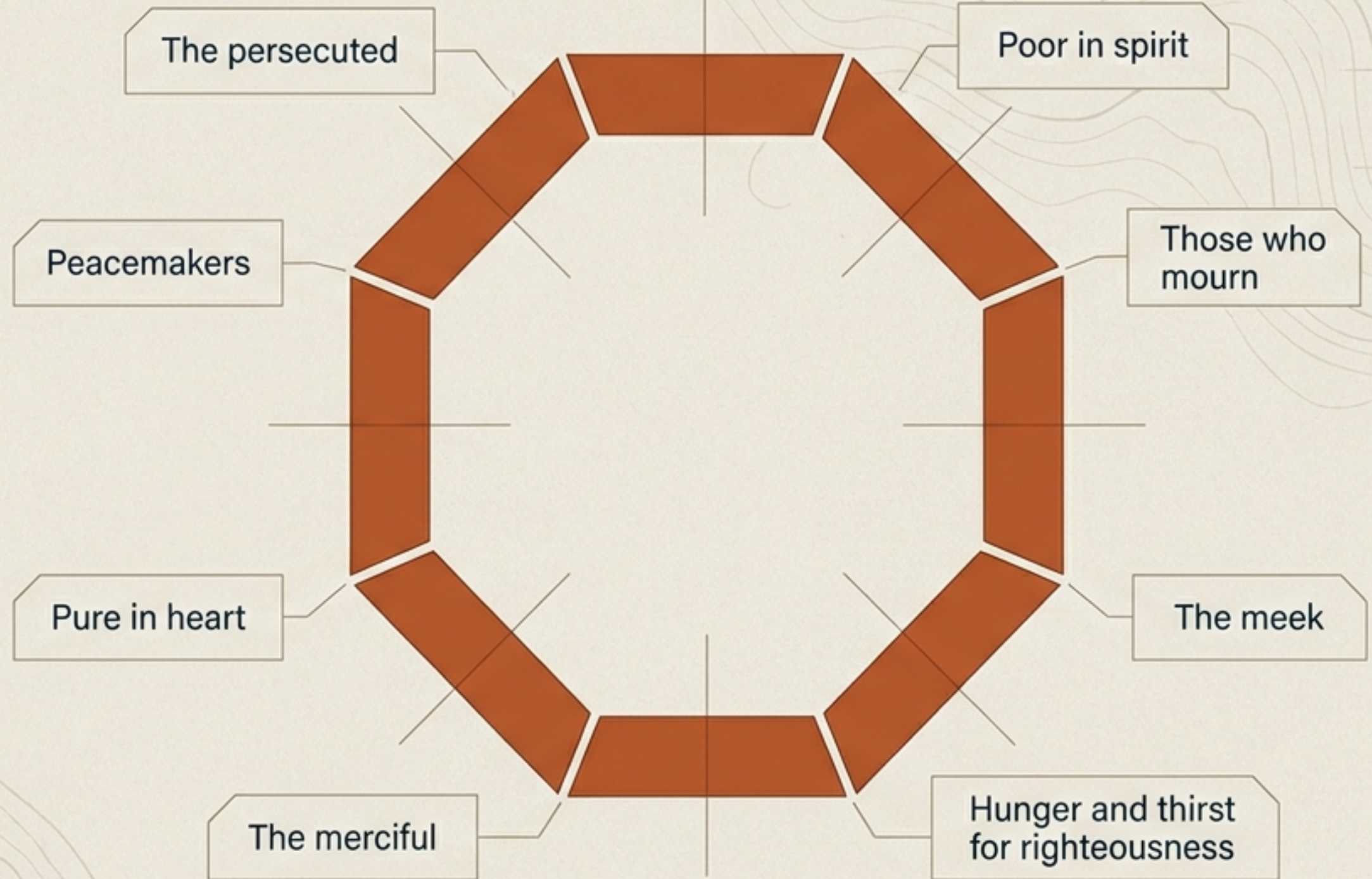


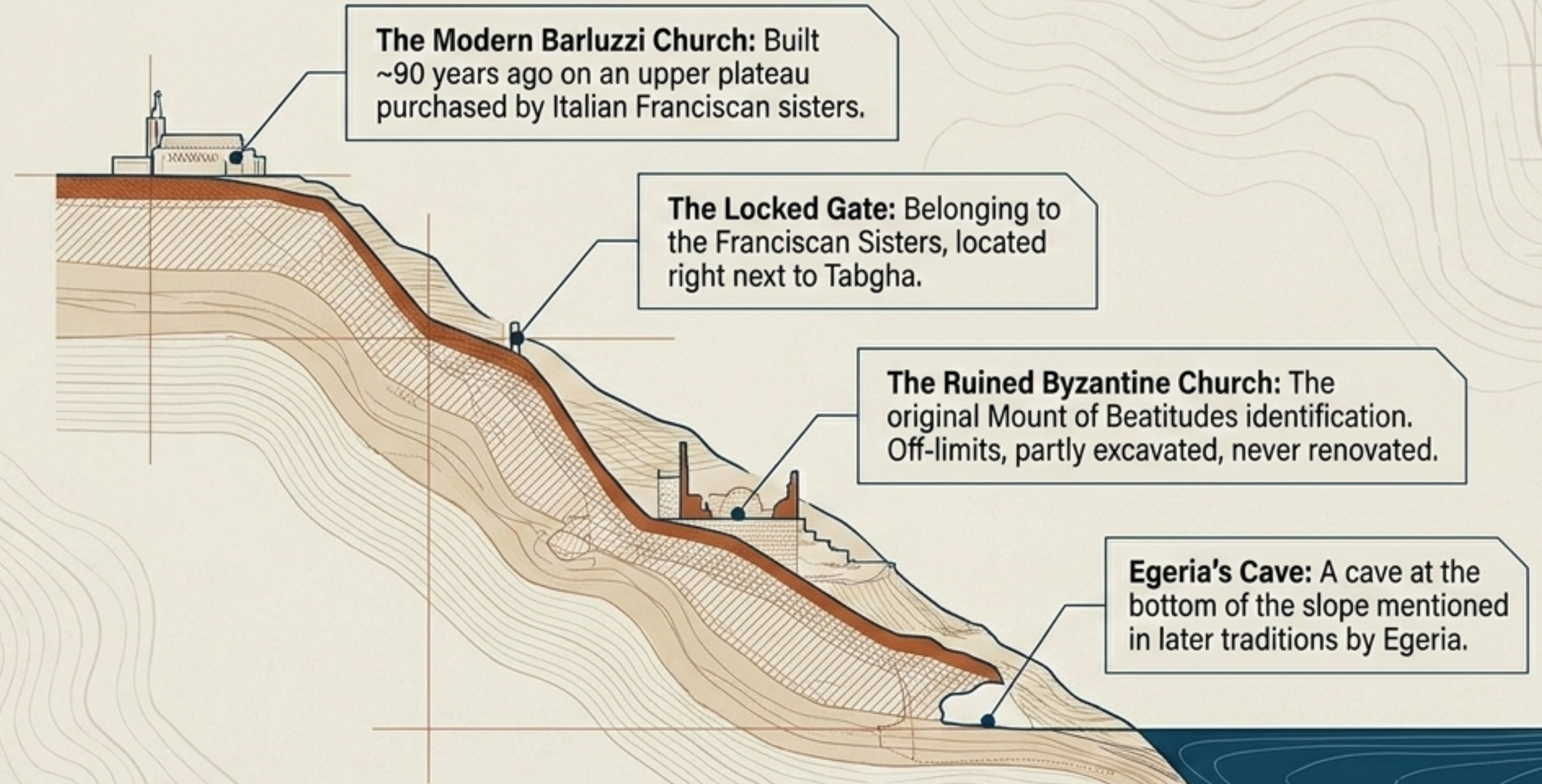
The Foundational Text of Christianity

The Sermon on the Mount spans three pages in the Gospel of Matthew (Chapters 5-7). It is widely recognized as the very basis of Christian theology—an equivalent in significance to the revelation at Mount Sinai. Jesus went up on the mountainside, sat down, and delivered eight distinct blessings.



