

A space for the liturgy: project of a catholic church at Ivrea (Turin; Italy)

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In the different religious traditions, worship places have different peculiarities: the temple has different motivations, different functions, it houses different actions, indicates a different relationship between man and god.

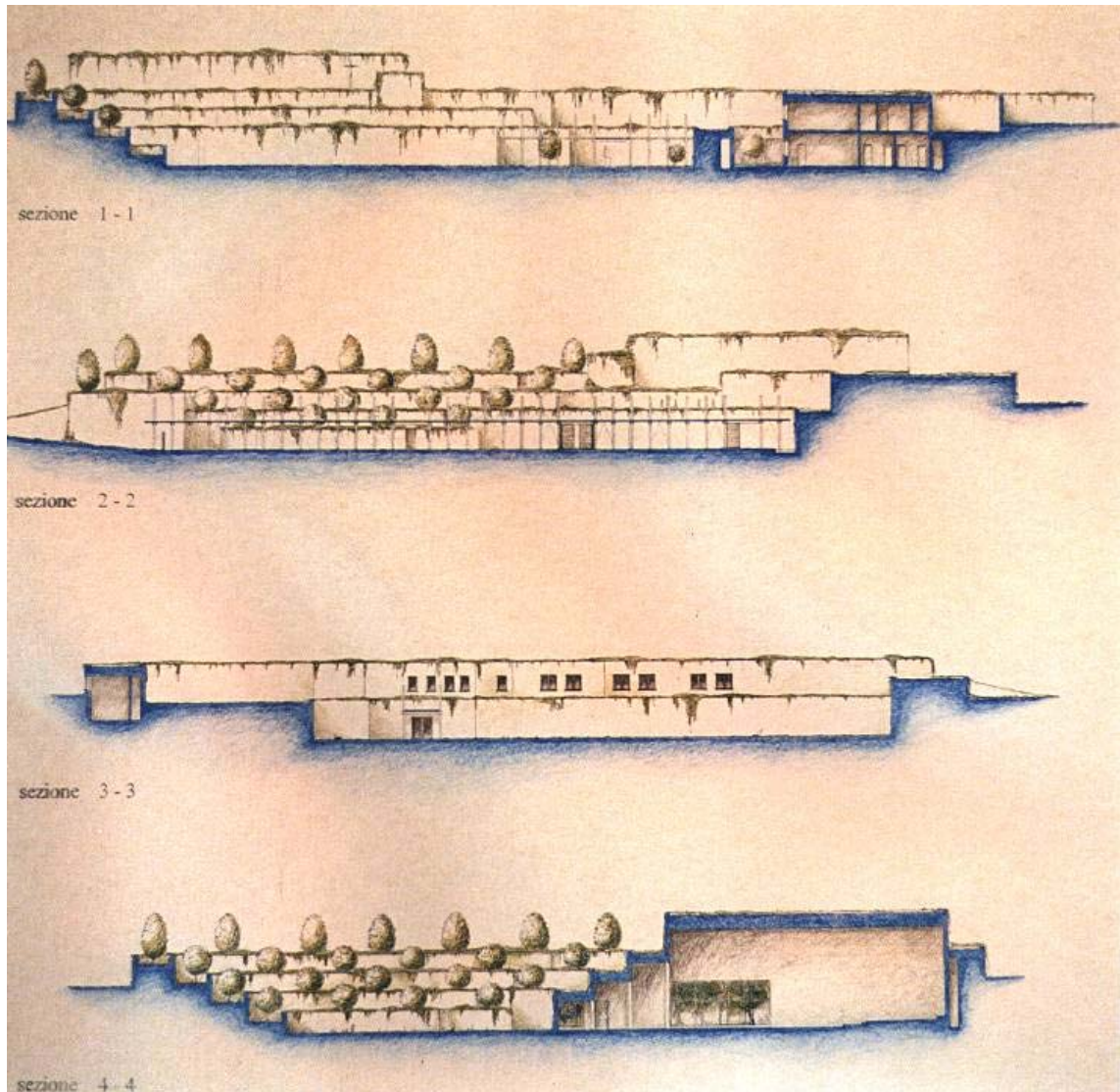
The liturgy, as its etymology indicates, is an *érgon*, that is a work, an action. For the planning of a new church, considered as a building, the Second Vatican Council underlined the central role of the Church, considered as the community of the believers who meet to celebrate the Eucharist. Thus to the question "What is the purpose of a church?" one must dare answer: "No one" (Grasso G., *Come costruire una chiesa*, Roma, 1994, p.11). Man, however, needs a space, a roof under which he can collect his thoughts in prayer together with a community. A place that, though not sacred, is nevertheless meaningful for the community to celebrate the sacramental mysteries.



