


The Post-War Reconstruction of the Ecclesiastical Building in Italy. The Role of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art

La reconstrucción de la posguerra del edificio eclesiástico en Italia. El papel de la Comisión Central Pontificia para el Arte Sacro

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ABSTRACT

Although we consider the Second Vatican Council the final destination of a path of renewal for the history of contemporary sacred art, it is, however, necessary to focus on its preparatory phase during the years of post-war reconstruction.

Though the first impulse to this process was given with the institution of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art (PCCSA), strongly desired by Pius XI, whose purpose was to maintain «a sense of Christian art», the key figure for the formation of the artists first, and then for the complex task of directing the reconstruction works of all the ecclesiastical buildings devastated by the fury of the war, was Msgr. Giovanni Costantini, third president of the PCCSA.

This contribution aims to highlight, through a comparative reading of unpublished archival sources, relating to the Abruzzo region, and consolidated literature, what were the dictates of the PCCSA regarding interventions on existing buildings and how they influenced the results that arose during the first period of reconstruction (1945-56).

KEYWORDS

Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art, Reconstruction, Ecclesiastical Heritage, Abruzzo Dioceses, Italy

RESUMEN

Aunque consideramos que el Concilio Vaticano II es el destino final de un camino de renovación para la historia del arte sacro contemporáneo, sin embargo, es necesario centrarse en su fase preparatoria durante los años de reconstrucción de la posguerra.

Aunque el primer impulso a este proceso se dio con la institución de la Comisión Central Pontificia para el Arte Sacro (CCPAS), muy deseada por Pío XI, cuyo propósito era mantener «un sentido del arte cristiano», la figura clave para la formación de los artistas primero, y luego por la compleja tarea de dirigir las obras de reconstrucción de todos los edificios eclesiásticos devastados por la furia de la guerra, fue Mons. Giovanni Costantini, tercer presidente de CCPAS.

Esta contribución tiene como objetivo resaltar, a través de una lectura comparativa de fuentes de archivo inéditas, relacionadas con la región de Abruzzo, y literatura consolidada, cuáles fueron los dictados de CCPAS con respecto a las intervenciones en edificios existentes y cómo influyeron en los resultados que surgieron durante el primer período de reconstrucción (1945-56).

PALABRAS CLAVE

Comisión Central Pontificia de Arte Sacro, reconstrucción, patrimonio eclesiástico, diócesis de Abruzzo, Italia

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FROM THE YEARS OF VATICAN II BACK TO THE YEARS OF POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

Architecture and liturgy have always lived a close relationship that has modified over the course of history, following changes in culture and in humankind's way of relating to God. The most recent occurred with Vatican Council II (1962-65) which gave new impetus to the Church's path of renewal, and brought about a profound mutation in the spatial structures of ecclesiastical buildings; in fact, the publication of the 1963 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* expressed the need to define and direct interventions for the structures of new churches, and their adaptation to mutated demands. The document made treasure of the experiences and reflections produced in preceding years which had advocated for improved liturgical functionality and also called for greater dialogue between clients and artists.

Although there is a tendency to consider Vatican II as a fundamental moment of recovery of ecclesial architecture, what appears more important is to investigate its preparatory phase, that is, what actions and which organizations operated during the years of reconstruction immediately following the Second World War.

The time span from WWII to Vatican II was very important for Italian sacred architecture: the end of the war, with the emergency of reconstruction, was a decisive moment in a period in which Italy was starting to mutate from an agricultural to an industrial society, resulting in consequent migrations from the countryside to large cities (Benedetti 2000).¹

The choice to investigate what happened in those years is dictated by multiple reasons. First of all, despite the number of churches completed during this period, there are truly few examples known and reported by critical studies: they are cases designed by great names in the field of architecture or the emblematic examples of Italian reconstruction,² but little interest has been shown until now towards the production of that sacred building, so-called *minor*,³ so dear to small communities. This is probably because, as Varagnoli observes (Varagnoli 2012), more recent architecture has not enjoyed positive reception

by the public as it has never reached such an aesthetic consensus as to postulate its knowledge and conservation; the systematic use of reinforced concrete as a building material and the lack of finishings have contributed to making these architectures similar to «market sheds or garages» (Costantini 1953) and therefore little accepted by critics. Lacking, in fact, are complete regional frameworks and for all these churches there is no systematic cognitive and critical analysis, even on an archival scale.

Furthermore, in the management of ecclesiastical assets or heritage, the important role that the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art (PCCSA) had has often been forgotten in its influence on ecclesial architectural planning, on the protection and reconstruction of this heritage following WWII.

Hence the desire to begin a documentary-archival investigation, starting from a limited area, the Abruzzo regional framework, to highlight how and how much the work of the PCCSA influenced the work of designers and clients in the immediate post-war period, reconstructing the paths of builders and communities, the relationships with various institutions involved, and analyzing the successes and failures of individual projects.⁴

THE IMPULSE FOR RENEWAL AND PROTECTION: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PONTIFICAL CENTRAL COMMISSION FOR SACRED ART IN ITALY

The situation of Italian ecclesiastical assets was well commented by Biagio Biagetti (Biagetti 1917) in one of his articles in 1917: «my heart cries to see the state of misery to which religious art is often reduced (...) it is in decay.» The ecclesiastical patrimony was, in fact, experiencing a long period of stasis due to many problems: surely the existence of a secular tradition did not offer much space for innovation and renewal; moreover, many parish priests were forced to entrust their works to designers who were not competent in artistic matters.⁵

In the history of pontifical measures, PCCSA thus marked a fundamental stage.

