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26 November 2026

Rosa Maria Marta Caruso

Churches by Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979) in Eastern Sicily between 1955 and 1970: Design Processes, Influences and Outcomes

ARTICLE

Eastern Sicily, Madonna delle Lacrime, Competition, Churches, Design

/Abstract

The piece focuses on the design of sacred architecture in Siracusa and in its surroundings through the study of the professional activity of Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979). The architect completed his studies in Rome in the late 1940s, and he worked in Sicily. Through Enzo Fortuna's projects, such as the project for the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* (1957), co-authored by Mario Tedeschi (1920-2005), and the design for the church of *San Giuseppe in Cassibile* (1957-1959) and the one of *Cristo Re* in Lentini (1959-1977), we recognize the vibrant discourse around sacred architecture during those years. Even smaller centers were not excluded from this discussion. The focus on architects operating in medium-small centers during the Reconstruction years provide insights into a series of historical-critical concepts traditionally based on exceptional samples. By examining the design processes of the selected projects, we identify references to contemporary famous architects, as well as significant changes in the design of sacred spaces due to the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

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Introduction

After the Second World War, the cities of eastern Sicily were subjected to significant changes due to urban expansion. Analyzing a selection of sacred architecture projects carried out in that area between 1955 and 1970 allows us to reread the design processes pursued by local architects and engineers. They were used to follow influences coming from the largest Italian centers, where the most renowned designers were active.

Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979) was one of the architects active in those years in Siracusa:[1] at the end of the 1940s, he completed his training in Rome, where he attended the course of "History and Styles of Architecture"[2] by Prof. Vincenzo Fasolo (1885-1969). After his studies in Rome, Enzo Fortuna returned to Sicily, as often happened to many Sicilian architects, who showed a strong "rootedness" towards their homeland. The young architects usually brought to their homeland some of the "winds" of change that were modifying the appearance of Italy after the Second World War. "Enzo Fortuna" fund is preserved in the Project Archive of the Special Didactic Structure of Siracusa,[3] and it contains studies that best represent his design approach to the theme of sacred architecture. Enzo Fortuna's *curriculum vitae* and the inventory of his Archival Fund contain seven projects of sacred architecture. The design choices made by Enzo Fortuna are different during his career: his first professional experience in designing sacred architecture, the sanctuary of *Santa Maria Regina di Fatima* (Siracusa, 1947), has an eclectic language. In 1957, Enzo Fortuna participated with architect Mario Tedeschi (1920-2005) in the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* (1957). After the competition, Fortuna received the assignment for the project of the parish church of *San Giuseppe* in Cassibile (1957-1959) and later the one for the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini (1959-1977). During the 1960s, Fortuna worked on the church of *Santa Lucia* in Floridia (1963), on the church for the popular district of *San Focà* in Melilli (1965-1975), and on the church of *Sant'Antonio* in Piazza Armerina, dated between the 1960s and the 1970s.

The paper focuses on the proposal for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* in Siracusa, co-authored by the architect and designer Mario Tedeschi from Milan, and it also focuses on the projects for the churches of *San Giuseppe* and *Cristo Re*, built respectively in the small towns of Cassibile and Lentini, which demonstrate a shift in the design of sacred spaces after the Second Vatican Council

1 Paola Barbera, Zaira Barone, and Maria Rosaria Vitale, "Enzo Fortuna: i progetti di Restauro e allestimento per il Museo di Palazzo Bellomo a Siracusa 1952-1970," *AAA Italia*, no. 16 (2017): 35; Rosa Maria Marta Caruso, "La lettura dell'antico nella formazione degli architetti siciliani a Roma. Studi e progetti di Giuseppe Marletta (1906-1988) e Enzo Fortuna (1921-1979)", in *Forme dell'abitare a Roma. Echi dell'antico nell'architettura del primo Novecento*, ed. Simona Benedetti, F. Benfante, I. Benincampi, D. Bigi, L. Kosmopoulos (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2023), 419-427; Rosa Maria Marta Caruso, *L'archivio di Enzo Fortuna. Uno scorcio sulla professione di architetto nella seconda metà del Novecento in Sicilia* (Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2018).

2 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 153, Notes of Vincenzo Fasolo's courses *Storia e stili dell'architettura greca* and *Storia e stili dell'architettura romana.*

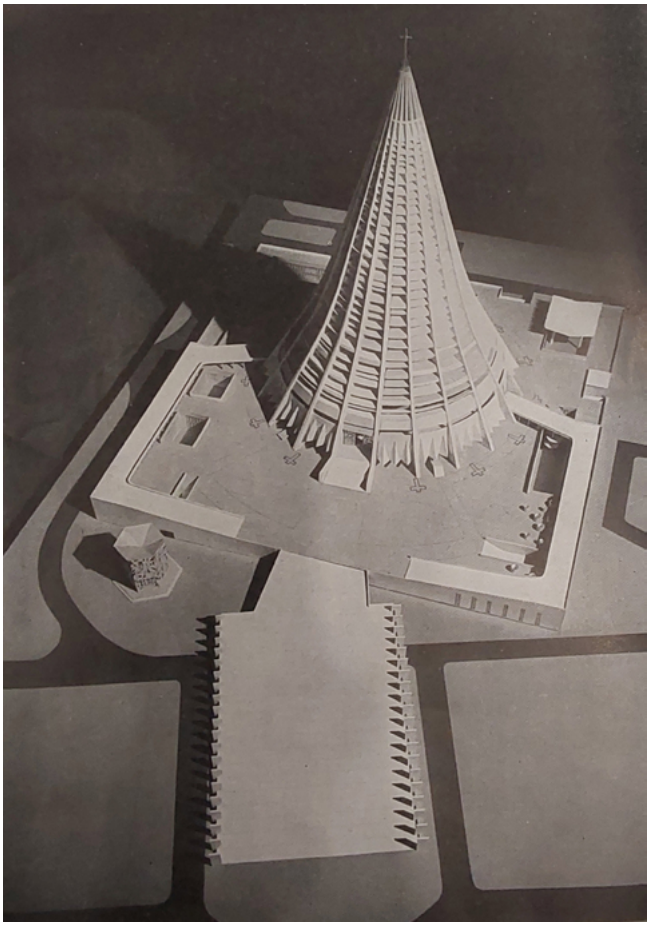
3 I want to express my gratitude to Prof. Luigi Fortuna (University of Catania), son of Arch. Enzo Fortuna, for donating me the book by G. E. Kidder Smith, *Nuove Chiese in Europa* (Milano: Edizioni di comunità, 1964). This book once belonged to Enzo Fortuna and reflects his interest in the design of sacred architecture.

of 1962. Out of all the projects, these two are exceptionally well-documented. The archive not only preserves the executive drawings, as it happens for the church in the *San Focà* district, but also the hand sketches, offering a comprehensive insight into the creative process. The hand sketches also represent an occasion to reflect on the possible references to design solutions by renowned architects active in Italy.

