th century. A great number of places of worship have changed their historical validity due to arbitrariness of choices and interventions.

ARBITRARINESS

Visiting the different places to be examined was a constructive experience because each good became the occasion for a meeting with people. I knew most of the churches for the past studies carried out during the Ph.D studies but the survey needed to analyse various data to describe the state of ecclesial buildings starting from the early project required to finalize the recent transformations. The survey analyzed buildings of worship made starting from the fifties of the 20th century (rarely more ancient cases) and nevertheless it appeared difficult to rebuild the various interventions. The phenomenon is due to the lack



Fig. 03. Gianfranco Fasana and Giuseppe Abbate, Gesù Crocifisso e Madonna delle Lacrime, Turin (Italy), 1959-65.

of documents about them. So often the recent parish priests don't know the history of their architectures. Recent worship architecture have been modified in the planimetric plant, in the presbytery area and, in some cases, the transformations interest the whole building changing the early project. The question was often: What is the query for transformation? Why contemporary churches are subject to change? What are the problems? Comfort, conservation, identity are not reflected by community?

The architectural experimentation about the buildings built after the Second World War determines innovative and brave examples that denounce problems in maintaining reinforced concrete structure and require continuous updating. The natural course of materials generates brutalist realities not always accepted by parish communities that dream a more welcoming place. This desire is often resolved with a camouflage of their original structure to give a more welcoming appearance. The reasons for the change are often motivated by problems of lack of comfort connected with heating and cooling and the waste of energy of building but also by the wish to have a more welcoming and warm environment (Fig. 07).

The phenomenon of the coldness of the environments created with the aid of reinforced concrete and prefabricated structures are a central node of the

transformation instances that, although faced with different approaches, denounce the difficult sharing.

I have always supported the thesis that this religious buildings are an important patrimony for the urban history and expression of the pastoral liturgy of the Diocese in Italy and that the community is fundamental to the birth and the management of a parish centre.

Often the results of transformations erase completely the early state to give a new identity. The first examples showed as the communities redesigned their heritage by deleting the initial state. The process takes place through a parish priest who forwards their thoughts, trusts in an architect and transforms the gray of the reinforced concrete beams into the bright white similar to the last pattern of the most famous church created along the 21th century.

In the second case, popular devotion surpasses and determines places of prayer saturated with objects and artistic products expression of a spirituality that wants to be noticed (Fig. 08).

The third case appears as a nostalgic desire to return to the past (Fig. 09).

Perhaps the unique rule to follow would be to elude the self-referentiality of the interventions. This rule could allow the natural historical stratification that each good requires over time. Pope Francis in the text *Laudato Si*, written in 2015, says:



Fig. 04. Oreste Dellapiana, San Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo, Turin (Italy), 1930-58.

Given the interrelationship between living space and human behaviour, those who design buildings, neighbourhoods, public spaces and cities, ought to draw on the various disciplines which help us to understand people's thought processes, symbolic language and ways of acting. It is not enough to seek the beauty of design. More precious still is the service we offer to another kind of beauty: people's quality of life, their adaptation to the environment, encounter and mutual assistance. Here too, we see how important it is that urban planning always take into consideration the views of those who will live in these areas. (§150)

HERITAGE

So, how should we relate to this heritage? Who does it belong to? Is it an expression of what? Is it right to see it as a stratification? «Heritage is not an administrative entity, not an economic category: it is, literally, the heritage of the fathers, the legacy of the generations that preceded us» (Montanari 2014, 10).

The historian of art Tomaso Montanari, in his text *Istruzioni per l'uso futuro. Il patrimonio culturale e la democrazia che verrà*, defines the term heritage, argues about *future instructions* and *democracy* (Montanari 2014). The government of the people led by representatives presupposes the knowledge of the heritage as a product of past artistic and social move-

ments, all born by an ideology. Just so the heritage could be respected. It is necessary to remember that the start point of any kind of planning and conservative action there is the value of a building. Who recognizes this value?

In Italy, this heritage is submitted to the Verification of Cultural Interest, with which the Ministry for Cultural Heritage establishes if a building is or is not subject to restrictions and is instructed if built more than 70 years ago (Codice Urbani 2004).

This activity is performed pursuant to the *Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code* (2004) within the area of the cultural heritage belonging to the State, the Regions, public bodies and institutions, as well as non-profit private legal entities.

About the State

For rules and procedures the regulation must take into account the *Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code*, Legislative Decree n° 42/2004.

