

A CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER



Operated by the Paulist Fathers
A Society of Missionary Priests
of Saint Paul the Apostle

Located in Columbus Circle, New York City

by

Theodore John Musho

B. S. in Architecture
University of Cincinnati
(1958)

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER IN ARCHITECTURE

at the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

10 August 1959

T. J. Musho

Signature of Author
Department of Architecture

Accepted by
Head, Department of Architecture

ABSTRACT

A CATHOLIC INFORMATION CENTER

by

Theodore John Musho

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
on 10 August 1959, in partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Architecture

My desire was to design a Catholic Church in a busy urban atmosphere. Further, I wanted the church to be an aid to all people and to accomplish this I decided to make it the core of a Catholic information center.

The idea of the information center has been the dream of Father Thomas Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers. Father Asselin, a member of the Paulist Center here in Boston, supplied me with information on such a center.

Columbus Circle in New York City offered the busy urban atmosphere, and fortunately a site on its north side has all the amenities necessary for a church.

The laws of supply and demand have created the city and to a great extent the spiritual side of man has been neglected. I hope to create with this thesis a form that will not lessen the life of the city but make its contribution toward a fuller life for all men.

Thesis Supervisor: Imre Halasz

Title: Assistant Professor of Architecture

395 Marlborough Street
Boston 15, Massachusetts
10 August 1959

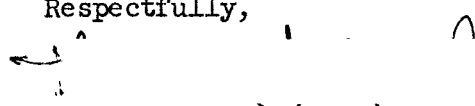
Professor Pietro Belluschi
Dean, School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

It is an honor to submit to you my thesis entitled "A Catholic Information Center" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Architecture.

This gives me an opportunity to express my thanks for your help in my education.

Respectfully,


Theodore J. Musho

395 Marlborough Street
Boston 15, Massachusetts
10 August 1959


Professor Lawrence B. Anderson
Head, Department of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

It is an honor to submit to you my thesis entitled "A Catholic Information Center" in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Architecture.

I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to acquire the education which, I hope, this thesis reflects.

Respectfully,


Theodore J. Musho

To acknowledge the help I have received
from many people throughout my life
- specifically to Father Asselin, C.S.P.,
of the Boston foundation
of the Paulist Information Center

Dedicated to the
Holy Ghost
the Third Person of the
Most Holy Trinity

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INTRODUCTION

To place a church in the city.

The Church has meaning to the non-Catholic.

To make the meaning of the Church clear and to instruct the interested person about the Church is the work of the Paulist Fathers.

My hope to place a church in the city, joined with a knowledge of the Paulist Fathers, has created this thesis.

The major components of this Catholic Information Center will be a church, information headquarters, lay workers' area and Paulist Fathers' residence.

The need to express and clarify the meaning of the Catholic Church has made the Paulist Fathers a vigorous and vital force in Catholic missionary work.

I believe it desirable and necessary that plastic form be found that reveals this vigor and vitality of the Paulist and, together with their spoken words, manifest the Love that is God.

HISTORY OF THE PAULIST FATHERS

The clergy, religious and faithful of the Archdiocese
of New York join the Paulist Fathers in thanking
Almighty God on the completion of their
First Century of service to our Holy Mother the Church

The Paulist Fathers have deep roots in this Archdiocese. The community was born in New York City. Here they developed the techniques of and had great success in their special convert apostolate. Their zealous founder, Father Isaac Thomas Hecker, was a native New Yorker from Hester Street. As a convert he was received into the Catholic Church at the old St. Patrick's Cathedral by Bishop (later Cardinal) McCloskey in 1844. When Father Hecker established his new religious Society and drew up the 'Program of Rule', Archbishop John Hughes of New York gave the approval on July 7, 1858. For 71 years the growing Society remained under the patronage and jurisdiction of the Archbishops of New York.

Joined with the very first foundation of the Society was the new Parish that was founded in New York City at 59th Street and Columbus Avenue, the Church of St. Paul the Apostle. Thirty one years elapsed before the Paulist Fathers began an expansion that was to establish them eventually in many places in the United States, in Canada, South Africa and Rome. Even with the passing of a century, this great Church, conceived by Father Hecker, loved by New Yorkers, continues to be the Mother Church and Headquarters of the Society.

While New York takes a justifiable pride in the Paulist Fathers and their zealous work for the welfare of souls in the city, we know that the apostolate of these missionary priests concerns all America. To his spiritual sons Father Hecker offered the same challenge he himself accepted through the pressing interior graces of his vocation. He believed fervently that the Church would make its greatest progress here because, as he said, "the American people are naturally Catholic." America, like a gigantic harvest to be reaped, has been prepared by the Providence of God to become a country of multitudes of Catholics. But opportunities for knowing and embracing the Faith must be made available to the people. As Father Hecker stated, "The character and the spirit of our people and their institutions must find themselves at home in our Church in the way those of other nations have."

The Paulist Fathers have lived a century striving religiously to fulfill the pious objectives of their revered founder. Theirs has been an admirable record of pioneering and leadership in the convert apostolate.

In 1861 they introduced the 'Five Minute Sermon' at low Mass. In 1865 they began what is now the oldest American Catholic monthly magazine, THE CATHOLIC WORLD. In 1866 they initiated the Catholic Publication Society for the Bishops of America which distributed low cost leaflets and booklets on a national scale. In 1891 they established their first printing press which has expanded into the successful Paulist Press now printing annually more than four million pamphlets and booklets. In 1894 they organized the Catholic Missionary Union which trained and supported members of the American diocesan clergy

in the conduct of missions to non-Catholics. In 1903 they opened the Apostolic Mission House on the grounds of the Catholic University of America in Washington to carry out this program effectively. In 1917 they formed the Catholic Unity League which financed city-wide lectures for non-Catholics and the free distribution of religious literature. In 1924 they undertook the first privately owned Catholic radio station, WLWL, broadcasting regularly each day from their rectory at 59th Street.

Today, the Society, which now numbers more than two hundred members, administers parishes, directs Information Centers, staffs Newman foundations at secular universities and maintains its national mission bands of missionary priests. In addition to THE CATHOLIC WORLD, the Paulist Fathers now publish another monthly magazine, INFORMATION.

The progress and the pioneering still continue. Their TECHNIQUES FOR CONVERT MAKERS, a monthly release to priests and seminarians the country over, investigates and examines better ways and means to advance the interests of the Church in America. To adapt to the changing habits of church-going people, they have introduced the 'Sunday Mass Mission' as a possible solution to more convenient mission attendance.

If symbols can summarily draw up for the mind's eye an immediate and recognizable picture of an idea at work, then the 'pulpit' and the 'press' will indeed detail a picture of the Paulist Fathers in action for these have been the instruments of their convert apostolate. The list of Paulist preachers and Paulist writers has been distinguished. Active with voice and with pen, they have influenced our American religious life in many ways and have brought knowledge of the Church closer to many of our fellow countrymen.

The centenary of the founding of the Paulist Fathers happily coincides with the centenary of the apparitions of our Blessed Lady at Lourdes, and we pray Her to bless the Paulist community and all their wonderful works. America has been dedicated to Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception and the Paulist Fathers founded in America are dedicated to the noble work of conversions. May the Blessed Mother of America be a gracious Mother to her devoted sons who are indeed the followers of St. Paul the Apostle.

letter of X Francis Cardinal Spellman, D.D.
Archbishop of New York

The above letter used as a Foreward in a booklet
commemorating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the
Founding of the Paulist Fathers by Father Isaac Hecker

THE SITE

New York City has grown in waves originating with centers at Wall Street, 14th Street, 34th Street, and presently Times Square. Recently it has shown signs of moving still further north to the area surrounding Columbus Circle. The recently completed Coliseum and the proposed Lincoln Center are two projects that indicate this shift of center.