As is known, it was established in 1924 by a letter of the Secretariat of State dated 1 September, 1924,



Fig. 01. Two moments of the Commission at work: visiting the remains of the Montecassino abbey; Msgr. Fallani, Msgr. Costantini, Consulor Passarelli and Msgr. Alfano during a meeting.

no. 34215 by the will of Pius XI (ASV, *CCASI*, G, b. 451, f. 1), as he felt the need to «keep awake and active the sense of Christian art and the intelligent and devoted zeal for the conservation and increase of the artistic heritage of the church», and in support and coordination of the diocesan commissariats, previously established.⁶ PCCSA became a protagonist in the conservation and promotion of sacred art and had the opportunity to exercise directly, at the central level, the direction and control of religious architecture.

It was towards the end of 1923 that Galassi Paluzzi developed a first programmatic framework to revive sacred art, and this text was the basis for the PCCSA program; the salient points indicated by Galassi Paluzzi ranged from reasonable conservation of what the past handed down to the formation of a body of scholars who, besides being competent technicians, were true connoisseurs of the sacred artistic subject. In fact, it had been a long time since the split between the ecclesiastical, artistic and cultural world caused much ignorance and mutual contrasts, at the expense of the fusion of skills and sensitivity between clergy, artists and scholars (Galassi Paluzzi 1953).

Four men of culture took turns in the presidency of the PCCSA, but Msgr. Giovanni Costantini (1943-1956) enjoyed a fundamental role since the weight of reconstruction fell upon his shoulders, so to speak. The Commission was made up of a president, a secretary and a group of forty-five consultor members, chosen and expert in the fine arts and in the field of liturgy and technology (Fig. 01).⁷

The first activities on which the Commission leveraged were aimed at promoting sacred art, with the organization of exhibitions and competitions, but above all, were directed at educating ecclesial and laypersons for the formation of an artistic culture and taste of and for beauty, with the institution of the weeks of sacred art for the clergy (1933-1939) and the publication of specialized journals, such as *Arte Cristiana*.⁸

For the Commission, the guardianship and knowledge of the vast ecclesiastical heritage has always been one of the principal issues of its mission: during the III Week of Sacred Art for the Clergy, Engineer

Luigi Angelini offered a number of significant considerations regarding the hoped-for interventions on existing churches (Angelini 1936);⁹ these considerations were certainly influenced by the presence of Gustavo Giovannoni as a consultant member of the Commission and by the recent publication of the *Carta Italiana del Restauro* (1932). But the novel character, compared to the then consolidated theories, was to consider the buildings destined for worship as a category in itself compared to civil-monumental buildings; the churches in fact, while maintaining their functions, were to be considered living organisms, capable of maintaining the divine cult through time and changes of styles with continuity: for this reason, it was necessary to intervene on them with due caution. Angelini takes care to categorize Italian sacred buildings into three areas: those of considerable artistic value that have long centuries of history behind them, those of interest for their forms of local character (as in some Abruzzo churches), and lastly, those characterized by their simplicity of lines and materials. As we shall see later, this subdivision will broadly reflect the *modus operandi* in the immediate post-war period.

The activity of the PCCSA proceeded for a long period of work from 1924 to 1989, passing through several operating seasons: but the most important chapter opened in the immediate post-war period with the direction and organization of the restoration and reconstruction of churches destroyed by the war and the establishment of a new collaboration between the Catholic world and the republican state.

THE RECONSTRUCTION WORK IN ITALY: THE ACTIVITY OF MSGR. GIOVANNI COSTANTINI

Called to the presidency from 1943 to 1956, known as co-founder together with his brother Msgr. Celso of the journal *Fede e Arte*, he was above all important for his contribution to the work of Italian reconstruction.¹⁰ The Commission, under his presidency, planned and financed, in the framework of the national activity for the reconstruction and restoration of buildings of worship devastated by the war (based on the laws in force,¹¹ the regional provisions on public works, and on the basis of requests made