According to article 10.1, the cultural heritage are all cultural and immovable properties belonging to the State, to the Regions, to other territorial public bodies, as well as to any other public body and institute and to private non-profit legal entities, as a consequence also ecclesiastic goods civilly that present historical, artistic, archaeological and ethno-anthropological interest.



Fig. 05. Mario Bianco (ing.), San Paolo Apostolo, Turin (Italy), 1965-67.

Article n° 12:

The movable and real estate indicated in article 10, paragraph 1, which are the work of a dead author and whose execution dates back to more than fifty years, if movable, or over seventy years, if real estate, is subject to the provisions of this Part until the verification of their historical-artistic and ethno-anthropological interest has been carried out.

About the procedures: all requests for authorization for interventions on ecclesiastical cultural heritage (in the case of buildings over 70 years old) must be sent to the competent Superintendent through the diocesan delegate for art and cultural heritage, with the opinion of priority and congruity (Agreement 26/01/2005 §5).

About the Church

The ecclesiastical body consists of all bodies that have religious and worship purposes, subject to ecclesiastical authority, civilly recognized (Italian laws 24/06/1929 n° 1159 and 20/05/1985 n° 222; Agreement 18/02/1984). Therefore, before the age of 70, every intervention must be evaluated by the Art and Cultural Heritage Section of the Diocesan Liturgical Office according to urban planning, architectural rules and respect for liturgical functionality. For the latter, the legislative reference is the orientations *The cultural assets of the Church in Italy*

(1992) and the pastoral notes of the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference): *La progettazione di nuove chiese* (1993) and *L'adeguamento delle chiese secondo la riforma liturgica* (1996).

About public opinion and therefore the faithful community? The transformation procedures that are discussed in the presence of the parish communities are certainly more respectful of the functionality of the building itself.

About designer

He has the task of intervening starting from the existing to enhance it, in agreement with the client and the competent diocesan, municipal and protection offices. But too often this heritage has been modified throughout its life, losing its identity.

Now, I think that it is necessary to consolidate projects strategies and fix best-practices to preserve the ecclesiastical heritage from everyone's action.

What are the criteria? Are there guidelines for the identified interventions? What elements are decisive in recognizing the value of these buildings? (Fig. 10)

To guarantee a conservation of the original architectural layout it is fundamental to have an idea of a classification and identification of kinds of intervention:

- Identification of the structural system - generally visible - with characteristics that derive directly



Fig. 06. Michele Berardo, San Giovanni Maria Vianney, Turin (Italy), 1962-70; the weekday chapel was realized in 2008-09.

from the use of prefabrication and reinforced concrete technology;

- Conservation and installation of the materials: use of exposed brick, reinforced concrete face-to-face, ribbon windows systems, etc.

Generally speaking, in all case of transformation of buildings for worship, it would be required to avoid the approval to other exempla. This approach could be for designers, clients, the Diocesan Commission a useful opportunity to make room for contemporaneity. The modified church will continue to be a reference point, a meeting place for its community, but it is necessary for it to take on a personality of its own, not changeable by colors, furnishings, too often taken up in a completely detached way from the context in which the building is located. Compared to liturgical functionality: the CEI standards give indications and not predefined schemes.

The Church has always left a lot of freedom to the design of places of worship in respect of liturgical norms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

The guidelines must spring by the essential meaning of the building: it means that places of worship must be capable of gathering the faithful for liturgical celebrations (Gabetti 2001). Architectures for the liturgy must be hospitable.

For this reason, the liturgical act, intended as the creation of an intentionality of the created or drawn path, is the only rule that should be respected in an

architectural project. The freedom of design choice must avoid the creation of amorphous spaces where everything can happen similar to an undifferentiated container. The worship spaces must be designed to express the liturgical mood where the relationship between liturgical order and architecture is clear.²

In order to create participatory processes, CEI is proposing the creation of a preliminary study tool for the new projects: the DPP (Preliminary Design Document) for the purpose of orientation and control. It is produced by the client to manage the dialogue with the designers to verify the correspondence of the design choices to the requests and the strategic directions it has gathered. The main contents are:

- General objectives of the intervention
- Information regarding the context
- Indications regarding the inclusion of the building in the context
- Constraints on the context area (supplemented by regulatory references)
- Technical elements
- Information regarding specific liturgical needs
- Information regarding specific pastoral and social needs
- Indications about the artistic project and the iconographic program
- Sizing of the parish complex

This approach is a pastoral action that involves all the actors interested in the construction but also in