sections

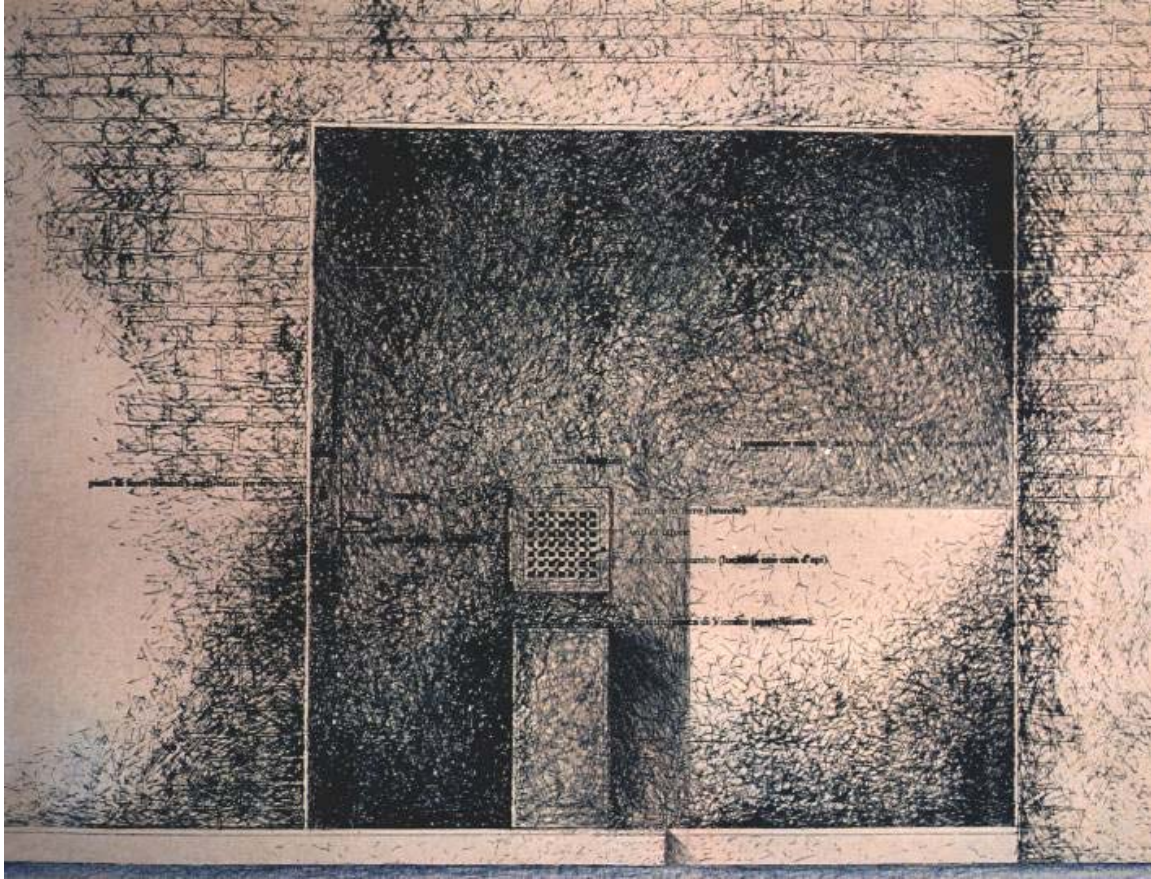
The project. A large rectangle of terraced 'hills', that slowly descend to form a large garden, begins right after the last houses. The little stone walls sometimes become higher or meet other walls slightly higher, covered with climbing plants (ivy and honeysuckle); they almost disappear, but something makes one realise and imagine that there is something important down there.

One gets to the church through a passage between the terraced grounds, sheltered by a long wooden portico parallel to a rivulet that eventually broadens to form a large basin; little water comes out from a slit in the wall, at the far end among the musk. Another rivulet runs parallel to the length of the garden. Along the two little canals, almost at the edge, is a row of willows; hornbeams and fruit trees are all around. Some hazels are near a big British oak in a garden surrounded by gravel path.



plan of the first and second level and of the coverings

The church. The position of the altar was the starting point of the whole project: "In the strength of this mystery of recapitulation, synthesis of memorial, presence and eschatological anticipation, we can say that *everything* in the church starts from it and gathers around it: the rite and the space and, above all, the living *ecclesia*, the assembly of the believers. Bearer of such a unique power of celebration and symbol, the Christian altar exceeds the purely functional scope because of its own nature"(Debuyst F., Situazione, struttura, decorazione in *Chiesa Oggi*, n.5, Luglio 1993, p.22). The room for the celebration of the Eucharist is large and quiet. The presbytery occupies about a quarter of the large square hall and is slightly raised. The ambo is visible to all the assembly: it is slightly raised, on the left and ahead of the altar, in order to "talk" to it. The presidential seat is a big wooden chair with two stools on the right and on the left to complete the place. A side chapel, clearly visible from the liturgical hall and lit by a narrow window that gets light from a small garden, houses the Eucharistic presence.



chapel for the Eucharistic presence

To get to the church one has to cross the parvis, place of mediation between the church and the outside that, though representing a limit, is not an obstacle but induces to go on; it is a large garden, quiet and sheltered, that unobtrusively suggests the slow rhythms of the prayer and where one can dwell to talk or meditate. Going into the church through the main entrance, the baptistery is immediately on the right; here the floor is a few steps lower to become a large pool. A small ferial hall is linked to the main hall but is also reachable directly from the outside through a door. Between the ferial hall and the baptistery is the place to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, made up of two small rooms preceded from a tiny atrium. The parish house contains all the environments for the pastoral service, the lodging for the priests and a larger room to be used by the people in the neighbourhood. Partly to indicate the *temporariness* of the building, the sense of its *transience*, walls and roofs are covered with grass, ivy and honeysuckle, so that they can gradually disappear to become, with time, a rolling, soft and almost insubstantial meadow.