The International Competition for the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa

In June 1955, the international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*[4] emerged among the limited number of competitions aimed at constructing sacred buildings.[5] Hugo Schnell, art historian and director of the magazine "Das Münster", spent some words in the issue of "Fede e Arte" dedicated to the competition, and he wrote: "One cannot think of any century in the European history where so many contrasting expressions of form have been proposed on a single theme. These range from historicism to romantic attitudes and even to the boldest aerodynamic shapes… churches with architectural motifs from almost all styles coexist, blending ancient and modern conceptions".[6]

The premise for the design of this significant place of worship is rooted in a historical and emotional event that profoundly impacted the faithful: the tear-shedding of a small effigy of the *Madonna*. This event held immense significance, and consequently, as noted by architect Vincenzo Passarelli, consultant for the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy, it should not have appeared "strange, irreverent, or incongruous with the location"[7] that the symbol of this event "was meant to be as striking as the Eurialo castle or the Greek theater".[8]



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Therefore, the winning project was the one by the French architects Michel Andrault (1926-2020) and Pierre Parat (1928-2019) [Fig. 1]: they envisioned

4 Martina Anfuso, *Il Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime di Siracusa* (Master Degree Thesis, University of Catania, 2011).

5 Giancarlo Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2011), 37, 57.

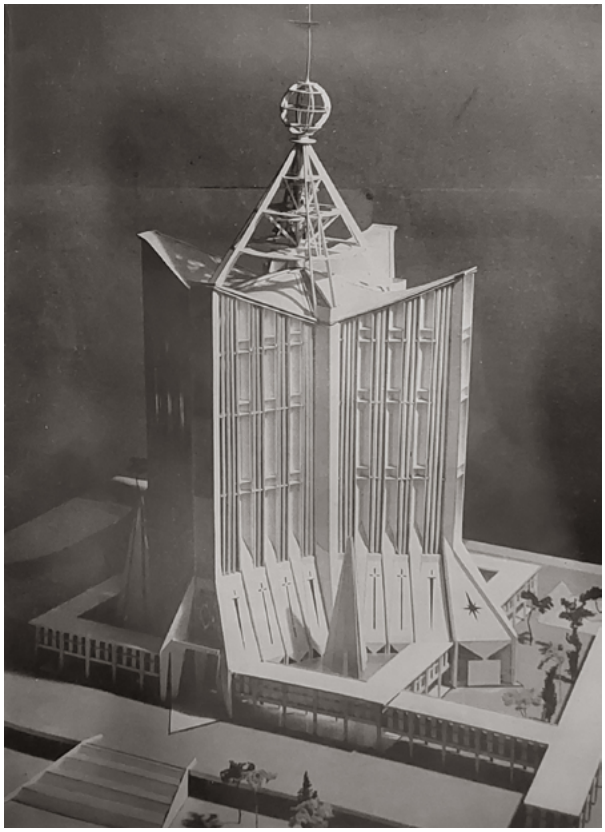
6 Hugo Schnell, "L'esposizione dei progetti: rassegna indicativa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 249.

7 Vincenzo Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 246.

8 Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", 246.

Fig. 1
Michel Andrault, Pierre Parat, *Corona con nove raggi bianchi in campo azzurro*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 266).





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a spire dedicated to the *Madonna*, serving as a poignant reminder of the tear-shedding event in the skies above Siracusa and the Mediterranean.[9]

The competition guidelines did not provide formal instructions on preparing the project. The only requirement to be met was that the sanctuary should accommodate 20.000 faithful, and the project should include the necessary service spaces and buildings related to the sanctuary.[10]

From an urban planning perspective, the city of Siracusa faced a complex situation. Its core, located on the island of Ortigia, was too decentralized compared to the potential urban expansion area. The competition thus became an opportunity to envision a new center, moved to an inland area on the mainland **[Fig. 2]**.[11] The winning project was based on a circular plan, ensuring good alignment with *Piazza della Vittoria*.[12] It addressed the main requirements of the competition. However, it was not the only project with a central plan. Other projects with a central plan were the second prize, *Turris Davidica*[13] **[Fig. 3]** by Guillaume Gillet (1912-1987) and René Sarger (1917-1988), and *Alma Mater*[14] **[Fig. 4]** by Vittorio

9 Passarelli, "Punto di partenza", 246.

10 "Bando di concorso internazionale per il progetto del Santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime e delle opere annesse in Siracusa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 256.

11 Rudolf Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 252.

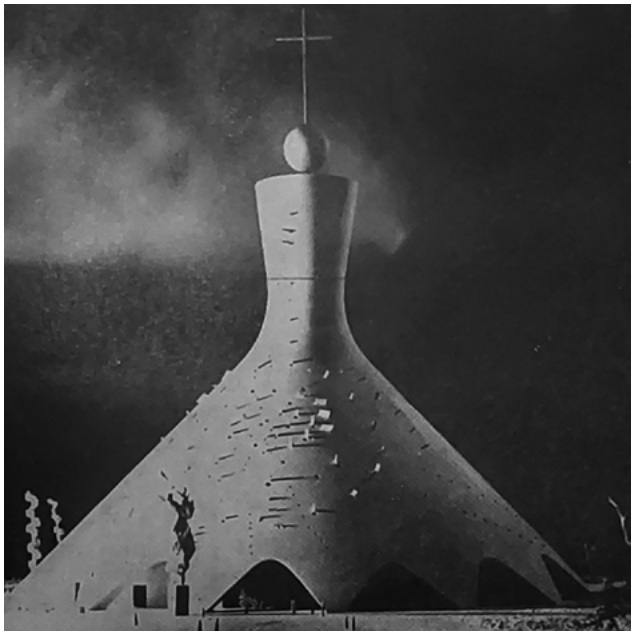
12 Michel Andrault and Pierre Parat, "Corona con nove raggi bianchi in campo azzurro", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 264-273.

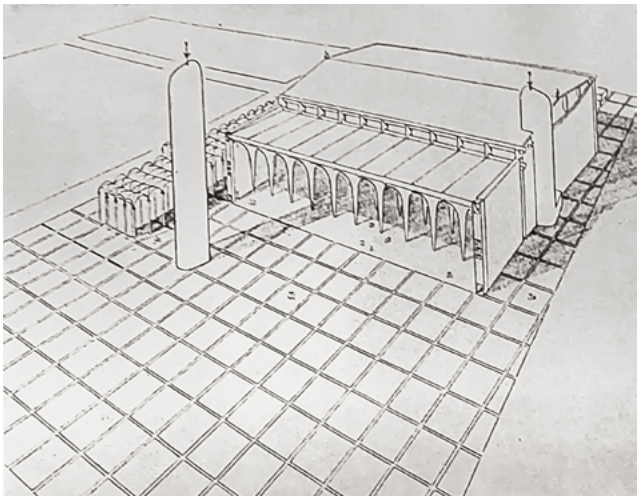
13 Guillaume Gillet and René Sarger, "Turris Davidica", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 274-279.

14 Vittorio Gandolfi and Mario Righini, "Alma Mater", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9

Fig. 2
Site plan for the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime. In *Madonna delle Lacrime* bulletin, 1956. (Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 3
Guillaume Gillet , René Sarger, *Turris Davidica*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 275).





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Gandolfi (1919-1999) and Mario Righini. Beyond their planimetric layout, these projects share the volumetric modeling evoking the ascensional character of ancient cathedrals.

The third prize, awarded to *314253*[15] **[Fig. 5]** by the German architect Erwin Schiffer, highlights "the mystical sense and value of the interior space, determined by the community of the faithful who participate in the Eucharistic celebration, rather than by the monumental forms of the building".[16] This project proposes a large hall with minimal emphasis on the exterior, where the congregation gathers around the altar.[17] The basilica-like layout evoked the expressions of local sacred architecture.