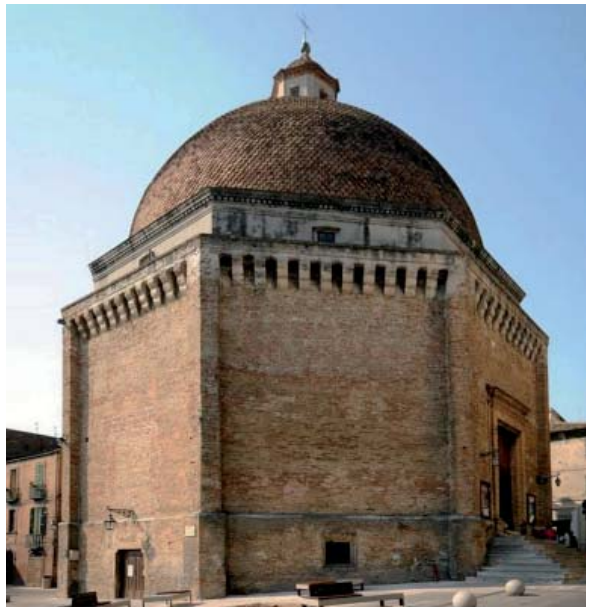
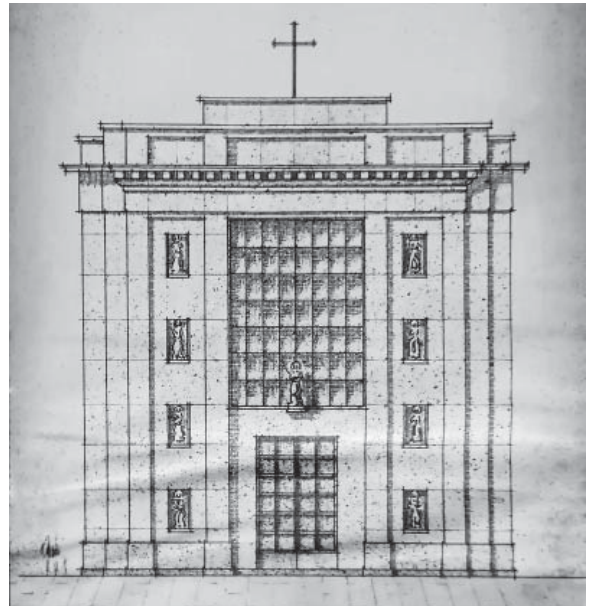
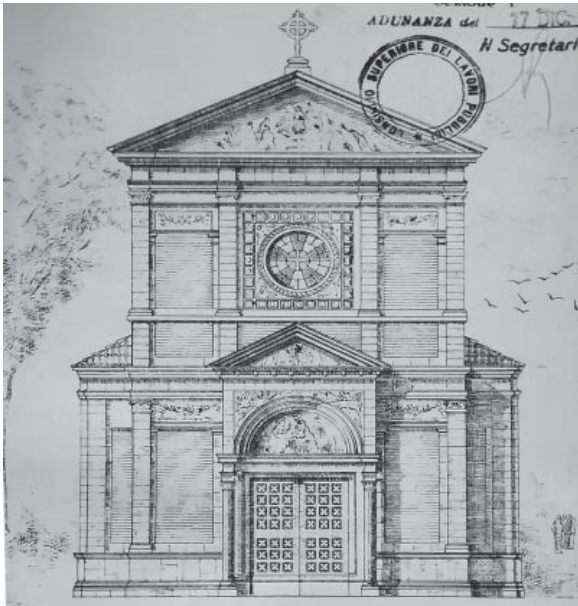


Fig. 02. Example of a reconstruction project by Eng. Dante Paolini rejected first of all by PCCSA for the church of Santa Liberata in Francavilla al Mare (Italy), 1947. «The project cannot be approved due to the banality of the facade that the designer qualifies as a twentieth-century style with the inspiration of a classic» (ASV, CCAI, G, b. 82, f. 37; images of the state of affairs and project status).

Fig. 03. Two churches rebuilt as they were and where they were: Leonardo Trevisiol, IFRI engineer, San Francesco, Popoli (Italy), 1953; Giuseppe Meo, San Flaviano, Giulianova (Italy), 1947.

by diocesan ordinaries), the reconstruction projects, which had to be submitted to it beforehand to obtain judgement on compliance with the norms of liturgy and sacred art. During the National Congress of the History of Architecture, Costantini firmly maintained that reconstruction work had to be supported economically by the State as the first *person* responsible for the war itself (Costantini 1957).

From the end of 1944 to 1947, it is estimated that 3,500 churches were repaired or rebuilt and from 1948 the PCCSA's activity continued at an uninterrupted pace: at the end of 1952, 167 projects were examined but only 90 approved (Fig. 02), and the need to select the most capable artists to obtain sacred architecture which, although inspired by modernity, proved worthy of the national artistic tradition (Rabitti 1989; Alfano 1951) was deemed ever more urgent.

The Second World War had devastating effects not only on the population and its living environments, but the theories of restoration also saw their equilibrium vacillate in dealing with the emergency of reconstruction. All previous statements were superseded by the need to intervene;¹² the seriousness of the damage and the demand for prompt intervention inevitably led to a reality in which the choice to intervene imposed itself as a spiritual necessity to rediscover the building, mainly as a unitary architecture, recovering its proportions, internal spaces, their environmental value and social function (Ceschi 1970).

The topic on the modalities of reconstruction was much discussed in Italy, although the numerous texts on reconstruction mainly dealt with the topic of prompt intervention on *monumental* buildings (Lavagnino 1947, Barbacci 1957, De Angeli d'Os-sat 1955); the Pontifical Commission was called, however, to operate also on buildings of modest architectural value located in small rural contexts, considered essential for the life of communities, and to insert themselves in a context where public institutions already worked, such as the Soprintendenza, the public supervisory board, and the Genio Civile, the public works office.

