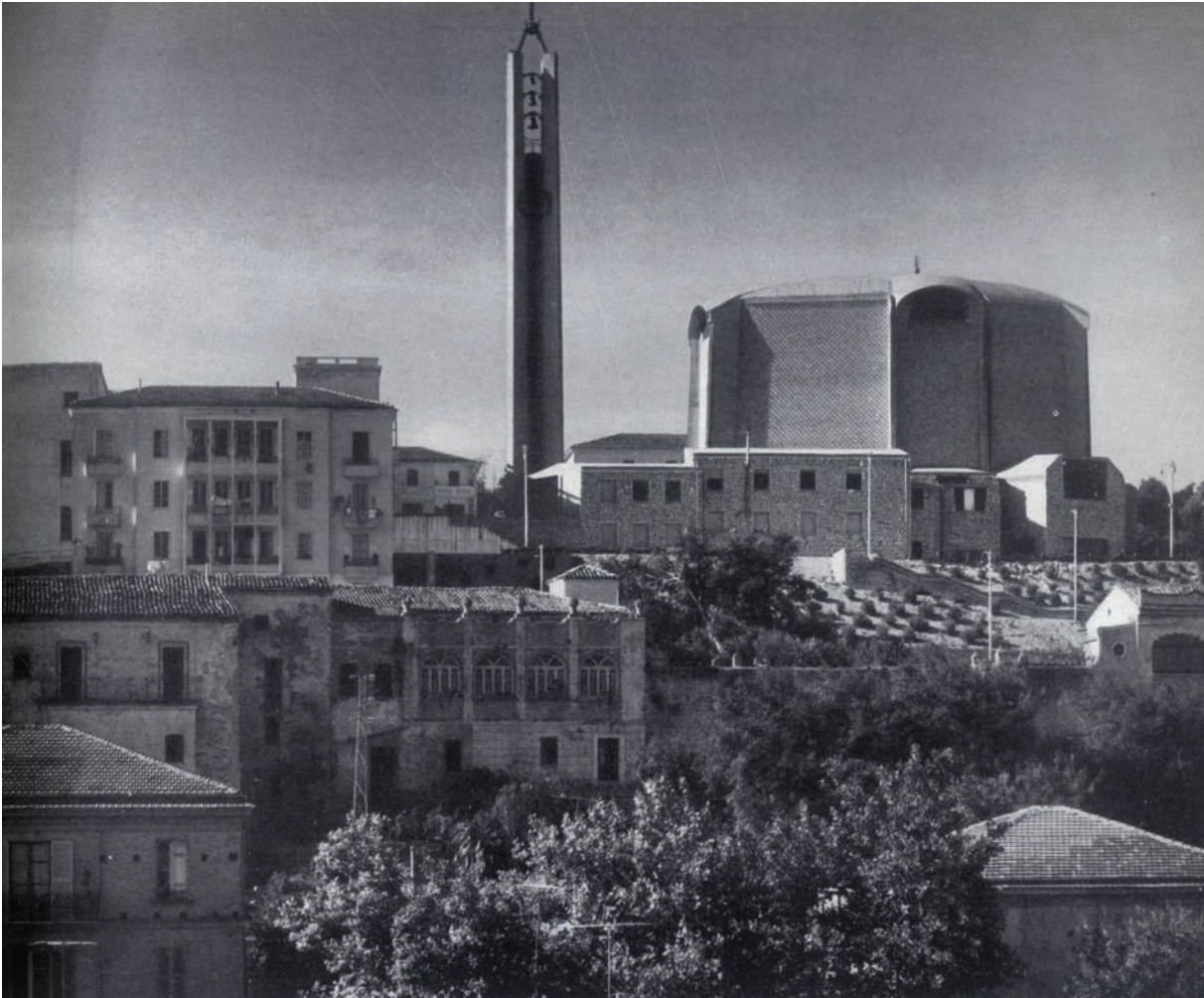


# Minimum Documentation Fiche

composed by regional working party of ABRUZZO, Italy

## 01. Picture of building



Depicted item: Santa Maria Maggiore Church in Francavilla, Chieti  
source: L'architettura, cronache e storia, n. 52, 1960.  
date: 1960

## 1. Identity of building

### 1.1 current name of building

Parrocchia Matrice Santa Maria Maggiore

### 1.2 variant or former name

'Church of S. Franco'