It is desirable for a church to stand physically free from its surroundings and it should have good east orientation. The area should have direct contact with as many people as possible.

With the above considerations a site was chosen for this thesis.

The site selected is northwest of Columbus Circle. It is presently occupied by a two-story, loft-type building, the stores of which are presently rented by a restaurant, car dealer, boat showroom, grocery store, tailor shop and liquor store. On the roof is a fifty foot by forty foot illuminated sign.

Physically, its area is 30,394.35 square feet. It is trapezoidal in shape extending longitudinally from Columbus Circle to 60th Street and transversely from Central Park West to Broadway. On 60th Street it measures 195 feet, on Central Park West 261.65 feet, on Columbus Circle 37.115 feet and on Broadway 316.45 feet.

The Broadway 7th Avenue subway has its 59th Street station entrance on the sidewalk adjacent to the site. The 8th Avenue subway has an entrance to its 59th Street station across the street to the east.

These subway stations are used constantly to convey people to the Coliseum, office buildings, Central Park and apartments adjacent to Columbus Circle. The New York bus system runs to this area and makes this block a fulcrum. A bus route passes on the east, north and west side of the site.

The southwest tip of Central Park is just east of the site. The public function of this much-used park will insure a pleasant eastern orientation for the church and a natural view for the Information Center. Columbus Circle to the south, with its expanding importance, will provide a strong regional landmark within which this Information Center can grow. The Columbus Monument in the center of the Circle and the War Memorial to the Men in the Battle of the Maine at the entrance to Central Park provide civic as well as visual importance to which a church could hope to contribute. On the south side of the Circle is proposed a new Gallery of Modern Art by Huntington Hartford designed by Mr. Edward Stone. This project was taken as a thesis project by Mr. Hanford Yong (M. I. T., 1957). North of the site are hotels, to the west shops and offices, to the southwest the Coliseum and a twenty-four story white brick office building; on 58th Street are restaurants and shops, a twenty-four story office building and on the southeast corner of the Circle stands an eighteen-story apartment house. Two blocks north of the site will be erected the Lincoln Center for the Performing Art.

Columbus Circle is realistically a traffic organizer. Thousands of cars pass through its channels past the Columbus Monument and Coliseum.

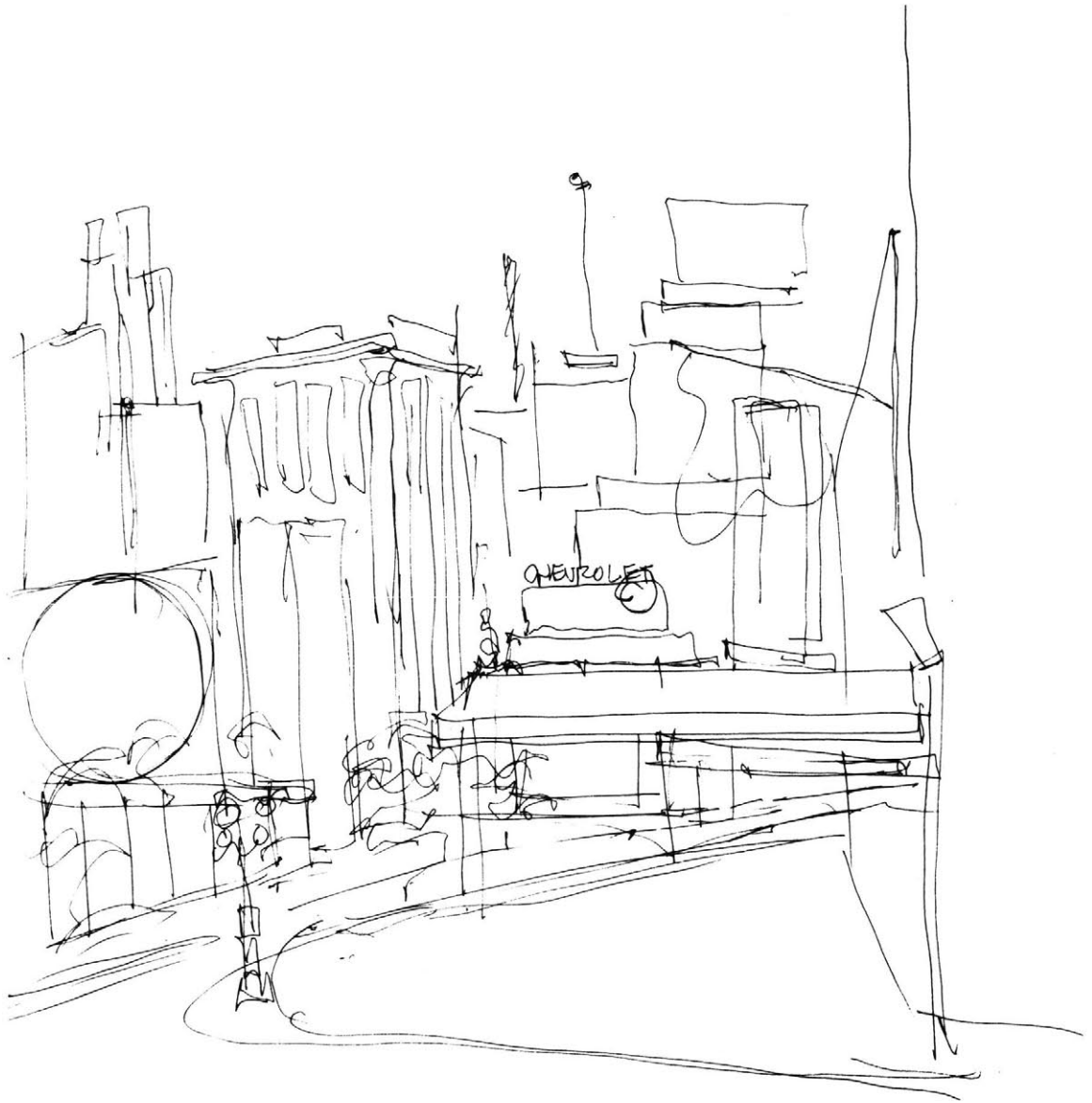
Truthfully, the car serves as the frame of reference for the first experience of this complex of buildings. The wide streets creating this Circle also diminish any hope of uniting the whole Circle into a pedestrian landmark. All that can be hoped for by a single project such as this Catholic Information Center or the proposed Gallery of Modern Art is to create a strong enough design whereby a visual perimeter for the Circle is created and hope thereby that the parts of the perimeter will create a sequence of related events that amplify the civic character of the Columbus and Maine monuments.

The pedestrian is at the mercy of the driver of the automobile. But the truth is, without the auto the life of Columbus Circle would not exist and the number of times a person changes from pedestrian to driver or passenger in this area is exactly what gives Columbus Circle its importance. The traffic, the pedestrian and/or passenger will increase and so will the importance of this Circle. This is where a Catholic Information Center needs to be.