It is in this context that the Costantini brothers published the stimulating text *Fede e Arte, Manuale*

per gli Artisti, divided into three volumes, of which the second is entirely dedicated to the methods to be used in the construction of ecclesial buildings. No instructions or technical standards are dictated, as PCCSA always left artists extremely free to choose a style «as in the slow evolution of styles over the past centuries, architects knew how to create new things, expertly using the essential elements of architecture, without producing disharmonies between a new art form and the immediately preceding one, so it is to be hoped that it will again happen» (Costantini 1954), but with directives dictated on the basis of the laws and traditions of the church. Illustrious names in the Italian architectural artistic field also collaborated in the drafting of this text, such as Giovannoni.

The text deals with various topics ranging from new constructions to restorations and extensions, ending with the reconstruction of the buildings devastated by the war: and it is the latter chapter that offers the greatest points for reflection.¹³

There was much devastation to the ecclesiastical patrimony in the Italian dioceses, and after such devastation, the church was considered the only place of peace and serenity, so prompt intervention was necessary.

Urgent was the call for the reconstruction of buildings that had been lost; reiterated, the call to maintain the character the building had assumed over time in the context of the community, rendering it a symbol for the community.

There are two methods of intervention foreseen in the manual.

The reconstruction as and where it was (Fig. 03), maintaining the historical and environmental importance of the area. When opting for this solution, especially in cases where the war had left clear traces of pre-existing edifices, two main reasons are considered: the sentimental value the building contained in itself, since changing the building in its initial conformation was equivalent to a loss of identity of the site; but also economic reasons, as part of the waste material of the devastated building could be reused.

The other method was replacement (Fig. 04), thus creating new interventions with a new style. The churches to be rebuilt from their foundations,



Fig. 04. Two churches rebuilt ex novo: Antonio Provenzano, Santa Maria ad Nives, Filetto (Italy), 1957; Edoardo Cherubini, Lorenzo Cheraviglio, Giuseppe Zander, Santa Cuore in San Rocco, Avezzano (Italy), 1967.
Fig. 05. The destruction on several churches in Abruzzo dioceses: Mozzagrogna, Ortona, Orsogna, and again Ortona (Italy).

thus choosing the path of experimentation, were an interesting challenge for the designers who could not ignore the original but not even copy its forms; they had to find the right balance between the lines of the past, the simplicity of construction, avoiding the luxury of decoration, through the use of solid and resistant materials.

Regardless of the reconstruction methods, however, the important thing was to keep the local tradition firm, the materials, the elements that could not disregard the place, as the most serious dangers were given by the haste to rebuild, which led to a unique and standardized type of church, as was maintained in the programmatic features of his journal *Fede e Arte* admonishing the artists in creating truly sacred and beautiful works.¹⁴

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ECCLESIASTICAL HERITAGE IN ABRUZZO (1945-1956)

To date, about sixty years after the fervent Italian reconstruction phenomenon, a systematic study on the situation of the ecclesiastical heritage of Abruzzo was lacking: a land rich in problems and uncertainties that are evident today from the study of the correspondence preserved in the Vatican Secret Archive, compared with the documents of the diocesan historical archives, the *Genio Civile* and the Ministry of Public Works.

Overall, the PCCSA fund, for the Abruzzo region,¹⁵ retained 81 reconstruction projects examined by PCCSA,¹⁶ many of which were not approved in the first instance as they did not comply with the canons of sacred art and were subjected to new examinations.¹⁷

When the Germans left Abruzzo, the picture that appeared was frightening, and although the greatest damage occurred on civil architecture, ecclesiastical architecture also suffered considerable damage, as the German Army deliberately looted and damaged various churches (Fig. 05).

The study of the correspondence kept in the Vatican Secret Archives shows both the suffering and hardship of the population affected by the war

and the measures taken to effectively shape the reconstruction.¹⁸

(...) the Holy Father (...) has graciously deigned to order that the reconstruction of ecclesiastical buildings devastated by the war take place under the direction of this Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art (...) this Pontifical Commission does not want, nor should replace it in the reconstruction work, which under the impulse of Your Excellency will certainly have already begun in your Diocese, sends to Y.E. all possible help according to the directions of the venerated Pontifical document (...) I always think of the serious devastations of your dioceses and I wish I can help you a lot. The summary list of ruined churches and ecclesiastical buildings is the most impressive of all that I have received so far (ASV, CASI, G, b. 132, f. 7).

Thus wrote the President of the Commission, Msgr. Giovanni Costantini, to the archbishop of Ortona on 20 April, 1945.

The current regional panorama, despite the PCCSA's prompt action, is marked by now incomprehensible ruins of ecclesiastical buildings,¹⁹ or integral replacements, sometimes well-executed and others totally detached from the local context. Often we are faced with interventions that can be defined as reinventions, where the rereading of the destroyed buildings made use of styles *evoking* those of the past. How did the dictates of the PCCSA influence the results in Abruzzo?