### 1.3 number & name of street

Piazza San Franco 1

### 1.4 town

Francavilla

### 1.5 province/state

Chieti, Abruzzo

**1.6 zip code**

66023

**1.7 country**

Italy

**1.8 national grid reference**

42°41'85N 14°29'06E

**1.9 classification/typology**

Church

**1.10 protection status & date**

Statement of cultural interest (art. 10 comma 1 - DL 42/04 Verifica art. 12 DL 42/04) date:  
11/07/2006

**2 History of building****2.1 original brief/purpose**

Ludovico Quaroni gains in 1948 a design competition for the St Maria Maggiore's Church in Francavilla a Mare, a seaside village of the Abruzzo region, in a place previously occupied by an existing building which has been destroyed during the Second World War. The theoretical structure for the Church's project is the will to build an architecture representing at the same time a new space for prayer and meditation and a landmark for the little town and the surrounding landscape.

**2.2 dates: commission/completion**

Commission 1948

Completion 1956-1959

**2.3 architectural and other designers**

Ludovico Quaroni

**2.4 others associated with building**

Giorgio Quaroni, Andrea Cascella, Pietro Cascella and Jacopo Cascella (artistic works)  
Giulio Ceradini and Ettore Villaggio (projects of structures)

**2.5 significant alterations with dates**

The functional layout was changed in the second half of 60's in order to adapt the main altar to post-conciliar reforms; a great refurbishment of reinforced concrete, in an advanced state of decay, was necessary in the early 80's. Some artistic works and an additional restoration were realised in the middle of 90's and accomplished a decade later, when were installed stained glass windows which were designed by Jacopo Cascella.

**2.6 current use**

The building is still used as a church and a parish seat.

**2.7 current condition**

Medium-Good

The restoration in the early 80's, which was aimed to a conservation intervention of the entire building and which was completed when Quaroni was still alive, allowed to preserve the church in good condition. Later trasformations have partially changed the original project, in particular with the realisation of a window which hasn't been foreseen in the Quaroni's design.

### **3. Description**

#### **3.1 general description**

The high and slim central nave of the church, with its reinforced concrete structure that is clearly exhibited outwards to define boundaries of dark brick walls, rests upon a stone basement, which is divided by an ambulatory and side apses. These apses are dedicated to the cult of Saints and are enclosed in a medium-sized volumes that contradict in fact the symmetrical layout of the church plan, inscribed into an octagonal shape. One wing of the architectural complex, as high as the stone basement, hosts inside a sacristy, a rectory and some service areas. In front of the church a square, where converge existing urban paths, completes the Quaroni's project, with several artistic works, statues and a fountain designed by Andrea and Pietro Cascella, in place of a foreseen baptistery no longer realised. At the virtual conclusion of Quaroni's project there is a bell tower whose slender cruciform profile in reinforced concrete reiterates the vertical development of this architecture.

#### **3.2 construction**

The octagonal shape of the central nave which is inscribed into the ambulatory, rests upon perimetral frames which are composed by pillars that are hidden inside and expressively exhibited outside through a contrast of materials and deep shadows on the walls.

The coverage sets on these frames; the roof complex geometry is generated by a cross vault, aligned to main axes and joined to walls by large lunettes. Light filters through windows placed below the vault while the penumbra of the ambulatory is reduced by small windows which are arranged along the perimeter. Three entrances to the church are located on the side facing the square and included into a portico. The entrances stand out for rich stone lintels, by Pietro Cascella.

#### **3.3 context**

The site occupied by the Quaroni's church is located in a prime position, on top of a hill that overlooks the town and the surrounding area. It also represents an urban node because of its location coincides with the convergence of important paths from the city center. The previous church in the area, with a tall bell tower, had been built in 1700; at the edge of the site there is a Mediterranean scrub, into which a path links the marine settlement and the ancient city center ending on the church square.

### **4. Evaluation**

#### **4.1 technical**

High value.

Quaroni chooses a specific design strategy that involves the use of traditional construction techniques for the exterior, the opus incertum for the basement and brick walls for the central nave, framed by reinforced concrete ribs

These choices declare the Quaroni's will of entrusting an expressive charge to materials that is denied, however, by interior white walls, only enhanced by light and shadows. Unadorned interiors contrast with the rich colors of decorations: the colored tiles of the presbytery, the mosaic floor of the altar, the Bas-relief of Virgin Mary on the front and the grates of apses window.

#### **4.2 social**

High value.

The Santa Maria Maggiore Church represents a landmark for the small Francavilla community, because of several reasons: the position where is located, at the top of a hill overlooking the sea, marking the boundary between the city and a Mediterranean scrub; the memory linked to the place and the distant echo of bombing; the ecumenical functions that offers.

