

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CHURCH AMADORA, PORTUGAL 2017–2014

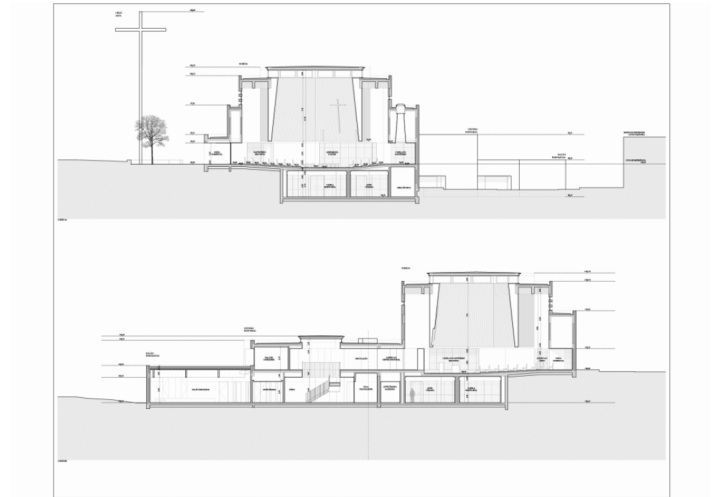
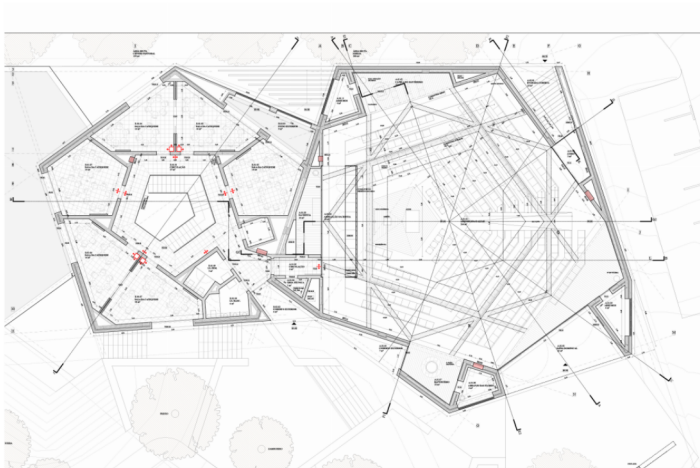
The site for the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is complex both from an urban and an administrative perspective as it stands on the border between the cities of Lisbon and Amadora, in addition to occupying an urban void generated by the inner Lisbon ring-road (CRIL) and the remains of the feeble urban fabric of Venda Nova. Located in the highest and most visible place, the broken-down volumes of its shape, was negotiated between a jumble of limitations and mandatory setbacks. Besides church, the ensemble comprises mortuary chapels, community centre and parish hall.

This extensive and varied programme is shaped in three distinct volumes based on a Euclidean honeycomb, whose seeming rotation generates a series of irregular polygons of variable height that ultimately merge into a single volume with the same materiality and expression. This awkward forms progress in height so as to topographically negotiate their relation with terrain incline. To this outwardly deformed 'nature' corresponds another, inwardly perfect, based on pentagonal geometry, lending to space a congregating and simultaneously ceremonial form.

The church is based on a central altar towards which the assembly floor slightly declines so as to evoke the liturgical idea of unity. This arrangement is physically emphasised by a clerestory suspended above a processional ambulatory. In this play of light and shadow, a higher clerestory in the central space highlights the polarising elements of the liturgy, namely, presidency, altar and pulpit. Within the ambulatory, the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where the Tabernacle is displayed, is a space in its own right with its ceremonial prominence underlined by a focused skylight. Counterpoising the Tabernacle, the Baptistry is an open and fluid space located near the entrance, with a direct visual relation to the exterior framed by the large and existing pine and oak trees.

The Pastoral Centre aims to be as flexible as possible in its use, allowing spaces to be respond to an evolving community and its changing needs. The double-height atrium where the stairs are located is the focal point of this wing and will function as meeting point for parishioners, reinforced by the easy articulation with the cafeteria and the outdoor terrace. The Parish Hall occupies the entire third wing at the South end of the ensemble. It is a large multifunctional space that responds to the frequent need to gather large assemblies for formative, cultural or recreational activities of the parish.

The apex of this ensemble is a High Cross positioned in the church square so as to reinforce its symbolic character and identify its presence from afar. This cross, in turn, will be the only religious element within the urban context that identifies the architectural ensemble as such.



Location: Venda Nova, Amadora, Portugal

Client: Paróquia de Nossa Senhora do Perpétuo Socorro

Project Brief: Church with mortuary chapel and parish centre

Gross Floor Area: Church and mortuary chapel (750 sq. m), parish centre (1,350 sq. m), community centre (1,400 sq. m)

Construction Cost: EUR 2M

Project Status: 2014 (concept design) – 2017