



Restoration and Modernization of the Church of Our Lady of Peace Ipanema Rio de Janeiro

Restauração e Modernização da Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Paz, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro.

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Informações do Artigo

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Abstract

Our proposal for CIRMARE 2025 aims to report on the procedures for the restoration and modernization of the Church of Our Lady of Peace, in the neighborhood of Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro. These were emergency procedures due to its state of abandonment (questionable maintenance) and the damaging interventions that disfigured several elements of its architecture. It is worth remembering that the church is one of the few listed buildings in the neighborhood. At the end of the First World War (1918), Pope Benedict XV ordered the inclusion of the invocation “Queen of Peace” in the Litany of Our Lady, thanking God and the intercession of Our Lady for the restoration of peace in the world. This was the main motivation for choosing the patron saint of Ipanema and for entrusting her with the church that was beginning its construction. The architectural style of the church corresponds to the taste of the time: it can be defined as neo-Romanesque, with simple and uncluttered architecture. Some decorative elements are reminiscent of Gothic and Arabic architecture. Its floor plan is in the shape of a cross. The project (1919) was designed by architect Gastão Bahiana, who was then a professor at the Rio de Janeiro School of Fine Arts.

Resumo

Nossa proposta para o CIRMARE 2025 visa relatar os procedimentos de restauração e modernização da Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Paz, no bairro de Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro. Trataram-se de procedimentos emergenciais devido ao seu estado de abandono (manutenção questionável) e às intervenções danosas que desfiguraram diversos elementos de sua arquitetura. Vale lembrar que a igreja é um dos poucos edifícios tombados do bairro. Ao final da Primeira Guerra Mundial (1918), o Papa Bento XV ordenou a inclusão da invocação “Rainha da Paz” na Ladainha de Nossa Senhora, agradecendo a Deus e à intercessão de Nossa Senhora pela restauração da paz no mundo. Essa foi a principal motivação para a escolha da padroeira de Ipanema e para a confiança depositada nela na

igreja que estava sendo construída. O estilo arquitetônico da igreja corresponde ao gosto da época: pode ser definido como neorromânico, com arquitetura simples e despojada. Alguns elementos decorativos remetem à arquitetura gótica e árabe. Sua planta tem o formato de uma cruz. O projeto (1919) foi concebido pelo arquiteto Gastão Bahiana, que na época era professor da Escola de Belas Artes do Rio de Janeiro.

1. Introdução

When invited by the parish priest to coordinate the restoration and modernization of the historic parish, I realized the importance and emotional charge that the building carries, as it was materialized by the faith of the residents of the Ipanema neighborhood and, therefore, deserves full consideration and respect. Researching its history, learning facts from its 100 years, was fundamental in the decisions that guided the development of the project. We remember here the architect and Full Professor at FAU-UFRJ, Olinio Coelho, who in his words recalled "that you only love what you know." In other words, the architect, active in restoration, always reminded us that any restorative intervention requires research and in-depth study of the built asset. Olinio's trajectory inspires us by the intersection between restoration theory and restoration practice, since, in addition to being a professor, he was Director of the Historical and Artistic Heritage of the State of Rio de Janeiro, being responsible for the restoration of some listed properties and nominating some cultural assets for state listing. Following this example of the union between theory and practice, I began studying and researching the Church. It revealed a universe of faith and a valuing of memory.

2 And so the story begins...

Dom Joaquim Arcoverde de Albuquerque Cavalcanti, the first Cardinal and Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, created the parish of Ipanema, separating it from the parishes of Our Lady of Copacabana, Our Lady of the Conception of Gávea, and Saint

Bartholomew, in Alto da Boa Vista, by a decree signed on September 6, 1921. Monsignor Joaquim Alvim, then parish priest of Copacabana, had long insisted that a new parish be created, and in late 1918 he himself began construction on the future parish church, Our Lady of Peace, on what was then Rua 20 de Novembro, later Visconde de Pirajá. He tried by every means possible to have the Franciscans take over the direction and continue the construction, which indeed happened, until in June 1920, the first parish priest, the Rev. Fr. Domingos Schmitz, was introduced to the Archdiocesan Curia. However, the construction progressed slowly. It was a mad struggle to raise funds to carry it forward. A vast sacristy was then built for celebrations, with the first Mass being held on May 1, 1921. But on August 15 of the same year, Masses were transferred to the main chapel of the new parish church.

Image 01 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1919), under construction,



photo by unknown author, Parish archive.

The image of Our Lady of Peace (from France), which was still in the Copacabana Parish Church, was taken to the church in a procession along Avenida Atlântica, accompanied by a large and emotional crowd. On September 6, 1921, as

mentioned above, the decree establishing the Parish of Our Lady of Peace was signed by the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, D. Joaquim Arcoverde de Albuquerque Cavalcanti, delimiting its boundaries and "canonically erecting it as the Parish Church of Our Lady of Peace, now under construction."