Other projects presented innovative spatial and compositional solutions, reflecting ongoing research during those years. For example, *Aretusa*[18] **[Fig. 6]** by Pasquale Carbonara (1910-1998), co-authored with two architects from Siracusa, Carmelo Minniti and Gaetano Santuccio, conceived a complex formed by the aggregation of different elements. On the other hand, *Stella Mattutina*[19] **[Fig. 7]** by Eugenio Montuori (1907-1982) featured an elaborate roof made of reinforced concrete segments with varying directions of inclination, creating a dynamic effect within the building. Additionally, *"ad aula"* church solutions became common, such as *Ex fletu tuo salus mea*[20] **[Fig. 8]** by Michele Zerbi

(1957): 284-287.

15 Erwin Schiffer, "314253", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 280-283.

16 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 253.

17 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 253.

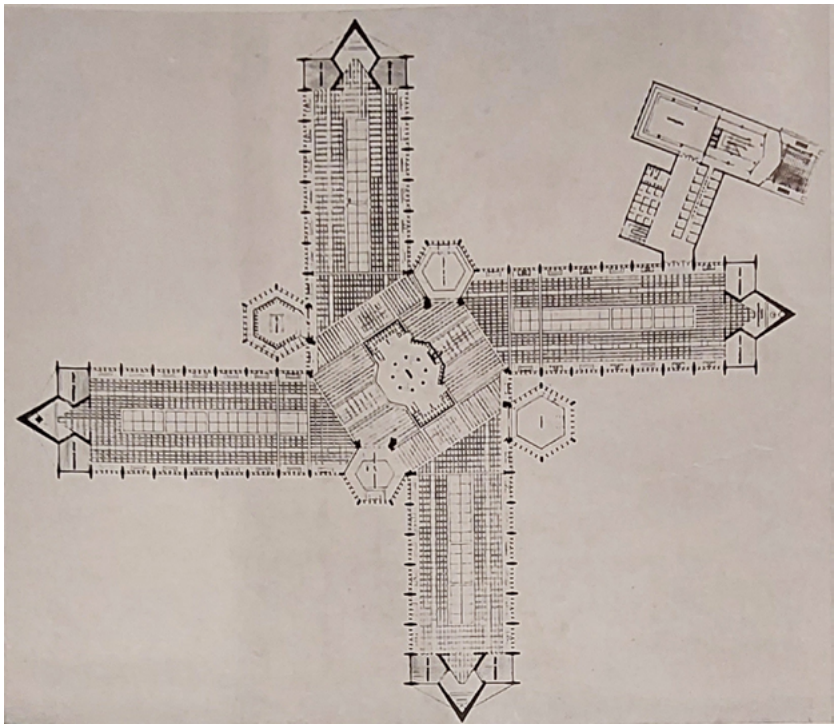
18 Pasquale Carbonara, Carmelo Minniti andGaetano Santuccio, "Aretusa", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 288-295.

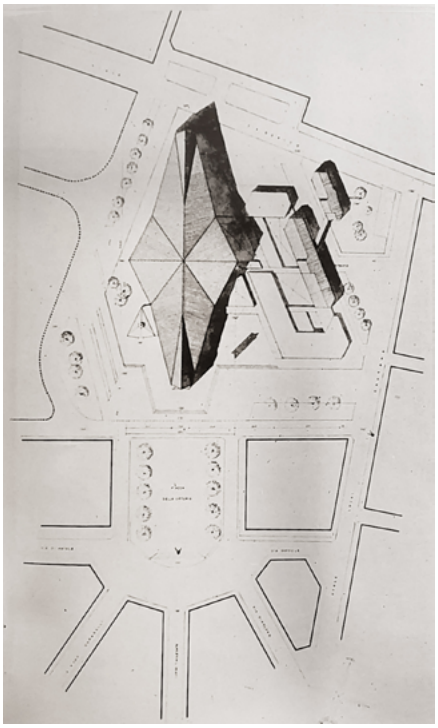
19 Eugenio Montuori, "Stella Mattutina", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 299-302.

20 Michele Zerbi and Antonio Martinelli, "Ex fletu tuo salus mea", *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9 (1957): 342; Michele Zerbi and Antonio Martinelli, *Progetto presentato al concorso internazionale per l'erigendo Santuario della "Madonna delle Lacrime" di Siracusa* (Sovrano Ordine di Malta, 1960).

Fig. 4
Vittorio Gandolfi, Mario Righini, *Alma Mater*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 285).

Fig. 5
Erwin Schiffer, *314253,* 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 282).





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and Antonio Martinelli, based on a circular sector plan, drawing inspiration from the experiments in sacred architecture[21] by Cesare Cattaneo (1912-2015) and Mario Radice (1898-1987).

The competition, therefore, represented a meeting point for new ideas on perceiving and reproducing spaces destined for sacred architecture. Recognizable names of designers active in Italy and abroad were involved, together with contributions from local designers. Most projects followed the design paths that emerged during the conference on sacred architecture in Bologna in 1955. The international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* was announced on that occasion.[22]

No specific requirements were necessary to participate in the competition[23] and most of the local designers involved were very young. Among them was Enzo Fortuna, who saw the competition as an opportunity to improve his skills in designing sacred architecture.

Fortuna participated in the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* alongside architect and designer Mario Tedeschi, with the project entitled *F.T. 38*.[24] The architects met in Rome, where they shared part of the educational journey. The invitation to this collaboration came directly from Tedeschi,[25]

21 Sandro Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano* (Milano: Jaca Book, 2000), 22; Luciano Caramel, ed., *L'arte e L'ideale. La tradizione cristiana nell'opera di Cesare Cattaneo e Mario Radice* (Milano: Mazzotta Editore, 1988).

22 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, ed., *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955* (Bologna: Ufficio tecnico organizzativo arcivescovile, 1956): 46.

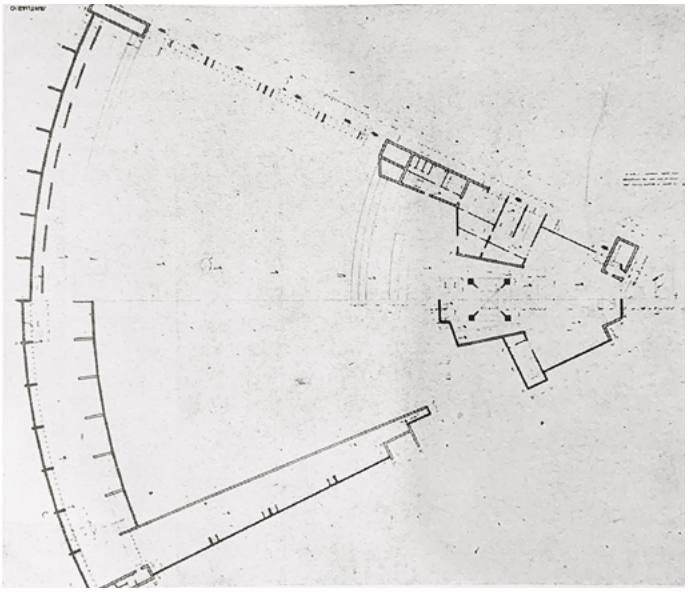
23 Schwarz, "Il problema dell'architettura sacra", 251.

24 "F" and "T" indicated the capital letter of the surnames "Fortuna" and "Tedeschi"; "1938" was the year when they met in Rome.

25 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 10/12/55.

Fig. 6
Pasquale Carbonara, Carmelo Minniti, Gaetano Santuccio, *Aretusa*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 288).

Fig. 7
Eugenio Montuori, *Stella Mattutina*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 299).