NW 61st & CPW



62nd & Broadway
NW

FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

	Square	Feet
<u>Church</u>		
1. Church (500 seats)	5,000	
2. Sacristy	600	
3. Side Altars (12 @ 80 sq. ft.)	960	
4. Baptistry (80 people)	1,000	
	<u>Sub Total</u>	7,560
 <u>Information Center</u>		
5. Receptionist	100	
6. Public Vestibule (lounge and library)	800	
7. Offices for Priests (18 @ 80, 2 @ 200 sq. ft.)	1,840	
8. Lecture Rooms (2 @ 300 sq. ft.)	600	
9. Auditorium (500 people, level floor)	5,000	
10. Kitchenette	150	
11. Coat Room	100	
12. Projection Room	80	
13. Storage	100	
14. Toilets	240	
15. Meeting Room for Lay Workers	300	
16. Work Area for Lay Workers	300	
17. Records Room	100	
	<u>Sub Total</u>	9,710
	<u>Balance Brought Forward</u>	17,270

	Square	Feet
	<u>Balance Brought Forward</u>	
		17,270
 <u>Paulist Living Quarters</u>		
18. Chapel (private)	500	
19. Private Rooms for Priests including Toilets, etc. (20 @ 175 sq. ft.)	3,500	
20. Dining Room	500	
21. Living Room	800	
22. Library	800	
23. Lobby	300	
24. Meeting Rooms (2 @ 100 sq. ft.)	200	
25. Kitchen, Pantry, etc.	500	
26. Boiler Room	400	
	<u>Sub Total</u>	7,500
Circulation	7,890	7,890
	<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>	<u>32,660</u>

Note: Area of Site - 30,394 square feet

STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS

Any living body such as the Church must have a constant stream of new blood through its system. This new blood is supplied by the natural increase of its families and by receiving into its arms non-Catholics.

It is the missionary work of the Church in reaching the non-Catholic which I have chosen to study and express.

The city, New York in particular, offers the circumstances and site for just such a missionary and it is my desire to successfully express this function in Columbus Circle.

The missionary function of the Church draws its energy from all the functions of the Church, the most important being that of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to God. It is from this sacrament, which is the fountainhead and no less than Christ Himself present in the Church, that the Church receives its food. This sacrament gives presence to the other sacraments of Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Marriage and Extreme Unction.

Baptism is the next basic sacrament and combined with that of the Eucharist form the chief instruments of the missionary task.

The grace of Baptism washes away the sins of the new Catholic and prepares him for the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Here we have the essence of missionary work, the preparation of the individual for Baptism and Communion. This task is rendered successful by prayer and instruction.

Faith through understanding is the creed of the Paulist Fathers and from this developed the Information Center.

Individuals are drawn to enquire of the Church for many reasons. Respect, natural desire, beauty, friendships, make up but a few of the original reasons. However, the initial contact with a priest to discuss their enquiry is the most difficult for the non-Catholic. This task must be understood and made as easy as possible for the individual to accomplish. Here we have the essence of the Information Center - to create an atmosphere that will transform the desire of a person to learn into their learning. With continual prayers to God for grace the enquirer is instructed concerning the Church. Lectures are made where the Bible, the existence of God, Christ's Passion and Resurrection and all the functions of the Church are explained and discussed. Personal conferences are held and gracefully the individual is initiated into the Church. The person is never forced. Prayer is dedicated for their intention and their presence at Mass to pray is recommended, this as a sign of their good intentions and by which God can operate in their souls and bring them to Baptism.

Here we have the essence of the Church expressed - the Eucharist supplying the grace by which the mission functions and toward which the mission guides its catechumens. The cycle is revealed and completed. In the words of Christ, "I am the Way."

To express is to reveal for the beholders a truer awareness of themselves. The Church received an expression of Itself during the Transfiguration when Christ revealed His Divinity, and at Pentecost the Holy Ghost gave the grace to the Church to "Teach ye all Men."

This cycle which should be expressed in form will reveal the unity and variety of life. Hopefully, it will serve as the entrance into the Church for many souls.

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SOLUTION

It was my hope to evolve an integrated building. That is one where the structure develops out of its supported form and where the spaces created create their own hierarchy. While experimenting with circular and rectilinear plans the problem of expressing these forms and of creating a structure predicated by that form seemed to me impossible. Working with these shapes and forms did however give me a knowledge of the required functional relationships. It also gave me some feeling for the site and its forcing elements that is elements which forced you to comply to existing features.

The hierarchy of functional elements required that the library be directly off the street and that the baptismal be used as a symbol. The chapels needed ready access from the street and a connection with the lecture rooms and private interview offices as an instructive element. The priests quarters needed direct access to the church and chapels and relatively indirect access to the offices and classrooms since their private life must be kept separate from their priestly duties. The church required a quiet retreatful position and this determined its location on the top floor. It was also necessary that there be nothing over the sanctuary and this problem also determined the space given to the chapels. The auditorium which will be used for social occasions as well as lectures was suited for a basement position. The varying interest of people who would not attend the church

above and the noise this area would generate seemed to indicate its basement location.

The idea of an integrated building is particularly applicable for a church since the walls become the roof and the structure from both reflecting the unity and diversity of religion itself.

Some preliminary observations on first viewing the site indicated the virtue of a single integrated building. This seemed to be the only kind of building that could hold its head up in such competitive surroundings. One other aspect although minor at this point, the site seemed to want a building that was raised from the ground so that it could become a "focus" instead of a "dead end" and also to give some visual connection from all its parts to the whole of Columbus Circle. It would also enable the church to be approached from below.