Image 02 – Nossa Senhora da Paz Square / Ipanema (1939)



General Archives of the City of Rio de Janeiro

The church has recorded significant events in the lives of many people, such as the wedding of the late President Juscelino Kubitschek (1931) and the death of the great composer Pixinguinha in 1973, who had come to be his godfather. For this reason, to this day, the Ipanema Band, when passing by the church, pauses in reverence for this great composer. At the time, the Ipanema neighborhood was a sparsely populated stretch of sand, with a population of limited financial resources; to fund the construction of the church, they turned to the people of Copacabana and Leme, already densely populated neighborhoods, inventing everything imaginable: raffles, auctions, etc., to keep the construction going. The square in front of the church was called Souza Ferreira, later Nossa Senhora da Paz - name given by Mayor Canon Olympio de Mello, with sand dunes.

Image 03 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1921), under construction, still without the tower,



Photo by Marc Ferrez, General Archives of the City of Rio de Janeiro

3 Restoration and Modernization

The church has a façade area of approximately 3,100 m², and its tallest tower reaches 40 m. The tower itself is made of stone up to a height of 7.90 m, and its base is structured to support 10,000 kg. Its robust appearance is necessary as a symbol of strength and faith. Lightning rods were installed in the small towers in 1929 by architect Luppi, the same architect who installed lightning rods on the Christ the Redeemer monument. The bells, cast by the Ababillon firm of Saarberg, Germany, bear the inscription: "Christ the King - Queen of Peace - and Saint Joseph." The stained-glass windows were executed, some by Casa Zettler in Munich, Germany; others came from Casa Conrado in São Paulo. The church's main altar is made of treated marble, made in Italy. It was inaugurated on November 21, 1926. The monstrance, made in Paris, contains relics of the Viscount of Ouro Preto, donated by his family to the church. The baptismal font is made of African onyx. The altar of Saint Anthony, built entirely of marble, was inaugurated on July 14, 1929; that of Saint Francis, also in marble, was executed by Heitor Usai. The image of Our Lady of Luján arrived with a delegation of clergy from Argentina, who handed it over to the parish in a ceremony held in 1935. In January 1957, a campaign began to install air conditioning, which finally happened on March 12, 1961. The Church of Our Lady of Peace became one of the few churches, if not the only one I've encountered, with a central cooling system, considered one of the best at the time, as it integrated into the architecture, with wind

turbines in the center of the nave's domes and machinery in the basement, with ducts lined with "scenographic" decorative elements in the same style as those on the façade. The grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, next to the church, inaugurated in 1958, forms part of the architectural complex.

4 The Process of Implementing Changes

In 1997, Monsignor Manuel Moreira Vieira, the current parish priest, decided to take on the challenge of restoring and implementing improvements, notably: a ceramic tile roof, masonry/rainwater drainage system (exterior), restoration of the wall frescoes (with artistic painting and gold leaf), and the electrical and air conditioning systems, which were visibly marked by the natural wear and tear of time, both externally and internally. To coordinate this endeavor, I was invited to coordinate the church's restoration project, which sought to identify and enhance the building's heritage by redoing the original paintings from its time, installing new and more efficient environmental comfort systems, and updating its architectural design to make it accessible with the installation of ramps.

We began with (01) research into the church's documentation and iconography, using the parish's own archives, which are very well organized and documented: inventory books, reference documents, and photographs, and the General Archives of the City of Rio de Janeiro. We adopted a procedure that yielded positive results: we asked parishioners at Masses to lend us old photos of the church so we could create a collection of reference images. These images greatly helped in the restoration of the church's interior: wall frescoes, rich in symbolism and design, many arabesques, panels depicting events of the Catholic liturgy, and capitals with gold leaf gilding. (02) In parallel, we carried out a detailed survey of the building: plans (including the roof/woodwork and ceramic tiles and rainwater drainage system), sections and facades, plus details of the decorative elements (external and internal), frames (doors, glass, capitals, furniture, images, etc.), electrical system (points and panels), cooling system (deficient and with excessive electricity consumption). (03) Once the physical survey was complete, we began a meticulous mapping of the damage, to define the multiple and diverse technical actions. The most extensive and expensive restorative action was the

removal of the layer of plastic paint that covered ALL the internal walls of the church, applied with the aim of "protecting" the oil painting (over a layer of plaster paste / the well-known fresco). This practice of "protection" through the application of plastic paint compromises the original aesthetics and its use, although inappropriate, was done when there were no resources for restoration. It became a very common method at the time. (03) Restoration of the keyboard, replacement of Compromised wood pieces and tiles (made from a mold of the existing tile and taken to a tile factory with which we had a partnership). Also on the roof, we repaired the gutters and increased the number of recessed drains as much as possible in the existing masonry. Small protrusions were incorporated into the facade plan through "scenographic" pagination. (04) Removal of part of the old refrigeration system and installation of a new one. The air spindles were reused, as they were in good condition and in harmony with the interior. We built metal walkways to facilitate technical inspections of the refrigeration system (plenum boxes), and the external condensers were installed next to one of the facades, which is partially hidden by construction next to the church. The site where the old condensers for large fans were located, a small basement below the Sacristy, was converted into a storage room. (05) Restoration of the external facades (including decorative/sculptural elements), with the removal of the deteriorated plaster (the base of the masonry). The exterior walls are made of solid brick and the base is made of ashlar stone), with waterproofing and painting applied, before installing decorative lighting points, highlighting the architectural forms and the security system/cameras. We took advantage of the scaffolding and installed new lightning rods and also replaced the concrete cross at the top of the tower with a new one, made from a mold of the old one, which was relocated to the new 'sailboat' (a place for lighting candles). Another restorative action was the restoration of the small grotto with the image of Our Lady of Lourdes. (06) Construction of ramps for accessibility for wheelchair users and the elderly, in accordance with municipal regulations. (07) Restoration of the floors in hydraulic tiles and marble (main altar). (08) Installation of the new reflected light lighting system, cameras, and sound. (09) Restoration of the furniture: pews (nave / total of two hundred / in dark wood, the most damaged parts were replaced with resin replicas in the color