### **4.3 cultural & aesthetic**

High value.

In this project is clearly shown the designer's will to assign an "urban function" to the religious building. This choice will be strongly repeated by Quaroni in later projects for two churches in Genua. The urban character of the Francavilla church is also reaffirmed by the presence of the square. A really original aspect is represented by the fact that first artistic works had been realised before the ecumenical council and they had been arranged following the rules of the pre-conciliar liturgical celebration. According to following directives of the Italian Episcopal Conference, an iconographic program was then added by Quaroni and Pietro Cascella in order to guarantee local liturgical and workshop requirements: works of religious art becomes therefore the synthesis of an intellectual synergy between the artist, the architect and local community.

### **4.4 historical**

High value.

The design of the church has dated back to the 1948 competition while the construction happens only a decade later including a long period; However this project has to be considered one of Quaroni's first experiences after the Second World War. Even larger is the time required for the realisation of artistic works which were initially designed by Quaroni and Pietro Cascella as an fundamental part of the architectural project. Andrea, Pietro and Jacopo Cascella are authors of artwork that adorns the church, artwork that was completed only in the first decade of 21st century.

### **4.5 general assessment**

The Santa Maria Maggiore's church is a significant example of building that stands out at different scales of the city and landscape, in order to define a relationship with a large territory and the near context through a progressive approach which culminates into the space of the central nave.

## **5. Documentation**

### **5.1 principal references**

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QUARONI, Ludovico, 'Perché ho progettato questa chiesa', Metron, n. 31-32, 1949, pp. 50-55, ISSN: 1125-3495.

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PALAZZOTTO, Emanuele, (editor), Il restauro del Moderno in Italia e in Europa, Milano, Franco Angeli editore, 2011, ISBN: 8856870975.

## **Archives**

Fund of Ludovico Quaroni - Fondazione Adriano Olivetti - Ivrea

### **5.2 visual material attached**

Fig.1 Santa Maria Maggiore Church in Francavilla, Chieti (L'architettura, cronache e storia, n. 52, 1960).

Fig. 2 The Church as a landmark for the Francavilla community (L'architettura, cronache e storia, n. 52, 1960).

Fig. 3 Plan and sections (TAFURI, Manfredo, 1964).

Fig. 4 A view of interior spaces (TERRANOVA, Antonino, 1985).

Fig. 5 The cross vault, aligned to main axes and joined to walls by large lunettes (M. Abita, 2015).

Fig. 6 The entrances stand out for rich stone lintels, by Pietro Cascella, and the central nave (M. Abita, 2015).

Fig. 7 Fig. 7 The altar and stained glass on the background (M. Abita, 2015).

Fig. 8 The opus incertum for the basement and brick walls for the central nave (M. Abita, 2015).

Figg. 9-10 On the left, the high and slim central nave of the church from the backside; on the right the slender cruciform profile of the bell tower (M. Abita, 2015).

### **5.3 rapporteur/date**

Danilo Di Donato, February 2015

## **6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R**

name of examining ISC member: date of examination:

approval:

working party/ref. n°: NAI ref. n°:

comments:



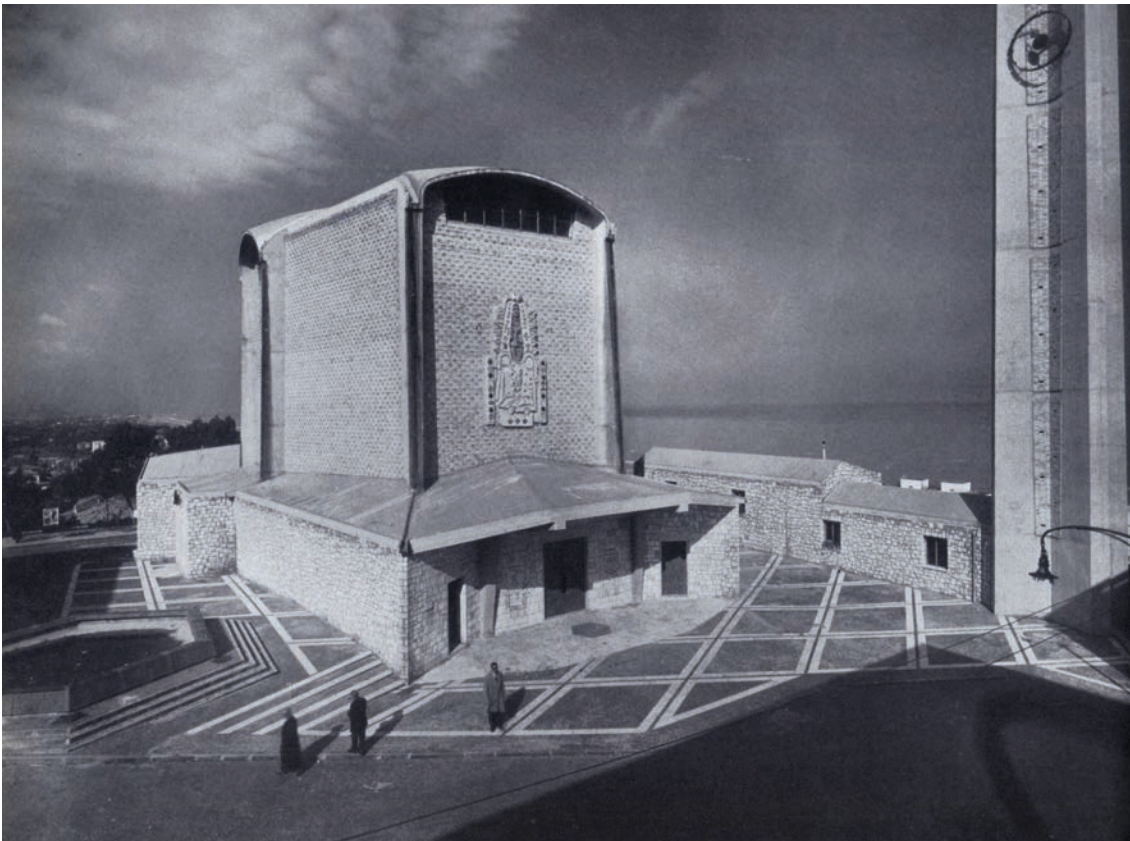


Fig 2 The Church as a landmark for the Francavilla community.