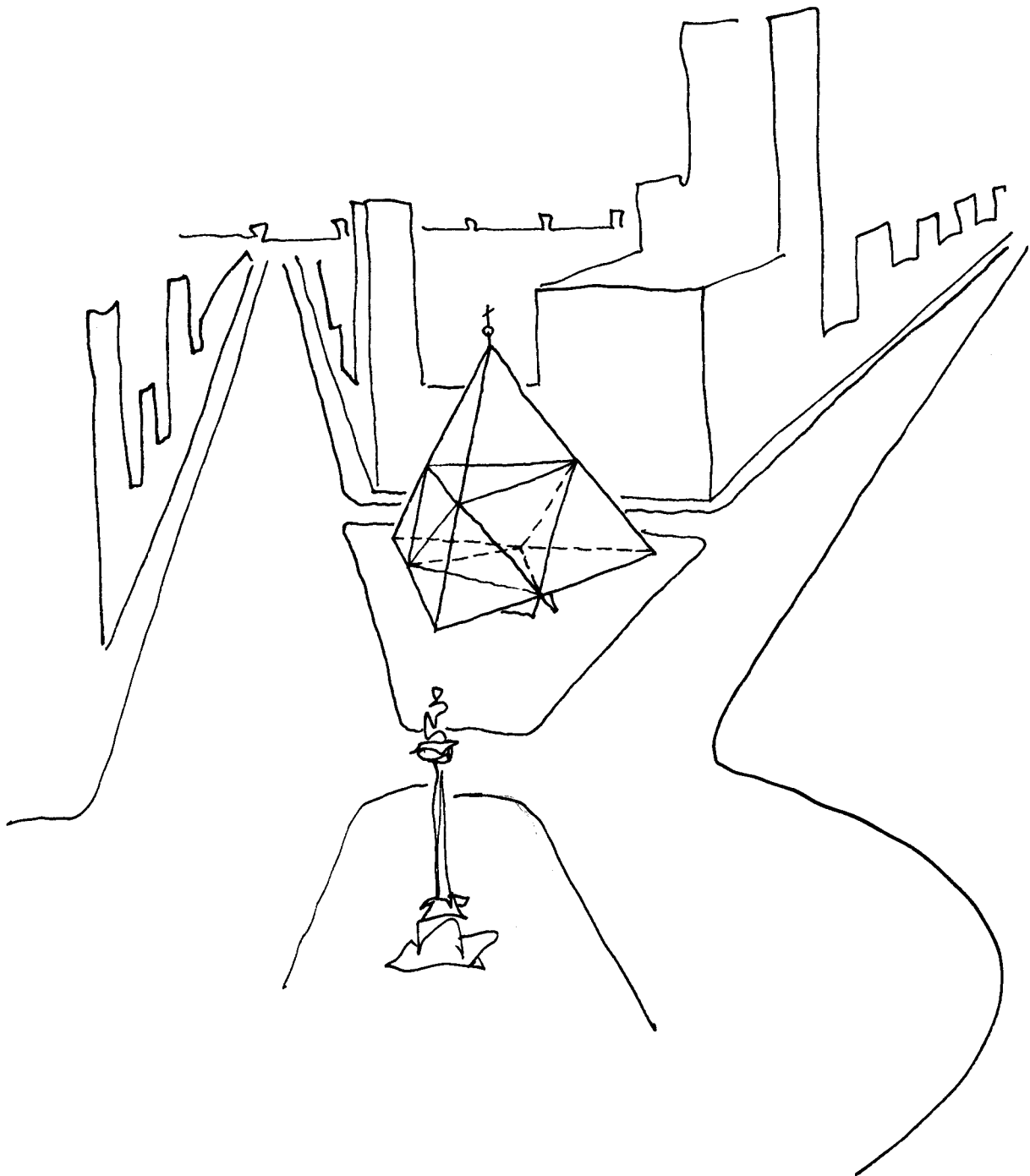
The functional requirements express themselves in a vertical manor. That is the way I have interpreted them and as they are in the solution.

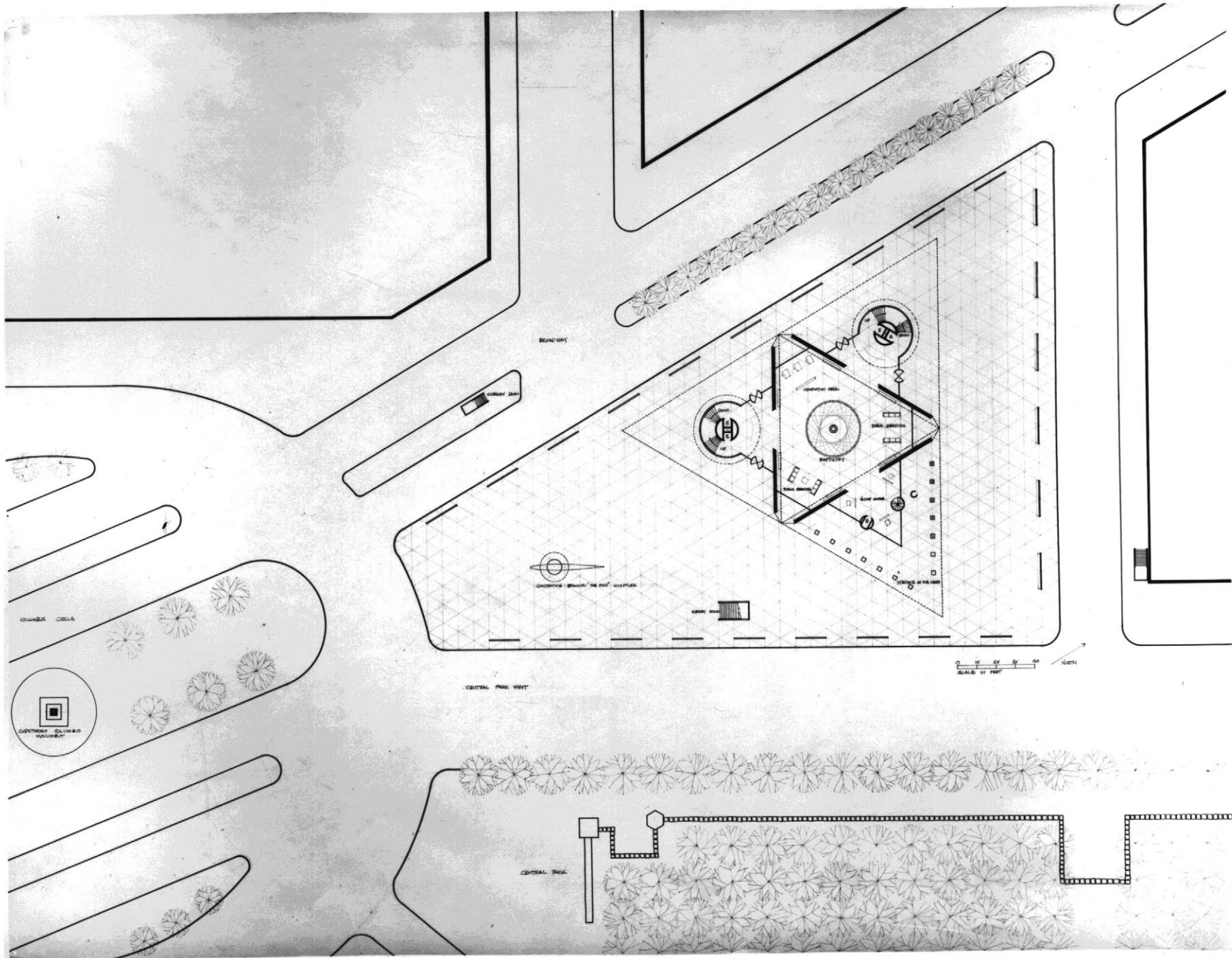
The form chosen to express this is a tetrahedron raised on a pedestal. The tetrahedron is broken down into an integral octahedron and four tetrahedron with a second non-integral octahedron forming the pedestal and the auditorium below ground level.