The Topography of Pilgrimage

Early Christian traditions identified the lower slopes as the site of the sermon. Today, these ancient ruins sit behind locked gates, inaccessible to the public. To create a living memorial, modern builders had to look upward to the plateau.



Two Sites, One Sermon

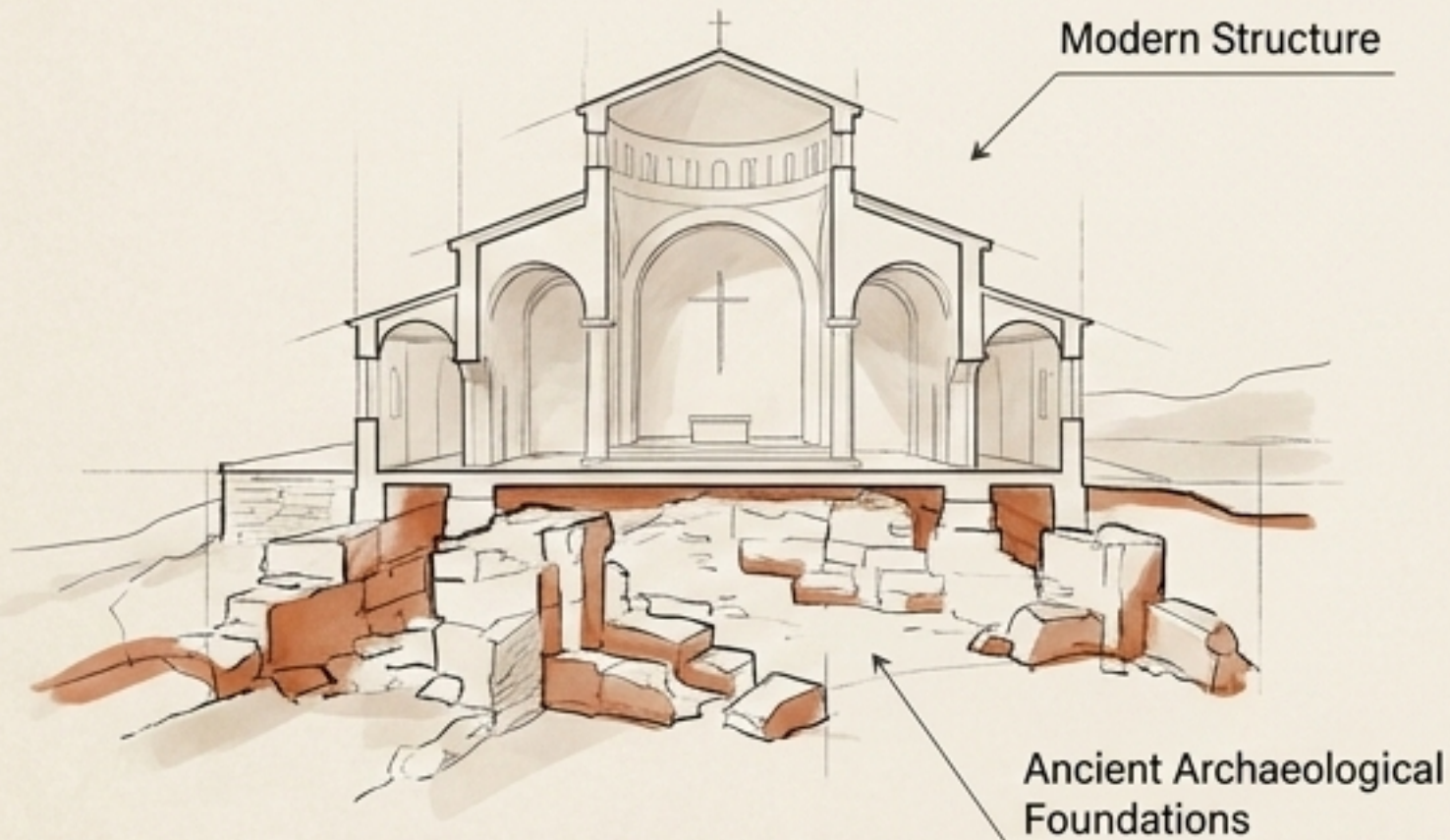
When the Italian Franciscan Sisters purchased the uphill plot approximately 90 years ago, they fundamentally shifted the focal point of the pilgrimage from an inaccessible ruin to an elevated vantage point.