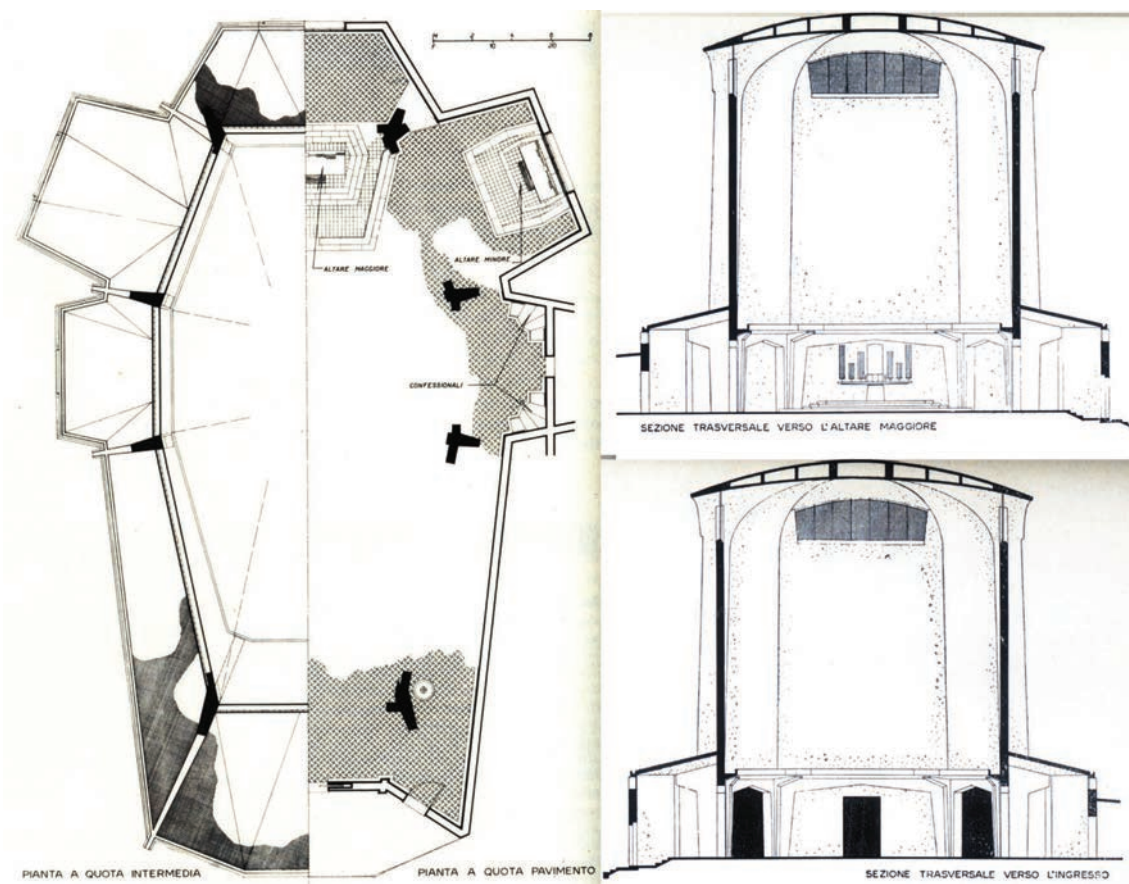


Fig. 3 Plan and sections.

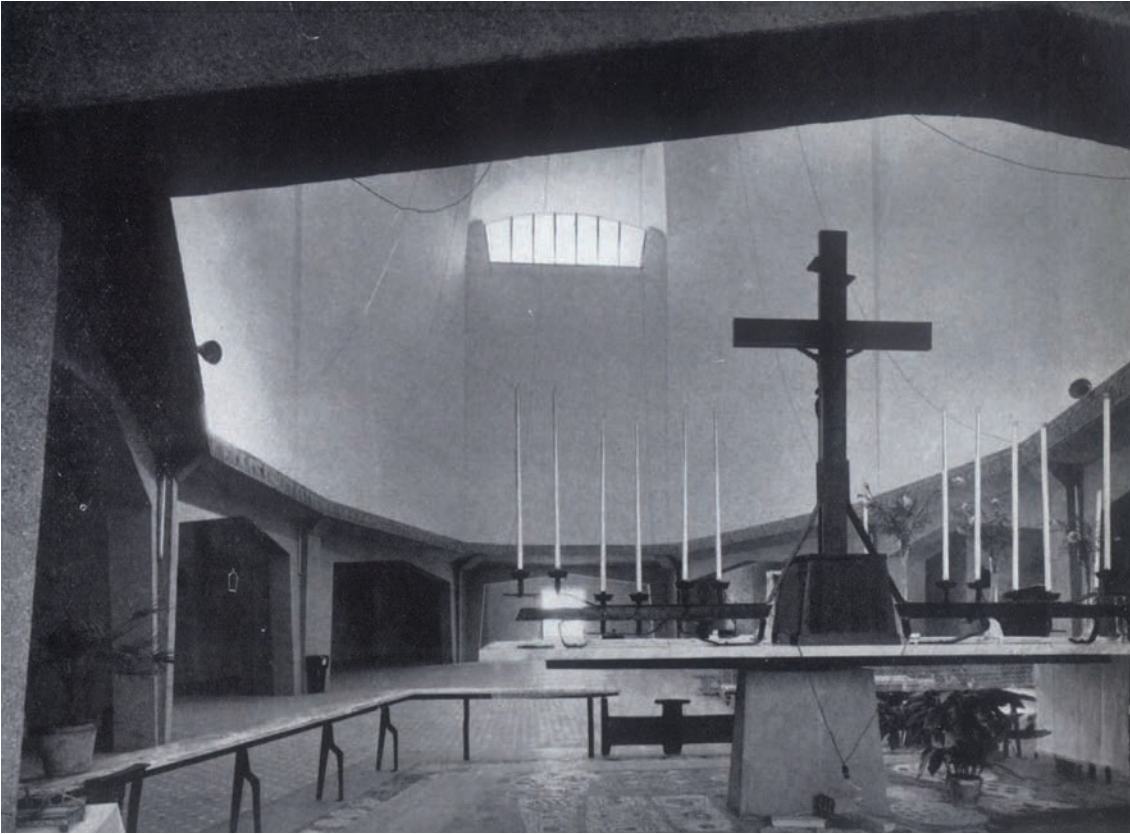


Fig. 4 A view of interior spaces.



Fig. 5 The cross vault, aligned to main axes and joined to walls by large lunettes.





Fig. 6 The entrances stand out for rich stone lintels, by Pietro Cascella, and the central nave.



Fig. 7 The altar and stained glass on the background.





Fig. 8 The opus incertum for the basement and brick walls for the central nave.



Fig. 9-10 On the left, the high and slim central nave of the church from the backside; on the right the slender cruciform profile of the bell tower