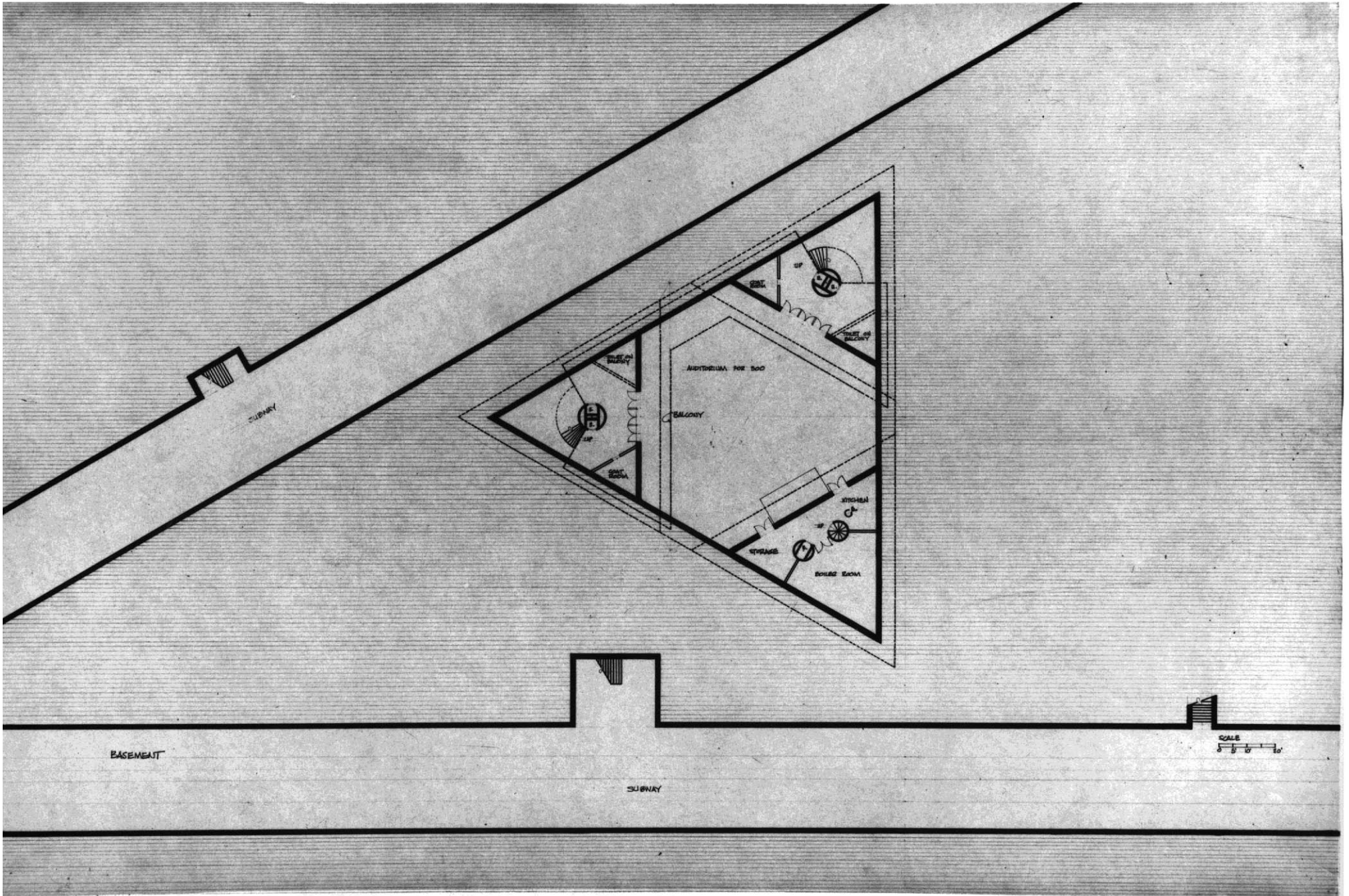
The integral octahedron is of reinforced concrete and is a stable form containing on five floors church, priests

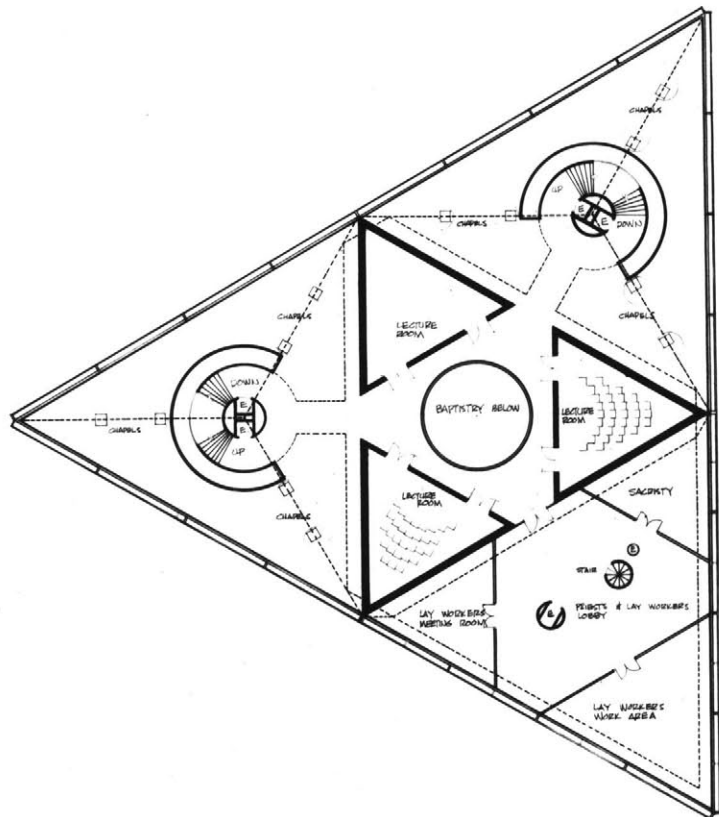
quarters, offices and lecture rooms, in compression on its top rim is a tetrahedron in concrete which is the cover of the church, in tension on its insloping sides are three tetrahedrons housing the vertical accesses, services and chapels.

The over all form of the tetrahedron fits the site well inasmuch as the adjoining buildings form a 60° angle. The tetrahedron is itself a clear and easily recognizable form which could develop as a symbol. Its sloping sides create what I feel to be a vertical ascending impression indicating its religious function. The pedestal support of the form enables free access from all sides. Raising it also expresses how the integral octahedron resolves its load to the ground and gives to this otherwise static form a dynamic character. The tension cable supported side tetrahedrons will I think appear light and airy contrasting with the concrete central supporting element and indicating its use as a point of vertical access and housing of chapels. The accompanying sketch shows the tetrahedron in place with its integral octahedron and tetrahedron. The displacement of the elements in this form arrived quite naturally and once they were fixed it seemed there was no other way. It was simply finding the answer not inventing it. This is what I term an integral building. I hope the following completed drawings will make this even more evident.