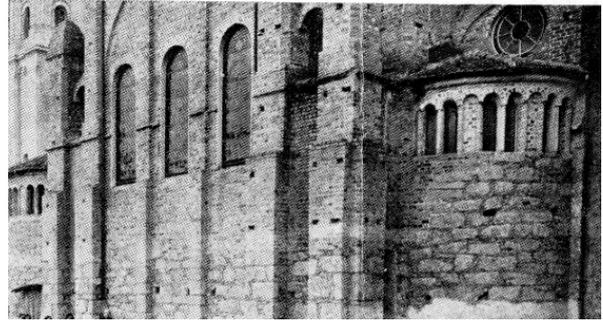
of the pew's wood); wooden confessionals (total of 04); altar furniture: a new carved wooden table with a marbled artistic paint finish, chairs for the celebrants, two "ambons" (where readings are made during the mass), altar furniture were made.

5 In Conclusion

The report presented here reveals the importance of the union between the theory and practice of Restoration in the intervention carried out at the Church of Our Lady of Peace. However, this union became the framework for the valorization of a religious building that is part of the Ipanema neighborhood. We speak of a 'sign' when we mention the tower because memory is a linguistic component when considering Cultural Heritage. The restoration of the Church described here evokes a sense of belonging and affection between society and the parish. When people brought their photos, responding to the parish priest's request to enrich the collection, they were laying the foundation for the interventions to come, as those photos constituted a process of communication. Communication is a language. The restoration carried out was the bridge that strengthened communication between that generation and the others who continue to attend the Church and make new memories. The restorative actions allowed the preservation of faith by solidifying the building. More than that, they unveiled covered walls, improved access and thermal comfort, and revitalized the property so that its meaning remains as a temple of faith. Another important piece of information presented here is the understanding that in restoration, "time does not go back" and that "only matter is restored," assertions reinforced by the Italian theorist Cesare Brandi. Indeed, the work constructed this narrative by presenting a detailed description of the actions performed. If time does not go back, it is necessary to ensure the permanence of memory, and understanding Cultural Heritage is the understanding of the importance of memory as a legacy of a society. Therefore, the Restoration and Modernization of the Church of Our Lady of Peace, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro fulfills this role of valuing memory.

6 Images illustrating the reported items

Image 04 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1919), under construction, detail of the external wall,



Unknown author, Parish archive.

Image 05 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1923), interior of the church still without covering,



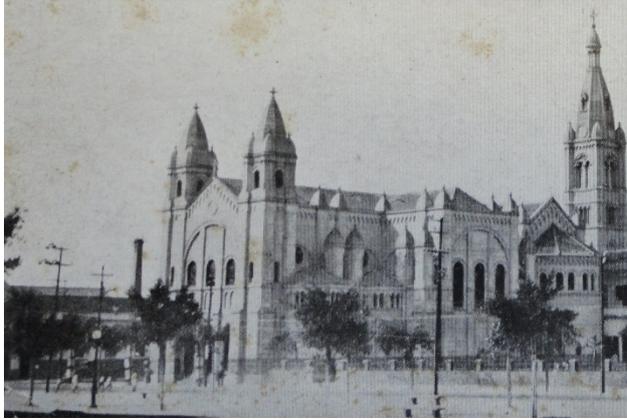
Unknown author, Parish archive.

Image 06 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1922), interior of the church, coronation ceremony of Our Lady of Peace, main altar /



Photo donated by parishioner, author unknown, Parish archive.v

Image 07 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1938) and architectural complex: church with the tower in the background and church hospital, for serving the poor. One of the few social care hospitals in the south of the city,



Author unknown, Parish archive.

Images comparing the condition of the Church before and after the restoration

Image 08 and 09 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1997 before and 2008 after), side facade facing Rua Joana Angelica, photos before and after restoration



Author Luiz Neves

Image 10 and 11 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1997 before 2008 after), towers of the main facade, photos before and after restoration



Author Luiz Neves

Image 12 and 13 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1997 before 2009 after, main facade, photos before and after restoration)



Author Luiz Neves

Image 14 and 15 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1997 before 2009 after), internal view



Author Luiz Neves

Image 16 and 17 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1997 before 2024 after), internal view, altar of Saint Anthony



Author Luiz Neves

IMAGE 18 and 19 – Church of Our Lady of Peace / Ipanema (1999 before 2023 after), internal view of the nave /



author Luiz Neves

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