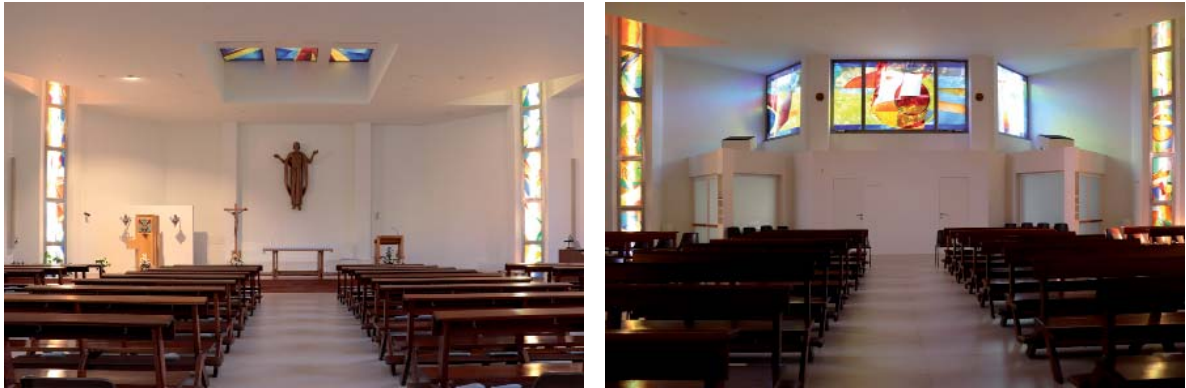


Fig. 07. Silvio Ferrero, San Benedetto Abate, Turin (Italy), 1971-78; remodelling by Giorgio Comoglio, 2017-18.

the preservation of a common good. This procedure requires a longer time of analysis but assures a good outcome.

THE SUPERVISION OF THE DIOCESES

Certainly, CEI plays an important role in the management and safeguarding of heritage through the coordination of the Dioceses. The National Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Italian Episcopal Conference (UNBCE) is aimed at protecting the cultural heritage, both for the organizational aspects and for the effectiveness of the initiatives promoted. Operationally, this commitment is based on:

- Central as a qualified interlocutor in the protection action;
- Local through the diocesan Office for ecclesiastical cultural heritage, which is entrusted with the task of assisting the diocesan Ordinary and the ecclesiastical bodies under its jurisdiction in a stable manner in everything concerning knowledge, protection and enhancement, liturgical adaptation and the increase of ecclesiastical cultural assets.

Next to the Offices, the Diocesan Commission for sacred art and cultural heritage is the consultative body of the Ordinary in the field of art for the liturgy and cultural heritage. Each Diocese has a boss who coordinates the work dedicated to their heritage in the area of competence. The 226 Dioceses are clustered into 16 ecclesiastical regions. Each has the relative

regional council for ecclesiastical cultural heritage.³ These structures facilitate relations between the Dioceses, the territorial Public Administrations and the peripheral organs of the MiBACT and guarantee the homogeneity and the convergence of the orientations regarding the cultural assets issued by the Bishops. It is significant to dwell on the subtitle of the text-guide *Guidelines* for the protection of ecclesiastical cultural heritage published by the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and created in 2014 in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism; the Italian Episcopal Conference collaborated in the drafting of the guidelines for the protection of the cultural assets of the Italian Catholic Church. It reads:

A small handbook that will be in support of every parish priest on Italian soil. We get to the heart of the matter when we list the protection organs, their procedure and the one who manages the ecclesiastical patrimony. (Ministero 2014)

In terms of supervision, the Diocese has its institutional channels but it is clear that if the decisions of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions have an advisory value so they aren't an authorized voice to decide what is absolutely denied so this fact involves interventions without any control on ecclesiastical heritage.



Fig. 08. Piero Contini and Marco Ghiotti (ings.), Santissimo Nome di Maria, Turin (Italy), 1955-72.

On the other hand, the parish priest is the legal representative of the Parish. He is responsible for the building so deciding what is the best to do. The Code of Canon Law (CIC) devotes entire chapters to this jurisdiction.⁴

The parish priest as administrator of goods (CIC 532 and 1279 §1)⁵ oversees, under the supervision of the Ordinary (CIC 1276), the conservation and supervision of the goods lest they be destroyed or damaged. If considered opportune this can be done by signing insurance policies (CIC 1284 §2.1). Beyond ensuring the above-mentioned supervision, Ordinaries must also carefully oversee the entire administration of goods by giving special instructions within the limits of universal and particular law (CIC 1276 §2); they also have the faculty of intervening where negligence by an administrator of goods occurs (CIC 1279 §1). The faithful,⁶ for their part, have the right to show pastors of the Church their own needs (CIC 212 §2-3).