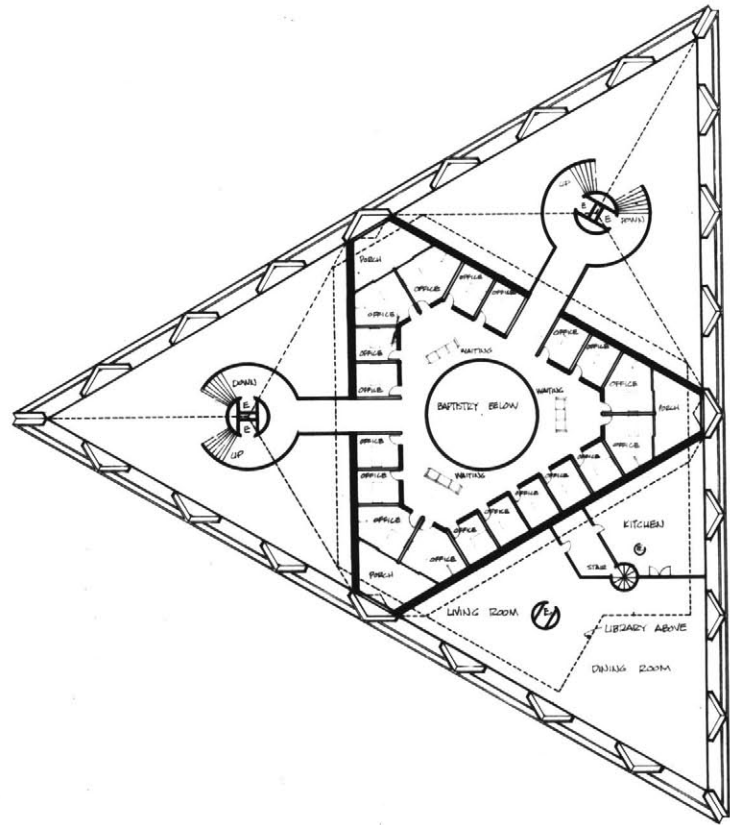








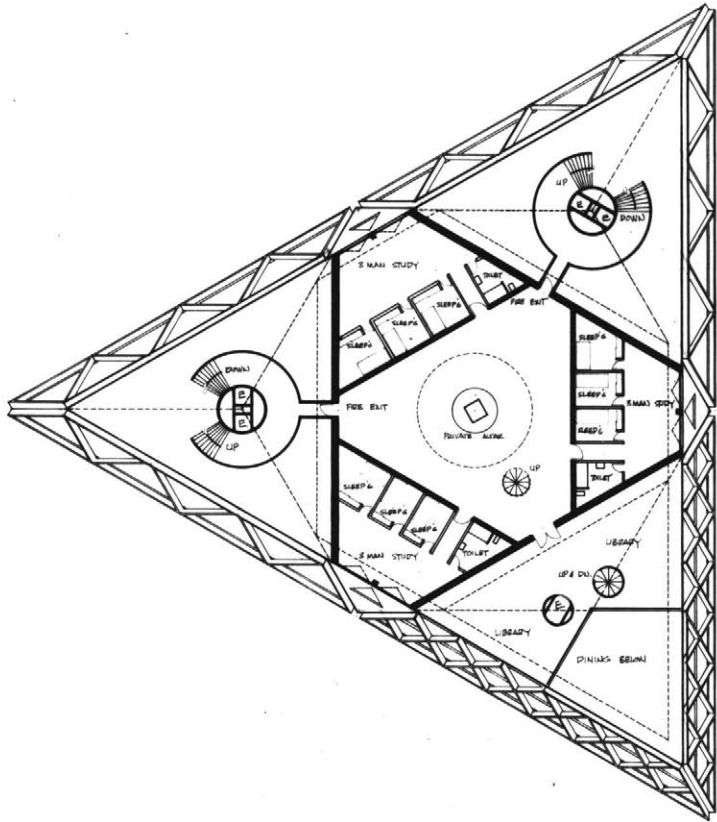
2ND FLOOR LECTURES - CHAPELS



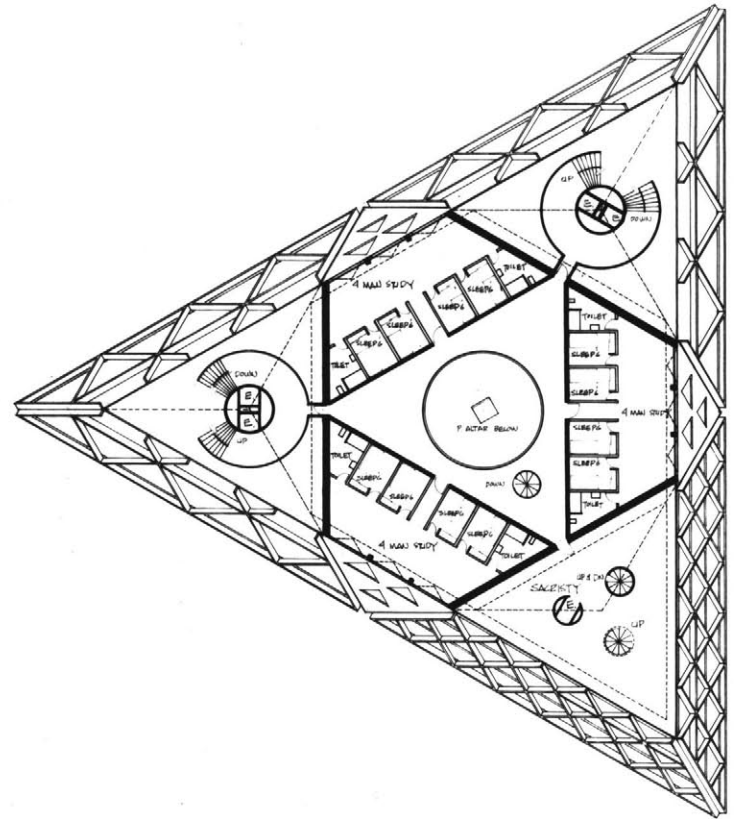
3RD FLOOR PRIVATE DISCUSSION OFFICES
CONFESSIONALS

0 10 20 30 40