It must immediately be clarified how the buildings of national interest, already defined of artistic value by Angelini, were subject to prompt intervention of securing the buildings and their reconstruction by the *Soprintendenza* and the Allies;²⁰ in these cases, the PCCSA, although called to express their own opinion, was placed at a more marginal level than the State level. This is the case of the thirteenth-century church of *San Pietro e Paolo* in Alfedena (Aquila) (Fig. 06), and of the fourteenth-century church of *San Giovanni Battista* in Castel di Sangro (Aquila), listed among the National Monuments: both restoration



Fig. 06. The church of San Pietro e Paolo, Alfedena (Italy), before and after the reconstruction.

projects (imposed by the *Soprintendenza* for their important artistic value) were entrusted by the Bishop of the diocese of Trivento, personally, to IFRI.²¹ In both cases, a large part of the building had remained standing, and for good restoration practice the facade blocks had been recovered and numbered by the *Genio Civile*, but being in a seismic area, for both, the *Genio Civile* opted for an integral demolition, rather than a completion, to build a load-bearing structure in reinforced concrete to be then covered with ancient features via original materials. But, compared to the clear dictates of the PCCSA in avoiding falsehoods, today we are faced with two churches, decidedly simplified compared to the ancient outline, and which

create concrete containers that totally violate the memory of the past (Serafini 2018).

Moving forward in the comparison of the various projects consulted, there is no clear reconstructive criterion. The so-called reconstructions *as it was and where it was* were chosen for the strong imposition that parish priests and communities both had in seeing their nerve center resurrected for its sentimental value, as they were before the conflict, although sometimes with the help of small modifications for the adaptation to seismic laws and to window/floor surface ratio or expansion in the hope of seeing their population increase. It is important to emphasize that in most cases, the parts of the buildings left standing

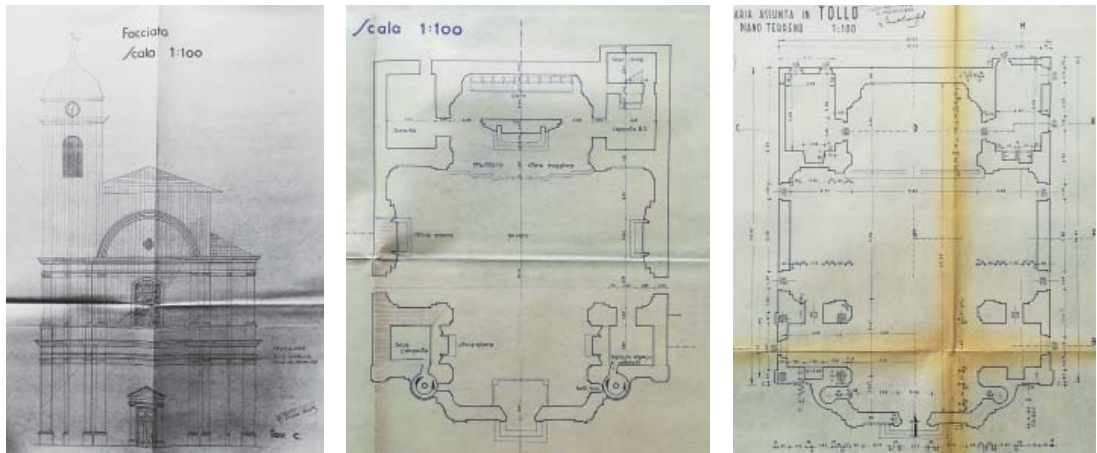


Fig. 07. The church of Tollo (Italy), before and after the reconstruction.

were never reused: the *Genio Civile* always opted for an integral demolition due to the fragility of the pre-existing materials or the static conditions of the land. One of these cases is the church of *Santa Maria Assunta* in Tollo (Chieti) (Fig. 07) which suffered extensive damage, and the reconstruction project was entrusted, by the parish priest, to the IFRI. The project was carried out, after some solicitation by the PCCSA, respecting the pre-existing style and shapes substantially as a restoration of the spatial and perspective values of the lost building;²² from the planimetric comparison, in fact, there are no significant differences in the layout, as well as in the façades; the only noticeable differences are the presence of





more windows in the lateral façades to allow greater internal ventilation. This was certainly one of the best reconstruction projects of as it was and where it was made in the region.

Sometimes, however, the way it was where it was was replaced by another type of intervention, namely that of *ex novo* reconstruction, but on the same site of the pre-existing edifice. Steadfast in the desire to see the building be reborn in their ancient location, it was the designers who put forward various motivations to justify the change in shape and style: when the ancient layout no longer adapted to the changing needs of worship (numerous, the cases of a passage from three naves to single nave); when urban planning requirements involved a change in orientation; when the will to express itself with techniques, forms and materials of modernity took over. However, many times the economic nature also influenced choices: the funds allocated by the Ministry for Public Works for reconstruction were established on the basis of the building's reconstruction as it was and where it was (without considering decorations), and in the Abruzzo context there were many cases that saw small, *poor* and rural churches involved, and therefore many planners had to deal with this limitation; often it was also the PCCSA to call for designers to avoid unnecessary waste of money, as we read for example in the report of reconstruction of the church of *San Giacomo* in Pescara, by the architect Pozzi.²³

The case of the church of *Santa Liberata* in Francavilla al Mare (Fig. 08) is an example of *ex novo* reconstruction on ancient grounds. The design was entrusted by the parish priest to the architects Pantano and Giurgola; in their report, after a brief excursus on the history of the sacred architecture of Abruzzo, it is clear what guided their reconstructive criterion, although in the first two presentations the PCCSA contested the industrial character given to the building: «the integration of a modern concep-

tion of architecture in the spirit of the environment through a concrete synthesis of several simple fundamental ideas. This has led us to discard all forms of banal imitation of motifs and architectural orders which are not traditional in the area, instead in its constructive forms, to the most sincere manner of the Benedictine organisms that eternalize the soul of the Abruzzese populations» (ASV, CASI, G, b. 82, f. 37). We are faced with a good example of reconstruction, which despite the seemingly rigid and simplified setting, is attentive to the use of the materials of the Abruzzo coast and its integration in its urban context, and also offers a space inside that is articulated by the skillful game of heights and lights.