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who saw his colleague as an essential support for the project due to his deeper understanding of the urban context of Siracusa.

The designers, who had respectively returned to Siracusa and Milan after their studies, had different professional opportunities in the design of sacred architecture. Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Enzo Fortuna worked on restoration projects for the churches of *San Giovanni Battista*, *San Pietro*, and *San Martino* in Siracusa. His only experience in designing new sacred spaces was related to the small sanctuary of *Maria Regina di Fatima* in Siracusa (1947). On the other hand, Mario Tedeschi collaborated with Vico Magistretti (1920-2006) on the design of the church of *Santa Maria Nascente* in Q.T.8 in Milan (1955).[26] He also designed the church of *Santa Marcellina and San Giuseppe* at the *Certosa* in Milan[27] **[Fig. 9]**, consecrated in 1958.

From the beginning of their correspondence about the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Mario Tedeschi presented to his colleague from Siracusa a list of issues to clarify: the site survey, the examination of the competition panel and the initial ideas for the design.[28] Enzo Fortuna replied by describing the area designated for the construction of the new religious architecture and the urban situation in Siracusa during those years. He wrote that the environmental characteristics were not binding because the area was "already

26 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano,* 43-44; Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955*, 296-301; Andra Longhi, Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2010), 152; Andrea Longhi, "Architetture per il battesimo: memoria, liturgia, progetti", in *Casa di Dio. Progettazione e adeguamento di chiese nel terzo millennio*, ed. Michele Anderlee (Firenze: Centro Di, 2005): 63-64; 66; Maria Manuela Leoni, "Chiesa di Santa Maria Nascente (Milano)", in *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi,* https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00242/ (last accessed November 2024).

27 Maria Feraboli, "Mario Tedeschi. Arte, interni e architettura in un archivio ritrovato", *Recupero e conservazione*, no. 147 (2018): 12-20; Laura Lazzaroni, ed., *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese 1954-2014* (Segrate: Digital Print Service srl, 2016); Fulvio Irace, Luca Pietro Nicoletti, ed., *Carlo Ramous. Scultura, Architettura, Città. Sculpture, Architecture, City* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2017).

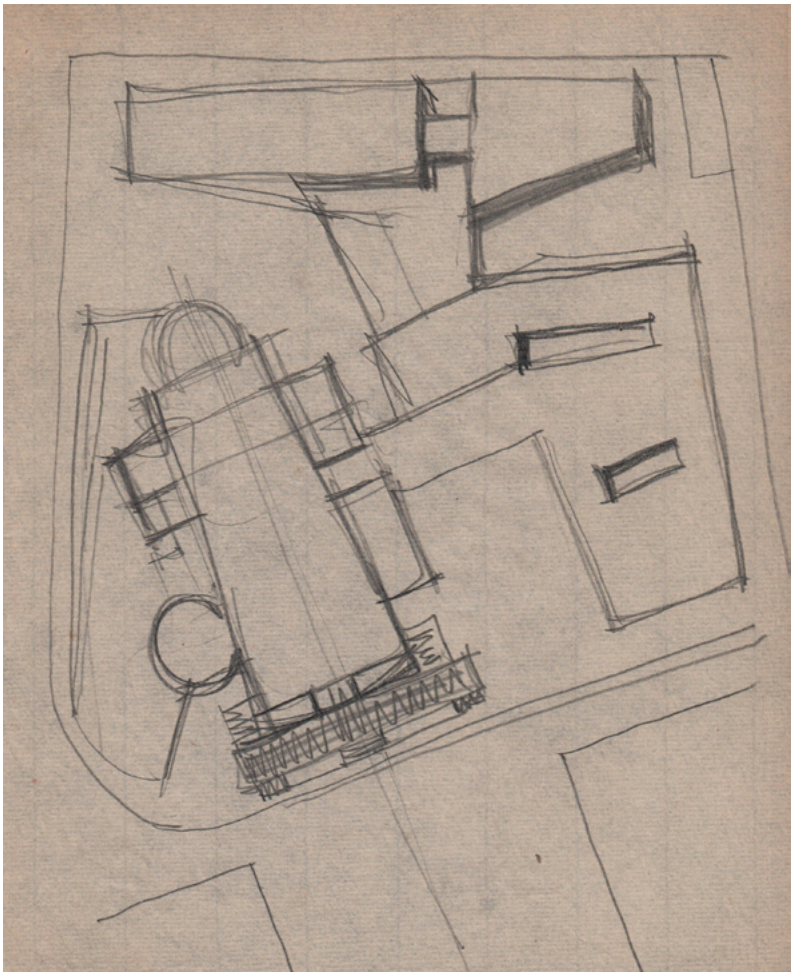
28 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 15/12/55.

Fig. 8
Michele Zerbi, Antonio Martinelli, *Ex fletu tuo salus mea*, 1957 (source: *Fede e Arte: rivista internazionale di arte sacra*, no. 7-8-9, 1957, 342).

Fig. 9
Mario Tedeschi, *church of Santa Marcellina and San Giuseppe alla Certosa*, Milan (source: Google Earth).

(unfortunately) compromised by popular constructions, by monstrous architectures".[29]

As can be seen from the project sketches, Fortuna and Tedeschi carefully planned the positioning of the complex even though it was in an urban context lacking relevant characteristics that were able to drive specific design choices. The layout and urban planning were the main reasons why the project stood out among the others[30]. The main axis for setting up the church was determined by the inclination of the road along *Piazza della Vittoria* [Fig. 10]. Moreover, the church and the annexed buildings were designed on a base to connect the sanctuary with the surrounding city.



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The only sketches preserved in Enzo Fortuna's archival fund represent the organization of the area, and it is possible to assume that Fortuna worked mainly in the general planimetric organization of the project. Mario Tedeschi worked on the sanctuary's composition, but he maintained his colleague's proposal in plan. The Latin cross was designed according to some of the characteristics that matured at the end of the 1940s, namely 'the extreme formative simplification' and 'the highlighting of the presbyterial area', "within which the altar, purified from the adjectives of the previous centuries, becomes the protagonist and towards which the renewed perspective and processional sequences converge"[31] [Fig.11, 12].

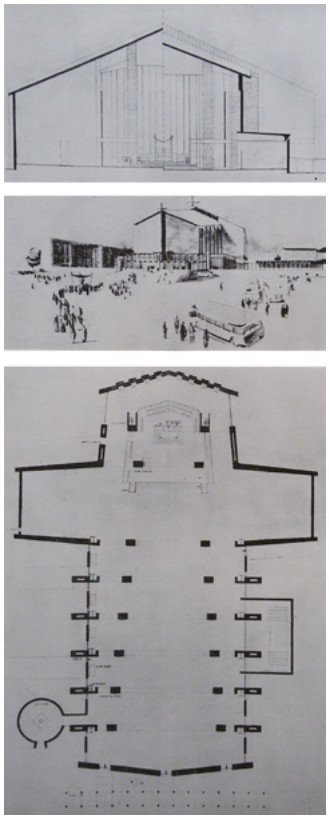
The facade loses the representative role used to have in the past, and it appears almost like a section, repeated with increasing dimensions to create a telescopic structure that allows focus on the presbytery area while remaining consistent with the choice to align the transept roof in the same direction as the main nave. The vertical cut on the facade, also intended as an entrance to the sanctuary, is innovative compared to the traditional division into horizontal sections typical of sacred architecture. The small volume variations between the nave and the transept and the exposed pillars on the side facades create a play of light and shadow on the elevations, lending a dynamic aspect to the result.