SCALE IN FEET

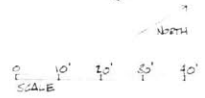
7
North

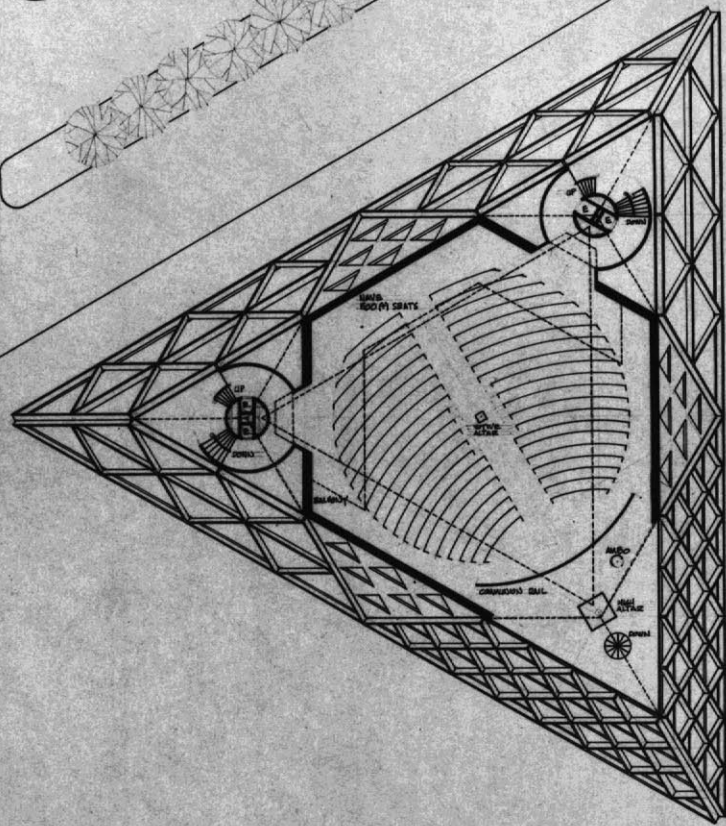


4TH FLOOR PRIESTS QUARTERS



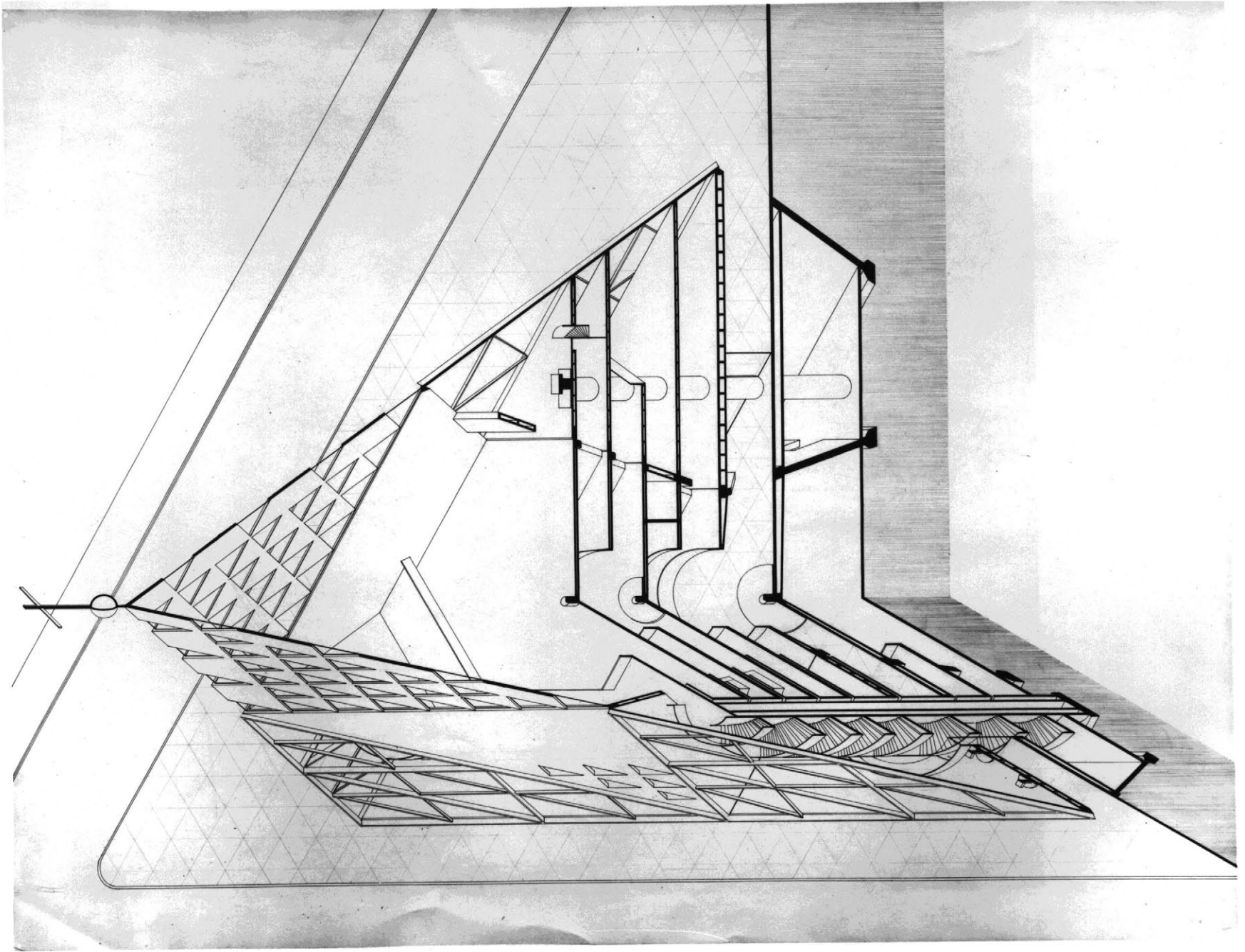
5TH FLOOR PRIESTS QUARTERS