When instead the reconstruction did not concern only the ecclesiastical building but included an entire movement of the burgh itself, the designers felt much freer in their design choices, as in the case of *San Nicola di Bari* in Lettopalena (Ch) (Fig. 09); of the ancient church, of which visitors can today still observe a few wall fragments left in a state of neglect and ruin, its first plan dated 12th century, was then rebuilt at the end of the 19th century. The new project designed, on the then Archbishop of Chieti and Vasto's indication, by Furio Fasolo (a Commission member), was therefore planned on a different site, as per the reconstruction plan: slightly sloping near wide-track roads. The project was immediately approved by the PCCSA on 10 December, 1953.

The project design choices are unclear, but probably the pressing opinions of the PCCSA, as regards wanting to see decidedly simple buildings reborn, evoking styles of the past without being a copy of them, influenced Fasolo: the new building, however, has an effect perhaps different compared to the one wanted, not only for the effect of a neo-Gothic in reinforced concrete extraneous to the local culture, but also for the powerful impact on the surrounding landscape, and the inability to give character to a place that fails to achieve a coherent and credible image and urban structure (Serafini 2005).

Ultimately, what is striking from reading the correspondence is the predominant role that the IFRI played in the region, perhaps because it was able to overcome those mutual contrasts between clients,

Fig. 08. The church of *Santa Liberata*, Francavilla al Mare (Italy). The site cleared of rubble and how it looks today.

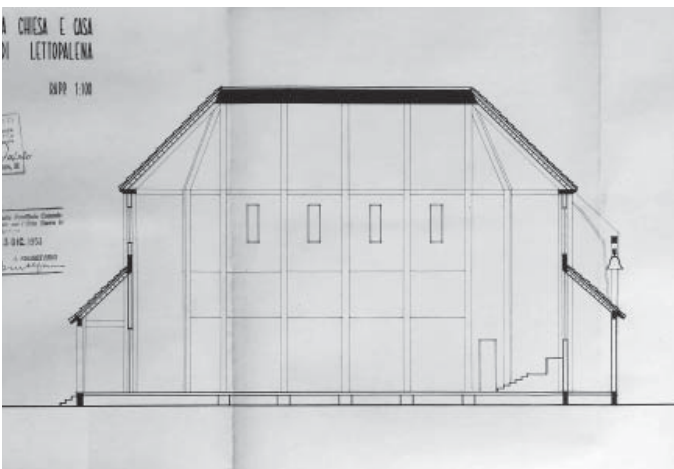
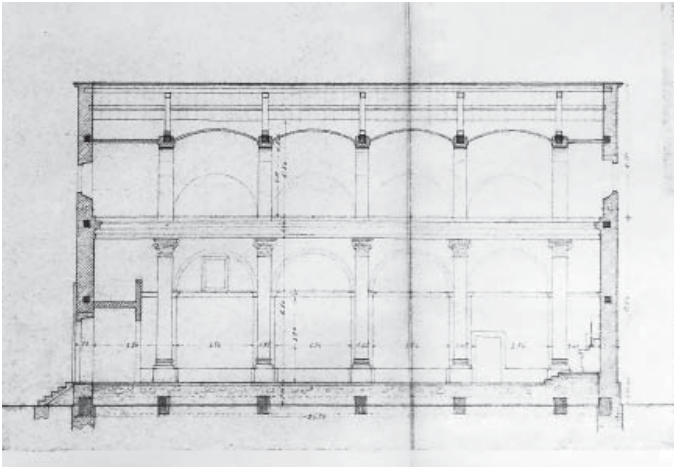


Fig. 09. The church of San Nicola, Lettopalena (Italy): from the remains to the reconstruction project.

designers, and institutions. To the many requests from clients for advice or assignment of professionals, PCCSA denied having this responsibility,²⁴ but there are not a few reports in which designers were advised to have private interviews with some advisory members.²⁵ So what are the reasons that led many clients to choose the Institute? President Corsanego was very skilled in creating a complex group of professional figures who enjoyed the full support of this Pontifical institution:²⁶ this body was founded exclusively for the reconstruction of the buildings of worship destroyed or damaged by war events, a body favored by all ordinary diocesans—80 assignments, interesting 18 dioceses—, shrewd in advertising itself to all clients. Its strengths, unlike other similar bodies and freelancers, were both its advance payments of all expenses necessary for the drafting of projects and technical assistance, but also the whole development or proceedings of the numerous bureaucratic practices that would have otherwise provided parish priests not a few troubles: the IFRI, given the extremely *cordial daily relations* with the Ministry and with the PCCSA, could thus contribute positively to the rapid outcome of the practices themselves (Sulmona Diocesan Archive, *Current Archive*, Subseries I, Sacred Art).