29 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 48, file 1, Correspondence – 15/12/55.

30 Fortuna, Tedeschi, "F.T. 38", 314.

31 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano,* 19.

Fig. 10
Enzo Fortuna, study sketch for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Siracusa, 1956 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa,"Enzo Fortuna" fund).



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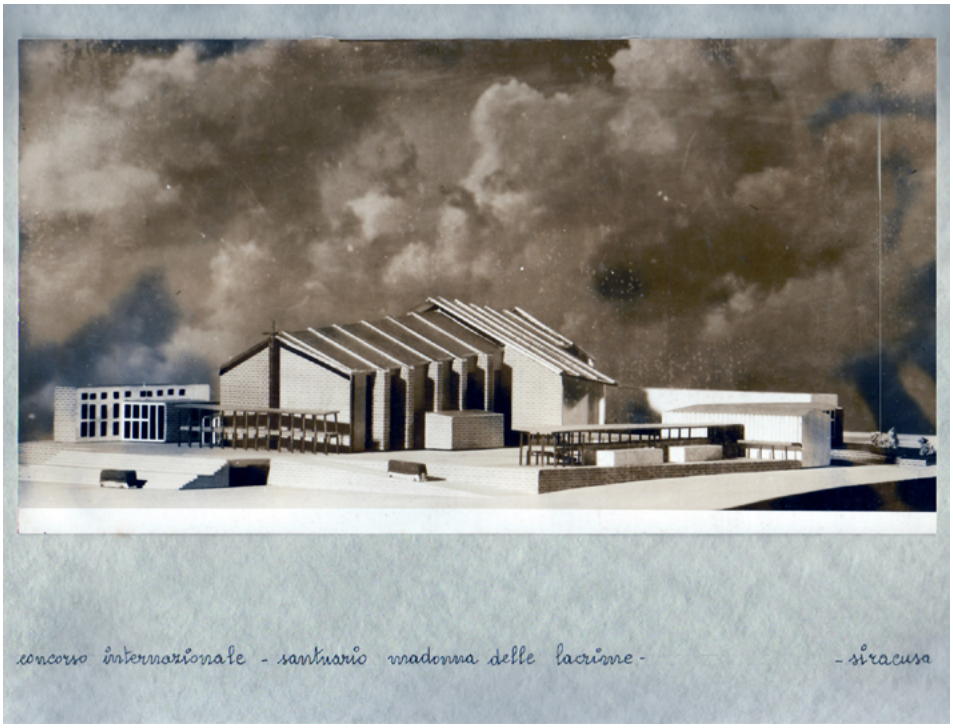

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The project's dynamism is influenced by the juxtaposition of the "mass" with the entrance *portico* frame, reminiscent of rationalist architecture and echoed in the spaces adjacent to the sanctuary, intended to house its facilities.

F.T. 38 shows that the designers wanted to maintain the characteristics closer to the tradition they were called to engage with: Fortuna and Tedeschi aimed to maintain a conscious connection with popular culture without straying too far from the sacred architecture already in the territory.[32]

Despite the outcome of the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*, Enzo Fortuna probably gained visibility thanks to the project co-authored with Mario Tedeschi: after 1957, he received several commissions for the construction of sacred buildings near Siracusa, including the church of *San Giuseppe* in Cassibile (1957-1960) and that of *Cristo Re* (1959-1977) in Lentini.

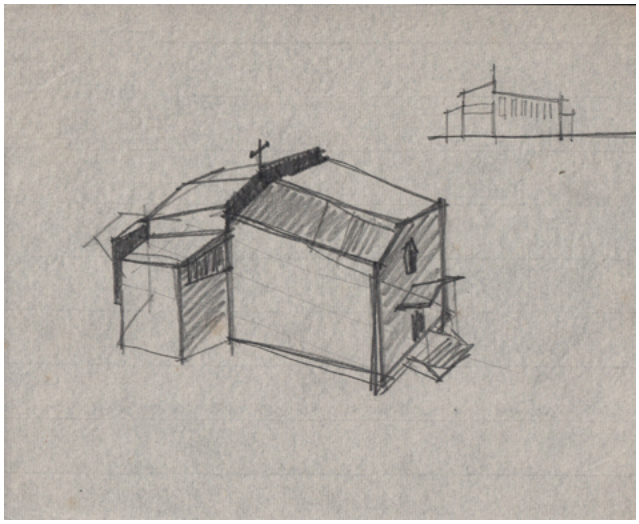
The Church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile

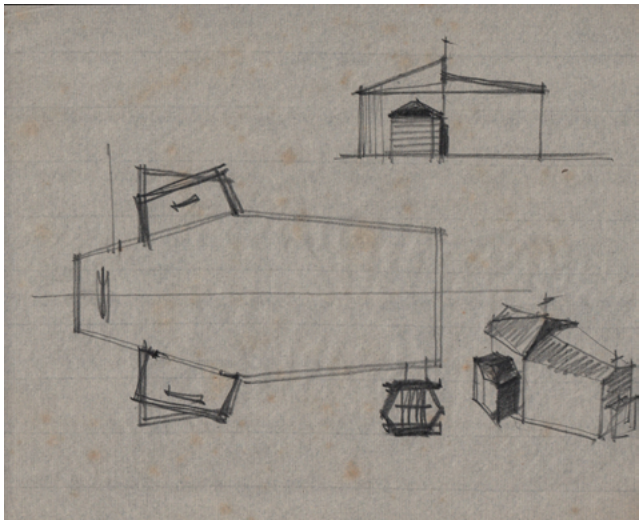
The story of the church of San Giuseppe is common to most sacred architectures designed during the same years: after the war, many churches had been ruined, and places of worship were lacking in small, inhabited centers. In the 1950s, Cassibile had more than 2000 inhabitants, and it faced an urgent need for a parish church. Given its distance of approximately 15 km from Siracusa, building a church that would have allowed the faithful to worship without leaving

Fig. 11
Enzo Fortuna, Mario Tedeschi, *F.T. 38, proposal for the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime*, Siracusa, 1957 (source: Fortuna and Tedeschi "F.T.38", 314).

Fig. 12
Enzo Fortuna, Mario Tedeschi, *Model of the sanctuary of Madonna delle Lacrime in Siracusa*, 1957 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

32 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 29-30.