| | Ancient Byzantine Site | Modern Barluzzi Site |
|-----------|--|---|
| Location | Downhill slope near Tabgha | Uphill plateau |
| Status | Ruined, partly excavated, totally off-limits | Active, highly trafficked, open to public |
| Anchor | Physical archaeological foundations | Textual and landscape foundations |
| Ownership | Historical antiquity | Italian Franciscan Sisters |

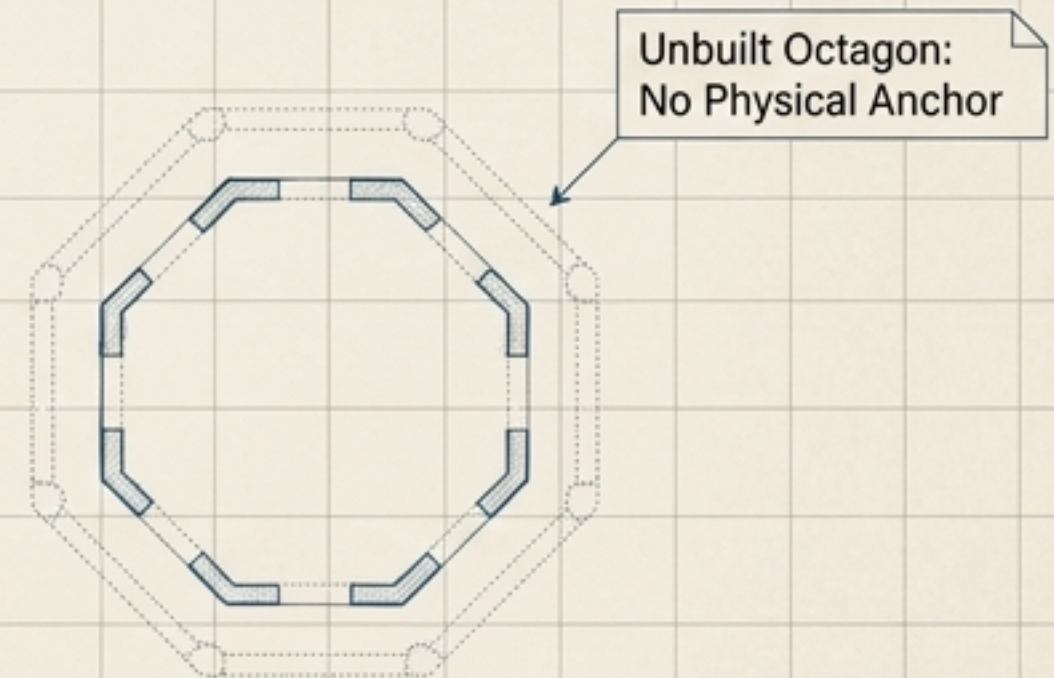
Building Without a Foundation


The Franciscan Sisters invited brilliant Catholic architect Antonio Barluzzi to design the new church. Barluzzi had recently designed the church on Mount Tabor, integrating ancient archaeological finds directly into the modern structure. Here, he faced a completely different challenge. There were zero archaeological finds on this upper plateau. He had no ancient stones, no cave, and no physical relic to build around. He had to start entirely from scratch.