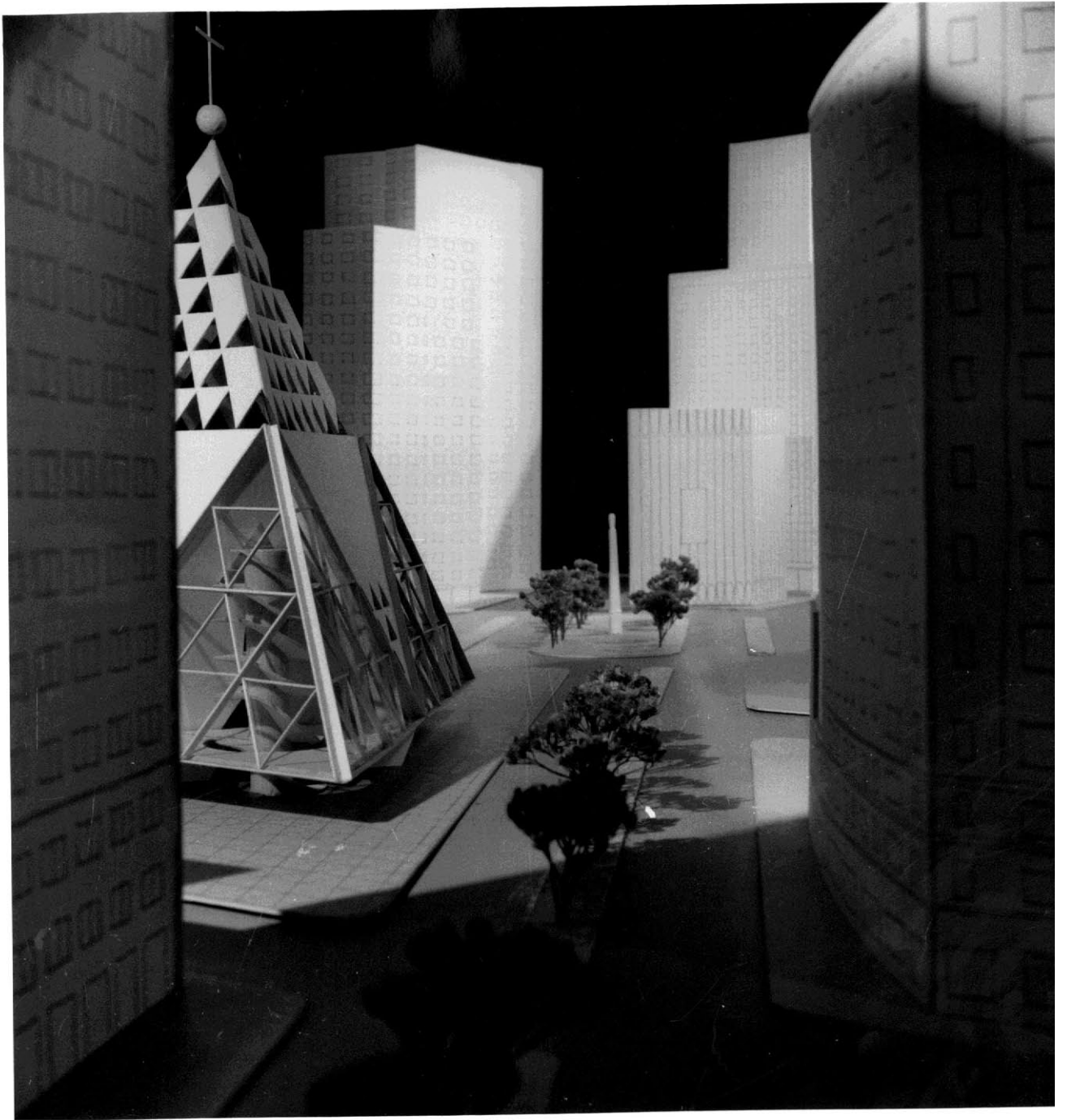


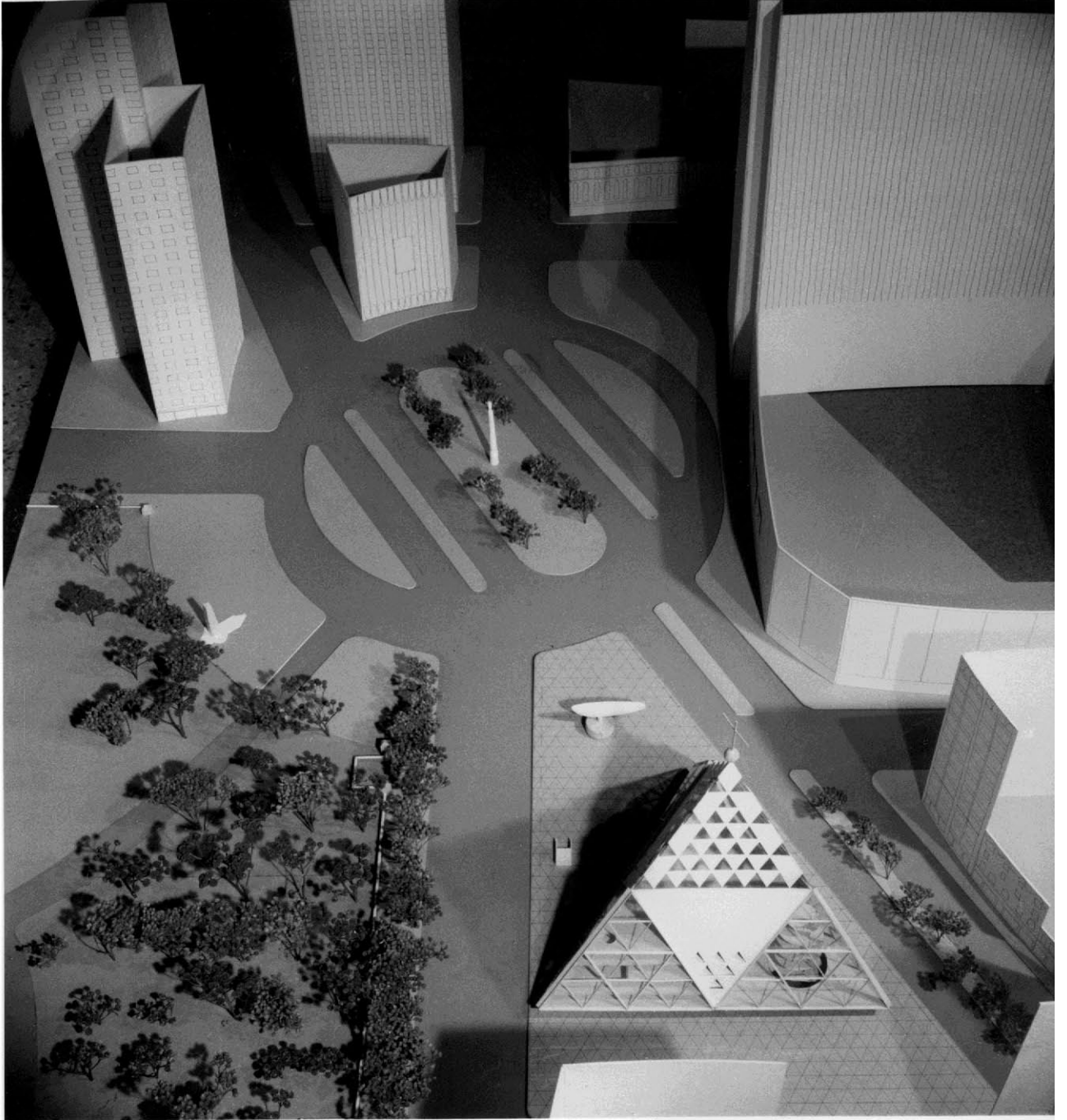


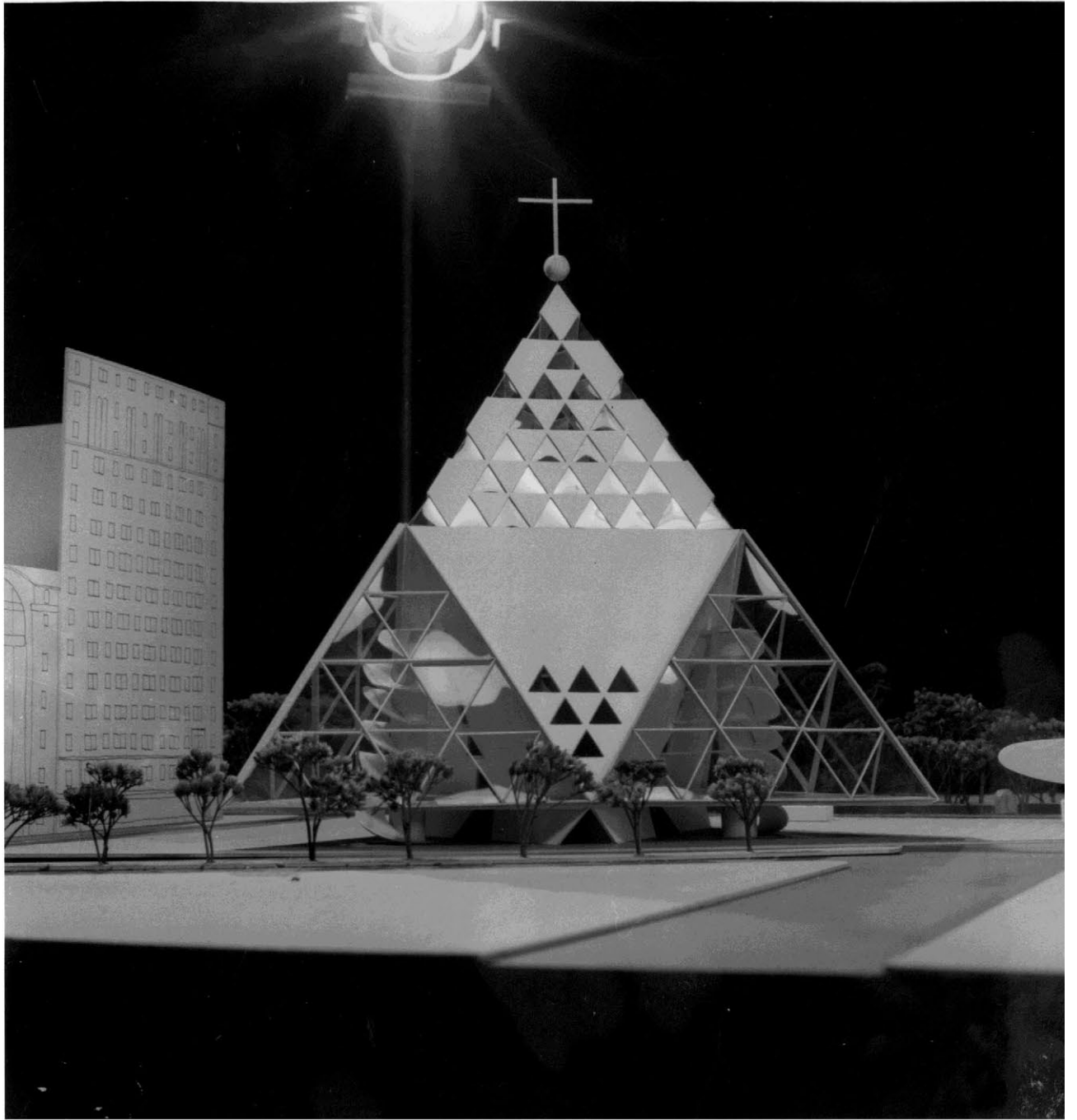
TOP LEVEL
CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN MARY

0 10 20 30 40
SCALE









FINIS

A.D. 1959