13 14

the district was essential. Archbishop Baranzini noted that there were no suitable worship structures "except for the rustic apse of a church […] capable of accommodating a maximum of 40 people", and therefore "wholly insufficient and inadequate".[33]

The recently renewed contact with Mario Tedeschi and the reflections developed with the Milanese colleague were still fresh in the mind of the architect from Siracusa. Indeed, the initial drawings for the church of *San Giuseppe* included strong analogies with the plans for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*. Enzo Fortuna did not mention any reference in designing this church, but a few years before, in 1955, the big conference on sacred architecture was organized in Bologna. On that occasion, the most important examples of sacred buildings – realized between 1945 and 1955 – were shown: these projects, published in 1956, were the primary references for sacred architecture in Italy.[34]

Designing the church of San Giuseppe, Enzo Fortuna primarily worked through axonometric views and elevations, reintroducing the variation in volume between the nave and the transept. In this case, the longitudinal elevation of the structure remains close to that of the sanctuary. However, two small apses are evident in the axonometric view, with a smaller volume than the nave and the presbytery. These apses allowed the preservation of the Latin cross design in the plan **[Fig. 13]**. The emphasis on the presbytery through subtle height variations can be traced back to several sacred architectures designed a few years earlier, including the church of *SS. Giuseppe e Francesco* in the *INA* district of Cesate (1954-1959)[35] by Ignazio Gardella (1905-1999): this church had a sound

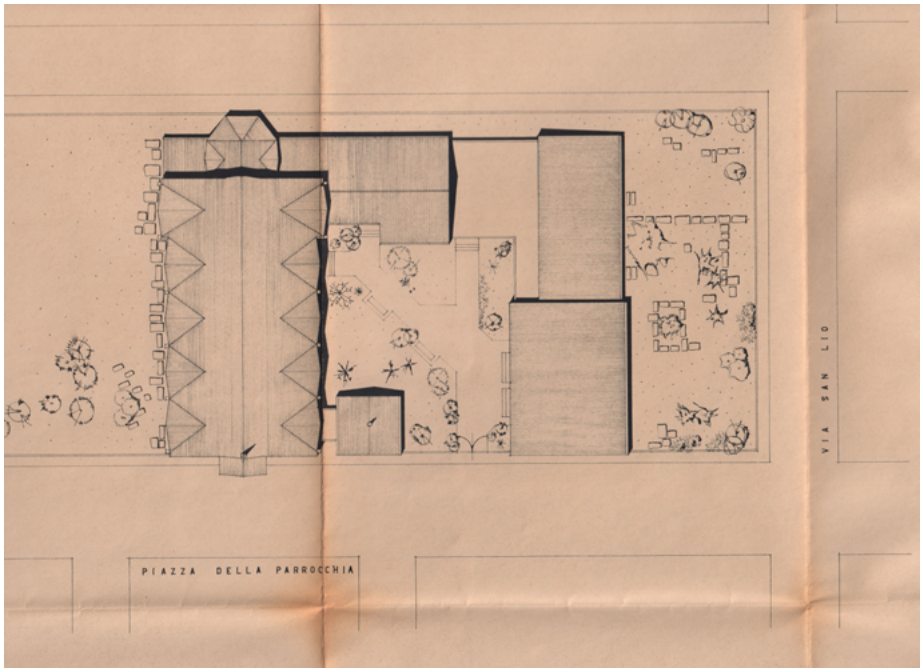
Fig. 13
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1957-1958 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 14
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1957-1958 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

33 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 60, file 2, *Relazione atta a dimostrare la necessità della costruzione della Chiesa parrocchiale di San Giuseppe in Cassibile (Siracusa)*, April 24, 1959.

34 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955.*

35 Maria Manuela Leoni, "*Chiesa di San Francesco d'Assisi (Cesate, MI)*," in *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 a oggi*, https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00532/ (last accessed November 2024); Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 44; 56. Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 19; Angelo Lorenzi, "Chiesa parrocchiale, Cesate 1954-1959", in *Ignazio Gardella architetture*, ed. Maria Cristina Loi (Milano: Electa, 1999), 79-87..



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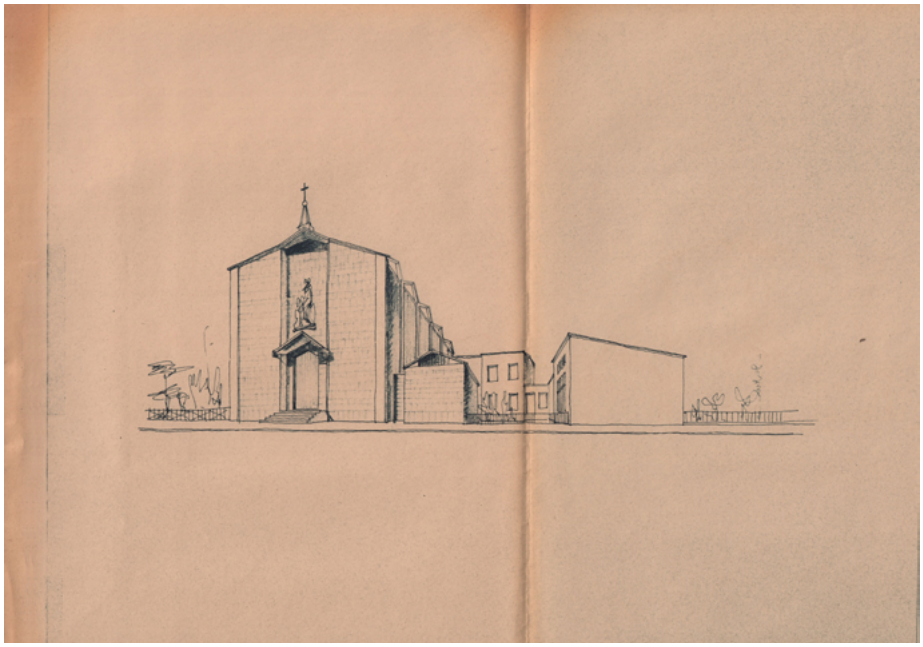


16

diffusion in the national context and was published in *Casabella* in 1957[36]. The church was in a popular district, and it proposed a formal solution based on tradition and simplicity: these characteristics could be coherent with the context of Cassibile.

Later, Enzo Fortuna's project for the church of *San Giuseppe* underwent some modifications **[Fig. 14]**, and the small lateral apses were inclined, similarly to the solution used by Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987) in the church of Francavilla al Mare (1948).[37] After various study sketches of the plan and axonometric views,

Fig. 15
Enzo Fortuna, *general plan of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1959 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

Fig. 16
Enzo Fortuna, *perspective of the church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile*, 1959 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

36 Ezio Cerutti, "Quartiere residenziale in Comune di Cesate", *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 216 (1957): 16-35.

37 However, Enzo Fortuna does not borrow from Quaroni the concept of the "losanga longitudinale" typology, which was a true Italian pre-conciliar innovation. Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano:* 34.





17a 17b

there was possibly a shift in Fortuna's choice of references **[Fig. 15, 16]**. It is possible to hypothesize references to the project of *Santa Maria Maggiore* in Francavilla al Mare (1948)[38] by Saverio Muratori (1910-1973).

The competition for the church in Francavilla al Mare in 1948 had a great diffusion in Italy and it was the only one with the sponsorship of UCAI.[39] The projects by Ludovico Quaroni and Saverio Muratori were published in the proceedings of the Bolognese conference (1955),[40] and their echo could be seen in many designers interested in sacred architecture projects.

In general, however, it is possible that Fortuna was familiar with Saverio Muratori's ecclesiastical building designs, particularly appreciated by their continuity with the historical urban tradition[41] and their "commitment to rigor and the intention of unity and readability in structures that opposed the arbitrariness and conceptual poverty of architecture in the 1950s and 1960s".[42]

Enzo Fortuna worked on this project in collaboration with engineer Luigi La Ciura, who was involved especially during the execution phase when further substantial modifications were made to the project **[Fig. 17]**. Both for ease of construction and for economic reasons, the technique of thin-walled reinforced concrete for the roof was simplified into a double-pitched roof, undoubtedly less expensive. However, the design of the supporting pillars was retained on the side walls, offering a "reinterpretation" of visible pillars reminiscent of Saverio Muratori's sacred architecture.

The Church of Cristo Re in Lentini

The project for the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini began in 1959. However, the design and execution phases extended until 1977, leading the architect to choose a very different solution than the church in Cassibile. The main reason for this choice lies in the Liturgical Reform introduced by the Second Vatican

38 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 30-31.

