

32. CARLA ZITO

The construction of 22 churches for Turin's periphery (1965-1977)

Abstract

The years of Father Michele Pellegrino's bishopric "delivered" to the city of Turin and its outskirts a great number of religious building complexes. The bishop participated as an expert and advisor on religious-building strategies in the 2nd Vatican Council and he tried to mediate between the Council's reforming impulse and the social and cultural changes that characterized the '60s and '70s in Italy.

In the city of Turin, from 1965 to 1977 twenty-two parish churches were built, all dislocated in the industrialized periphery, where they were most urgently needed; they were very different from the usual religious architecture, rising among rows of high buildings and with no cultic elements preserved to characterize them. Turin's urban situation determined not only the peripheral localization of the new-built churches, but also their conspicuous number, as well as the urgent planning that characterized that architectural model of buildings of cult: "religious equipments" were some of the social services deemed to be indispensable in new residential areas. In the peripheral areas, the absence of a church meant that there was nothing to promote social aggregation, especially needed by the population immigrated from southern Italy, and it also meant a drastic reduction in religious practice. The church and parochial centre had to meet the urgent needs of the neighbourhood, lending itself to many uses during the whole week except for Sundays, when it only acted as church.

For this reason, the morphology of the building of cult became secondary; technological innovation and prefabrication helped build the churches quickly. This unknown history of a building process that was repeated for more than twenty times in the periphery of Turin fitted well with both the reform of ecclesiastical liturgy and the secular world. The church was no longer a monument but rather the House among the houses for the Christian community; "poor" among the poor.