CONCLUSION

The Second Vatican Council, therefore, stored and carries within itself all the experiences, movements and experiments in the theoretical and architectural field that began with the establishment of the PCCSA, but which were mostly applied during the years of reconstruction. The statements were certainly inspiring, and previous doctrinal expositions on architecture were consolidated, formulating and integrating them with a new language and features. Costantini had a fundamental role in providing guidelines for the renewal of the liturgy and providing recognition of the autonomous dignity of artistic creation and a renewed openness to dialogue with contemporary artists.

It moreover seemed appropriate to attempt to provide a general overview of the provisions that were applied during the years preceding Vatican II,

reconstructing the intervention methodologies and the dialogues intertwined by clients and designers and investigating the reasons for the failure of some project proposals.

The great historical heritage of Italian sacred architecture offered a vast field of experimentation during the years of reconstruction: these interventions, however, often proved to be mere stylistic reconstructions, without identity; other cases were driven by technological possibilities and new tools, giving rise to buildings with more improbable forms: reconstruction, especially after the 1950s, took a speculative direction, causing the disappearance of small minor churches in favor of projects unrelated to the environmental context. However, there was also no lack of good examples that knew how to reconcile the use of modern materials and forms with the needs of the modern liturgical space.

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NOTES

1. «The Church today is witnessing an ongoing crisis in society. While humanity is at the turning point of a new era, tasks of immense gravity and breadth await the Church, as in the most tragic epochs of its history». The sentence was pronounced by John XXIII on December 25, 1961, by means of the bull with which the Pope called the Second Vatican Council (ANSA news release dated December 25, 1961, at 12.02 p.m.)

2. See Benedetti 2000 for a complete picture of the major achievements of Italian contemporary architecture. For the reconstruction there are three known cases attributable to different intervention methodologies during post-war period. The abbey of Montecassino, totally razed to the ground during WW2, for its reconstruction, by the engineer Giuseppe Breccia Fratadocchia, emblem of reconstruction in Italy: a way it was and where it was in the pre-existing architectural and volumetric lines (Breccia Fratadocchia 2014; ASV, *Commissione Centrale Arte Sacra Italia (CCASI)*, Generale (G), b. 274, f. 55-63). *Santa Chiara* in Naples was hit and damaged by a fire that brought to light the ancient fourteenth-century guise of the structure: chosen was a reconstruction based on the ancient austere fourteenth-century plan, resulting in a sense of loss

in the population (Ceschi 1970; ASV, *CCASI*, G, b. 164, f. 5,7,17). Finally, the reconstruction of *Santa Maria Maggiore* in Francavilla al Mare, by Ludovico Quaroni: the reconstruction of the church, following a competition notice, would bring the building to a new architectural guise through the use of modern materials and techniques (De Carlo 1960; ASV, *CCASI*, G, b. 82, f. 36).

3. The term means all those buildings that cannot be defined as monumental, or of national interest, since they do not have centuries of history behind them or particular artistic and architectural value.

4. The following objectives are part of the author's Ph.D. research topic (XXXIII cycle), with supervisor prof. Claudio Varagnoli.

5. To be an expert in Christian art, a solely technical study was insufficient, but above all, to be prepared also in the religious dimension of the built (Tantardini 1930).

6. The diocesan commissariats were commissioned by Pius X and had the function of guardianship (De Marchis 2013).

7. The lists of consultors are published in files published by the Commission of Sacred Art entitled *Costituzione e Compiti della Commissione*. Collaborating as consultants are important names in the Italian artistic-architectural field, names such as Polvara, Foschini, Piacentini, Giovannoni and Fasolo.

8. The journal was founded in 1913 by Cardinal Celso Costantini and directed by Msgr. Giuseppe Polvara, for the promotion and support of the complex study activity both on the problems of sacred art and on those of contemporary achievements in the liturgical field and in the conservation of churches.

9. The third Week of Sacred Art for the Clergy was held in Ferrara from 13 to 20 October 1935.

10. On 31 October 1944 with letter from the Secretariat of State no. 84556/S, Pius XII entrusted the reconstruction and restoration of the churches to the Commission (De Marchis 2013) and subsequently sanctioned, based on law 10 August 1950 n. 784, with the preventive examination of the reconstruction projects of buildings of worship devastated by the war.

11. Cf. Ministerial Circular for Public Works 1 October 1949 and Law no. 784 of 1 August 1950 on war damages.

12. The rules, proposed by Giovannoni, approved in 1931 by the Superior Council of Antiquities and Fine Arts and published in 1932 in the *Bollettino d'Arte* of the Ministry of National Education, already in 1938, on the occasion of the Conference of Superintendents held in Rome, were taken up again under examination. Thus was born a work of revision of the Charter through the Instructions for the Restoration of monuments, in which certain points of the previous ones were abolished.

13. «The danger is imminent, but [there] is still time. Nothing is lost with peace; everything can be lost with war» (Pius XII, 24/8/1939), thus opens the chapter dedicated to reconstruction in the manual.