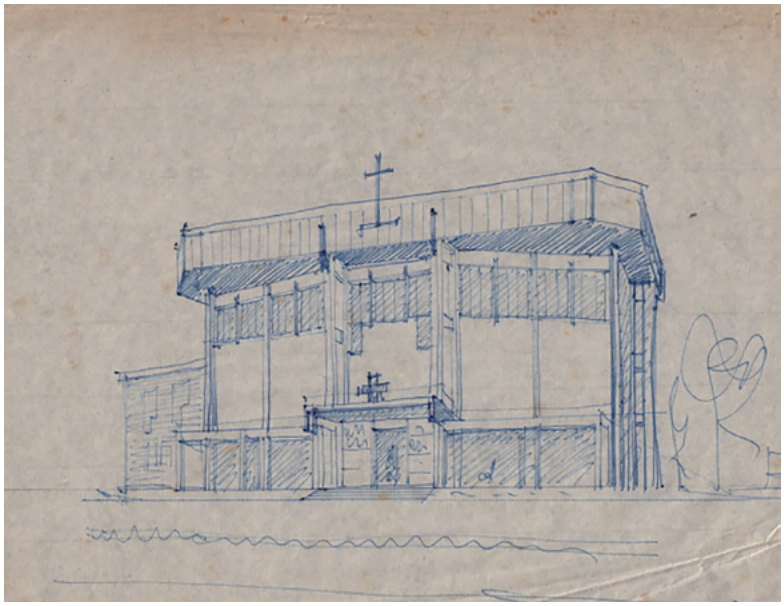
39 Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 106-113.

40 Centro Studi Architettura e Arte Sacra, *Dieci anni di architettura sacra in Italia, 1945-1955*, 341-343; 356-358.

41 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 30.

42 Sandro Benedetti, *Architettura Sacra oggi* (Tarquinia: Gangemi Editore, 1995), 234; Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 11-12.

Fig. 17a, 17b
The church of San Giuseppe in Cassibile. Zenit view (from Google Earth) and elevation (photo by the author, 2024).





18b

18a

Council (1962-1965).[43] Until the 1950s, worship buildings maintained a division of spaces reminiscent of traditional liturgical practices. There was always a distinction between the main nave, side aisles, apses, presbytery, and transept. However, in the post-conciliar years, this distinction faded away.

This was probably caused by the novel concept of "communality" introduced in liturgy. This term aimed to strengthen the connection between the altar, the sacramental signs, and the assembly.[44] The initial approach to adapt sacred architecture to "*participatio actuosa*"[45] was to simplify the plan, reducing the sacred space to "large square or rectangular halls, covered without significant structural variations".[46] The focus was on the presbytery, where the primary liturgical objects were placed.

Enzo Fortuna was also responsible for overseeing the construction with the engineer Luigi Maiolino. Enzo Fortuna's design choice involved creating a "central, simple, and solemn" space **[Fig. 18]**. The assembly gathered around the altar, which became the "focal point of liturgical action",[47] positioned directly in front of the faithful and aligned with the church's main entrance.[48] In the project's report, Fortuna explicitly expressed the intention to "fully consider all the norms indicated by the acts of the Second Vatican Council while preserving the freedom of expression that is fundamental for every good designer"[49] **[Fig. 19]**.

43 A big conference was organized in Assisi in 1965, after the Second Vatican Council (Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 38-39); Pina Ciampani, *Architettura e Liturgia* (Assisi: Edizioni Pro Civitate Christiana, 1965).

44 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano:*193.

45 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 193.

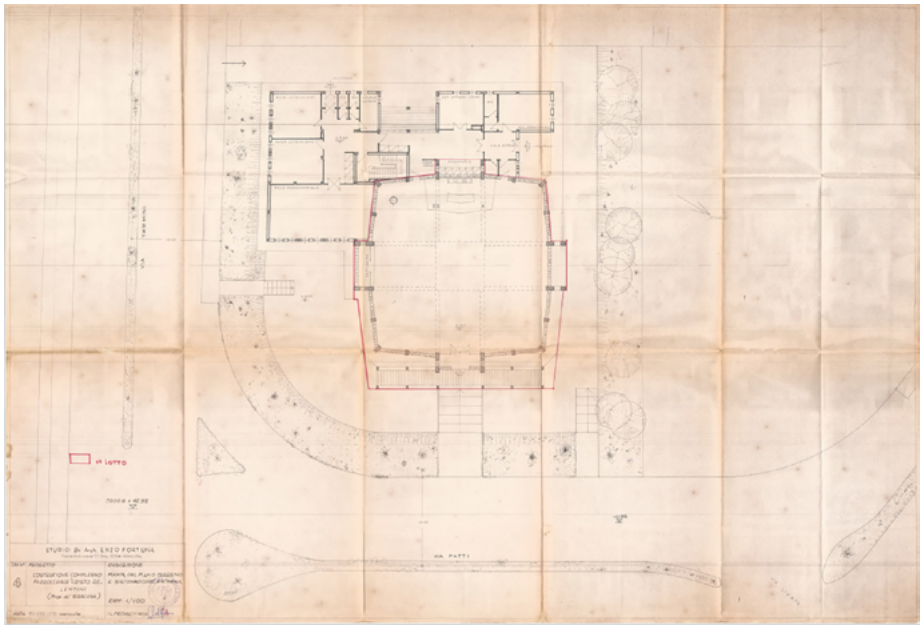
46 Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee, il caso italiano*, 194.

47 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

48 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

49 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, November 7, 1974.

Fig. 18a, 18b
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Seciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund) and the church of *Cristo Re* in Lentini today (photo by the author, 2024).



In Chapter VII of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council regarding liturgical space are present: "to be primarily designed/intended for the celebration of the sacraments…, churches must provide that the ambo, the altar, and the baptismal font are centrally located for the celebrating assembly. This, of course, does not mean forgetting or neglecting the tabernacle and images. It involves configuring churches differently, giving them new centrality".[50] In Enzo Fortuna's project, the placement of the Tabernacle and the Baptismal Font is not arbitrary: the Tabernacle is in a separate chapel to "clarify the concept of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Altar and the Eucharist as the Sacrament"; the Baptismal Font is positioned "so that it can serve as a reminder and memory of each believer's entry into the Faith".[51]

The central part of the building is emphasized by a lantern (*tiburio*) situated above a glass ribbon around its perimeter **[Fig. 20]**. This lantern was intended to illuminate the large hall and establish "that mystical relationship between shadow and light, so essential and inviting for prayer and meditation".[52]

Enzo Fortuna also designed the associated buildings. As with previous projects, the study about the context that would host the building was important to arrive at the final solution. The site was in a newly constructed area **[Fig. 21]**. The area held no strategic value and was not situated at the center of the settlement. It was not a location chosen by the Archdiocesan Curia but imposed by the non-negotiable destination of the General Regulatory Plan (*P.R.G.*) and detailed zoning. Consequently, it lacked all primary and secondary urbanization works.