The figure of the parish priest and the community of the faithful play an important role in the life of the church building, but it is increasingly necessary to provide a tool which, in addition to the enhancement of the heritage spread throughout the Italian territory, guarantees the awareness of the role of the memory of the past as a founding element of community identities and social integration.

CONCLUSION

Understanding building process and governance means studying the parish centers: their history is the pretext to understand the dynamics of settlement, of society, of politics, of decision making in a district (Fig. 11).

Over 50 years from Vatican II, and nearly 70 (years) from the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII,⁷ key moments for the renewal of the relationship between Catholic Church and society, the sensitivity towards Catholic places of worship requires a comparative analysis.

Since recent years, the Catholic Church has been the spokesman of widespread need for contemporary sacred architecture knowledge (not superficial). The research provides an answer to this instance and adds an innovative value: a methodology able to enter in a historic religious architecture designed in the years of economic boom (often anonymous and poorly designed) to recognize the value of identity with respect to the social-historical, religious and urban context. The international scope in which the research fits also allow the scientific community, national and international, to better interpret this wide heritage.

Thus, this research will promote a more accurate knowledge of the contemporary architecture of worship, to expand reflection and debate. The multidis-



Fig. 09. Santa Maria delle Grazie, Brusciiano-Naples (Italy), 18th century, remodelling 2017-18.

ciplinary perspective will provide useful tools for a positive interaction with local communities and institutions that will be able to better appreciate the value of those religious architectures, often considered not very significant.

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Fig. 10. Antonino Tripodi, San Michele Arcangelo, Turin (Italy), 1966-71.

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NOTES

1. The system is specifically designed for the compilation of the census form and also contains some information in the catalogue of architectural heritage, drawn up by the Central Institute for Catalogue and Documentation (ICCD) of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, with the variations and additions introduced by the National Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage and Worship Buildings to take account of specific ecclesiastical needs.

2. This reflection comes from a speech entitled «Vitality or Obsolescence of Post Council Churches?», in collaboration with architect Francesco Novelli, for the conference «Architecture of Churches and Liturgical Reform 50 years after Vatican Council II» held in Turin, on the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Council Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in May 2014.

3. The Regional Council is presided over by the Bishop Delegate for Cultural Assets, and is composed of the regional and diocesan representatives as well as representatives of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The sixteen Regional Representatives make up the National

Council for Ecclesiastical Cultural Assets, as a link between the UNBCE and the territory.

4. The *Code of Canon Law* (abbreviated to CIC, with the Latin title *Codex Iuris Canonici*), is the normative code of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. The new CIC was promulgated by John Paul II on 25 January 1983 and came into force on 27 November of the same year. The current CIC replaces the Pious-Benedictine Code of 1917 (so called because it was drawn up during the pontificates of St. Pius X and Benedict XV). John XXIII, on January 25, 1959, announcing the convocation of an ecumenical council for the universal Church, manifested his intention to proceed with the revision of the Pious-Benedictine Code. However, the work of codification did not begin in practice until the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council ended in 1965. The work of codification continued throughout the pontificate of Paul VI and ended during the first years of the pontificate of John Paul II.

5. About the parish priest you may consult CIC 532: «The parish priest represents the parish, according to the law, in all juridical shops; make sure that the goods of the parish are administered according to cann. 1281-1288. Il parroco rappresenta la parrocchia, a norma del diritto, in tutti i negozi giuridici; curi che i beni della parrocchia siano amministrati a norma dei cann. 1281-1288».



Fig. 11. Felice Bardelli (ing.), Santa Famiglia di Nazareth, Turin (Italy), 1950-62.

6. About the faithful you may consult CIC 212 §2: «They are free to manifest to the Pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual needs, and their desires». CIC 212 §3: «In a manner proportionate to the knowledge, competence and prestige which they enjoy, they have the right, and indeed sometimes the duty, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their thoughts on what concerns the good of the Church; and to make this known to the other faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals

and respect for the Pastors, bearing in mind also the common utility and dignity of persons».

7. From the Liturgical Movement, with the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII in 1947, and the Second Vatican Council documents (1963-65).

SOURCE OF IMAGES

Fig. 01-11. Carla Zito's Archive.