14. «Do not repeat the widespread mistake of the past to make copies of ancient styles, the world walks and art must be an expression of its time, today there are technical possibilities - reinforced concrete, etc. - which in the past the artists did not even dream to have; therefore use even the most modern means to praise the Lord (...). But let them be real churches, not sheds or warehouses for markets (...). Use simple lines, but everything be well proportioned as a whole. and in the parts and everything responds well to its goal» (Costantini 1954).

15. To date, not all the PCCSA fund has been inventoried and therefore available for consultation.

16. Of these projects, 52 are for on-site reconstruction, 12 for reconstruction in a different place, 7 for restorations and 5 for completions or extensions. The phase of the Abruzzo reconstruction did not only concern the period of presidency of Costantini, but continued for a long time also during that of Msgr Fallani, until around 1975.

17. «One appreciates the taste and the finesse of the presentation but we ask the authors to review, in the definitive presentation, various solution that recall too many expedients in use in industrial buildings». This is the opinion expressed to designers Giurgiola and Pantano in the case of the reconstruction of *Santa Liberata* in Francavilla al Mare (ASV, CASI, G, b. 82, f. 37).

18. The fund of the PCCSA, unpublished for the ecclesiastical patrimony of Abruzzo, is still partially in the inventory phase. I thank Dr. De Marchis for granting me the opportunity to consult this part of archival documentation, and specifically the compilation volumes on the churches destroyed by the war.

19. Despite the projects approved by the Commission, only ruins of some churches remain standing today, as in the case of Lettopalena and Farindola, left in complete abandon, or Roccacinquemiglia with museum display of the ruins.

20. See the reports of Chierici on the emergency safety intervention on the monuments (Chierici 1945).

21. *Istituto Fiduciario Ricostruzioni Immobiliari* (Real Estate Reconstruction Trust Institute).

22. From the reading of the first meeting held on 11 March 1947: «The project is carefully studied from a technical point of view, but the architectural forms are extremely deficient. The appreciable intention of rebuilding the pre-existing building can only be carried out if the remains and documents of what exist allow it and only after a careful stylistic study. Lacking these prerequisites, it is better to face the issue ex novo, with other intentions»; subsequently at the meeting of 15 January 1948, «It is approved, since it is a restoration which must however be carried out with the utmost respect for the pre-existing forms» (LANc, AC, parish of Maria Ss. Assunta).

23. «The absence of religious inspiration, the waste of area and volume for the use of only 300 faithful and the inadequacy of the sum make a new study necessary» (ASV, CASI, G, b. 192, f. 15).

24. To the requests of the parish priest of Borrello, the PCCSA answers: «In Vatican City there is no technical office that has the purpose you indicate; instead there is this PCCSA which works, in agreement with the State offices, for the construction of churches destroyed or damaged by the war. To this end, it had specific laws made - two are the ones that I join here - and by order of the same Ministry examines the artistic and liturgical projects; but it has no assignment or charge for building new churches or for expanding churches, having no means of contributing to such constructions» (ASV, CASI, G, b. 252, f. 15).

25. «Prof. Piacentini is asked to give some indications to the author for a reworking of the project»: this is the answer to the project presented by the architect Cortelli for the reconstruction of the church of *Santa Nicola di Bari* in Castel di Sangro, in ASV, CASI, G, b. 252, f. 20. Or even «I have the duty to inform you that Professor Foschini, interested by me, has taken charge of speaking with Arch. De Renzi or with arch. Vaccaro for the arrangement of the facade of the cathedral», for the complex case of the reconstruction of the cathedral of Ortona, in LANc, AC, Basilica of S. Tommaso Apostolo, Reconstructions and restorations for war damage_Carteggio.

26. A select group of professionals, especially architects, who made it possible to create truly worthy works, while the now specialized equipment of the offices allowed the rapid drafting of the documents required for the projects.

SOURCE OF IMAGES

Fig. 01a. *Fede e Arte* IV, 06/1956.

Fig. 01b. *Fede e Arte* IV, 01/1956.

Fig. 02. Archivio di Stato Chieti (ASCh), *Genio Civile (GC)*, Opere a totale carico dello Stato-Danni di guerra agli edifici di culto (ODG), b. 20, p. 212.

Fig. 03, 04, 06bc, 07d, 08bc, 09ad. Photo by the author.

Fig. 05a. Archivio Diocesano Lanciano (LanC), *Archivio Corrente (AC)*, 'Mozzagrogra. Chiesa S. Rocco'.

Fig. 05b. PAColl-4161: New Zealand DA-05127. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (New Zealand).

Fig. 05c. A. Liberato Colection.

Fig. 05d. LanC, AC, 'Ortona. Chiesa S. Domenico'.

Fig. 06a. Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ASC), *Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici (MLLPP)*, D.G. Servizi Speciali(SS), Divisione (D) XXVIII, b. 31, f. 74.

Fig. 07abc. ASC, *MLLPP*, SS, D XXVIII, b. 64, f. 174.

Fig. 08a. ASC, *MLLPP*, SS, D XXVIII, b. 160, f. 490.

Fig. 09bc. ASCh, GC, ODG, b. 41, p. 409.