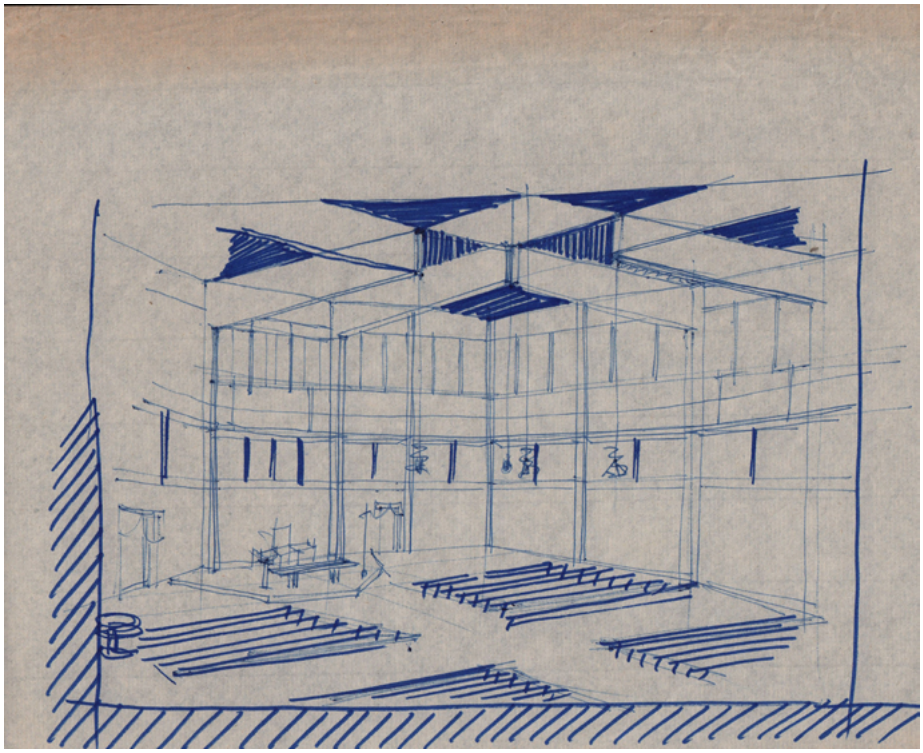
Perhaps if it had been a lot with pre-existing or strategic structures, the archi-

50 Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*: 76.

51 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, 7 November 1974.

52 Project Archive of the S.D.S. of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund, Project no. 90, file 3, *Relazione del progetto generale*, 7 November 1974.

Fig. 19
Enzo Fortuna, *ground floor plan of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).



tect from Siracusa would have made a different choice, adhering to the traditional language he was more familiar with. However, the ferment caused by the Liturgical Reform was strong: "churches are not self-referential buildings, but expressive buildings of the church imagined and proposed by the Council. Therefore, in relation to the city, they become creative poles, open toward/in/for the city. There is no room for triumphalism, but neither for anonymity, absence, closure, or indifference regarding the context and the city. There is no place for seeking a dominant or exclusive position".[53] In response, Enzo Fortuna did not hesitate to experiment with the new language for the design of sacred spaces in the church of *Cristo Re*.

Conclusion

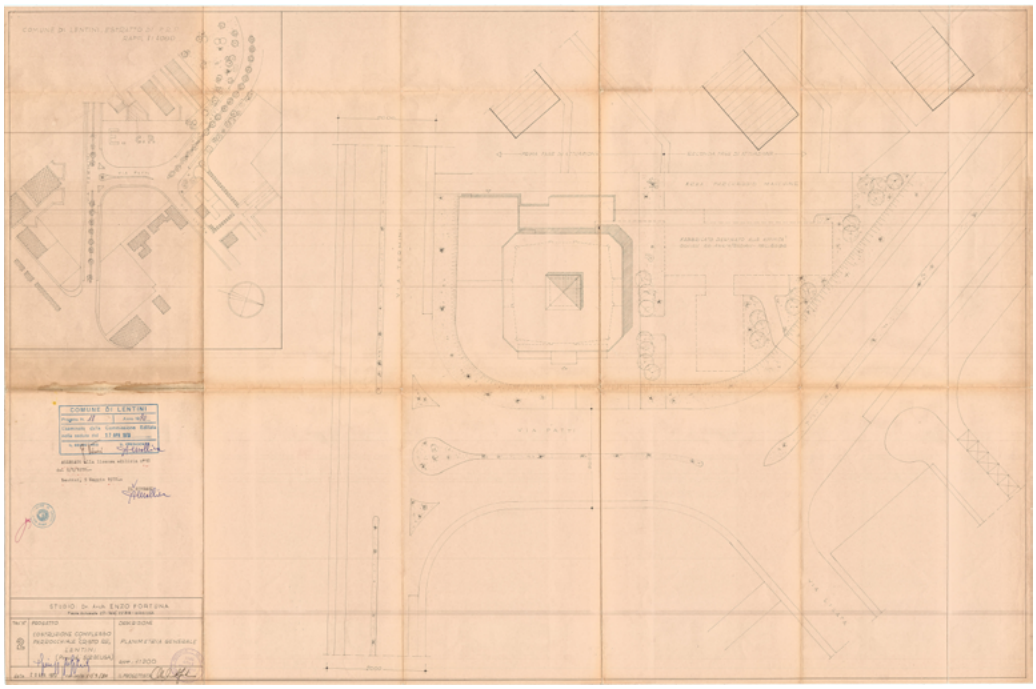
Enzo Fortuna's experience in designing sacred architecture allows a glimpse into the opportunities and real-world challenges faced by professionals during Reconstruction.

Enzo Fortuna's experience also serves as an excellent validation of the research path proposed by Guido Zucconi in 1997.[54] This validation extends not only to the geographical context in which Fortuna worked but also to the intricate balance between ideals and practical necessities, theories and practices, inherent in the architect's profession. Therefore, on one hand, designers had the chance to engage with renowned architects at both national and international levels as for the international competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle*

Fig. 20
Enzo Fortuna, *sketch of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

53 Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni*, 76.

54 Guido Zucconi, "La professione dell'architetto", in *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento*, ed. Francesco Dal Co (Milano: Electa, 1997).



Lacrime; on the other hand, more frequent commissions were aimed at building places of worship in smaller centers by ambitious architects able to draw from well-known national references and employ modern construction techniques, such as thin-walled reinforced concrete.

Fortuna, in the project of the "church-monument"[55] represented by the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime* and in the San Giuseppe in Cassibile, chose to follow the traditional design of sacred spaces. Even if there are no explicit references to contemporary projects for sacred architecture, Enzo Fortuna took on board the main elements arising from the national debate on this issue. Despite the significant modifications often made during the execution phase, largely driven by economic reasons, the reported projects echoed the fervor surrounding sacred architecture. This fervor is evident through the various formal expressions proposed during the competition for the sanctuary of *Madonna delle Lacrime*. It is also perceived in the design choices adopted by Enzo Fortuna in the selected case studies. Especially in San Giuseppe in Cassibile, the interest in the competition for the church of Francavilla al Mare (1948) could be confirmed due to the consecutive sketches remembering the solutions by Ludovico Quaroni and Saverio Muratori. The international debate interested Enzo Fortuna also after the Second Vatican Council, when he worked on the project for the church of Cristo Re in Lentini: his choices in this project show a different approach to the design of sacred architecture, following the main indications derived from the Council.

Through his design activity, Fortuna contributed to the transformation of expanding centers with a careful approach to the national and international debate, often expressed in a manner consistent with the local architectural tradition.

Fig. 21
Enzo Fortuna, *general plan of the church of Cristo Re in Lentini*, 1970 (source: Project Archive of the "Struttura Didattica Speciale" of Architecture, Siracusa, "Enzo Fortuna" fund).

55 Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)*, 58-62.

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