Mount Tabor: Built on History



Mount of Beatitudes: A Blank Slate





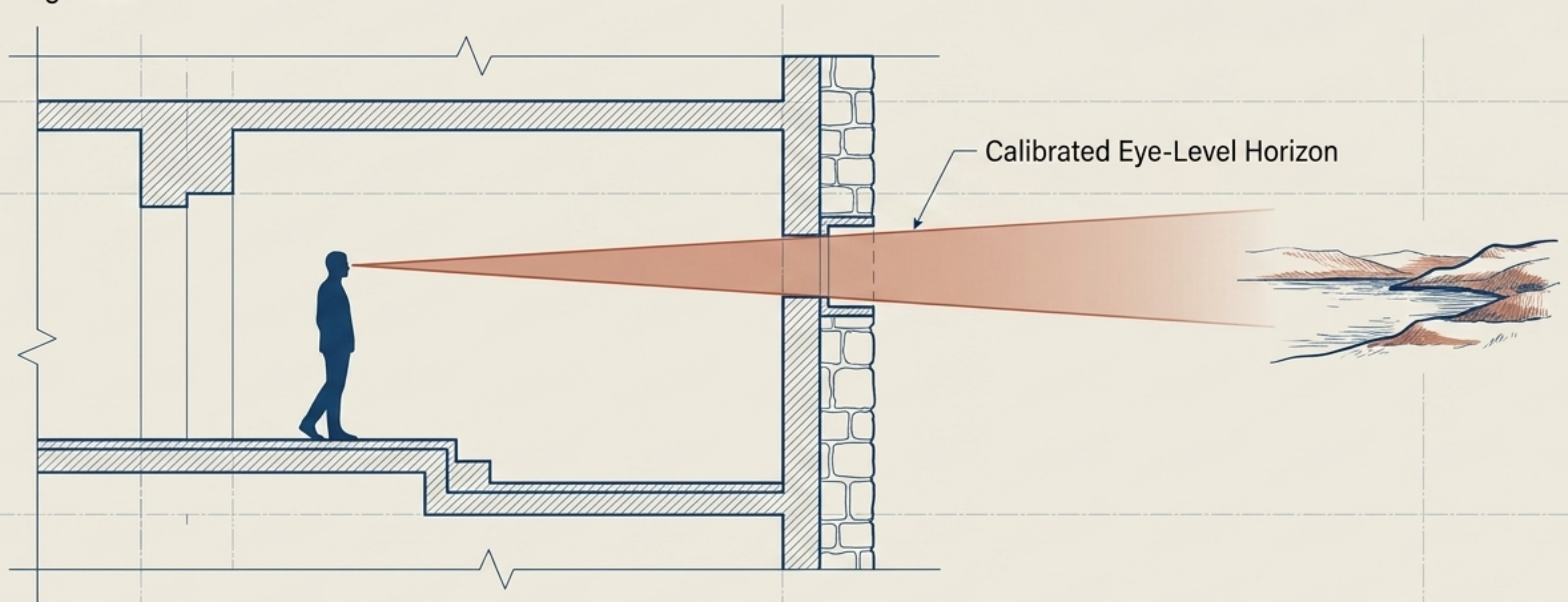
The View as the Holy Relic

Traditional holy sites are constructed over a physical artifact—a tomb, a rock, or a ruin. Barluzzi realized that while the stones of the first century were gone, one thing remained exactly as it was when Jesus spoke: the landscape.

Because he had no physical ruin to build upon, Barluzzi elevated the unchanging landscape to the status of a holy relic. The church would not house an artifact; it would act as a viewing frame for the topography itself.

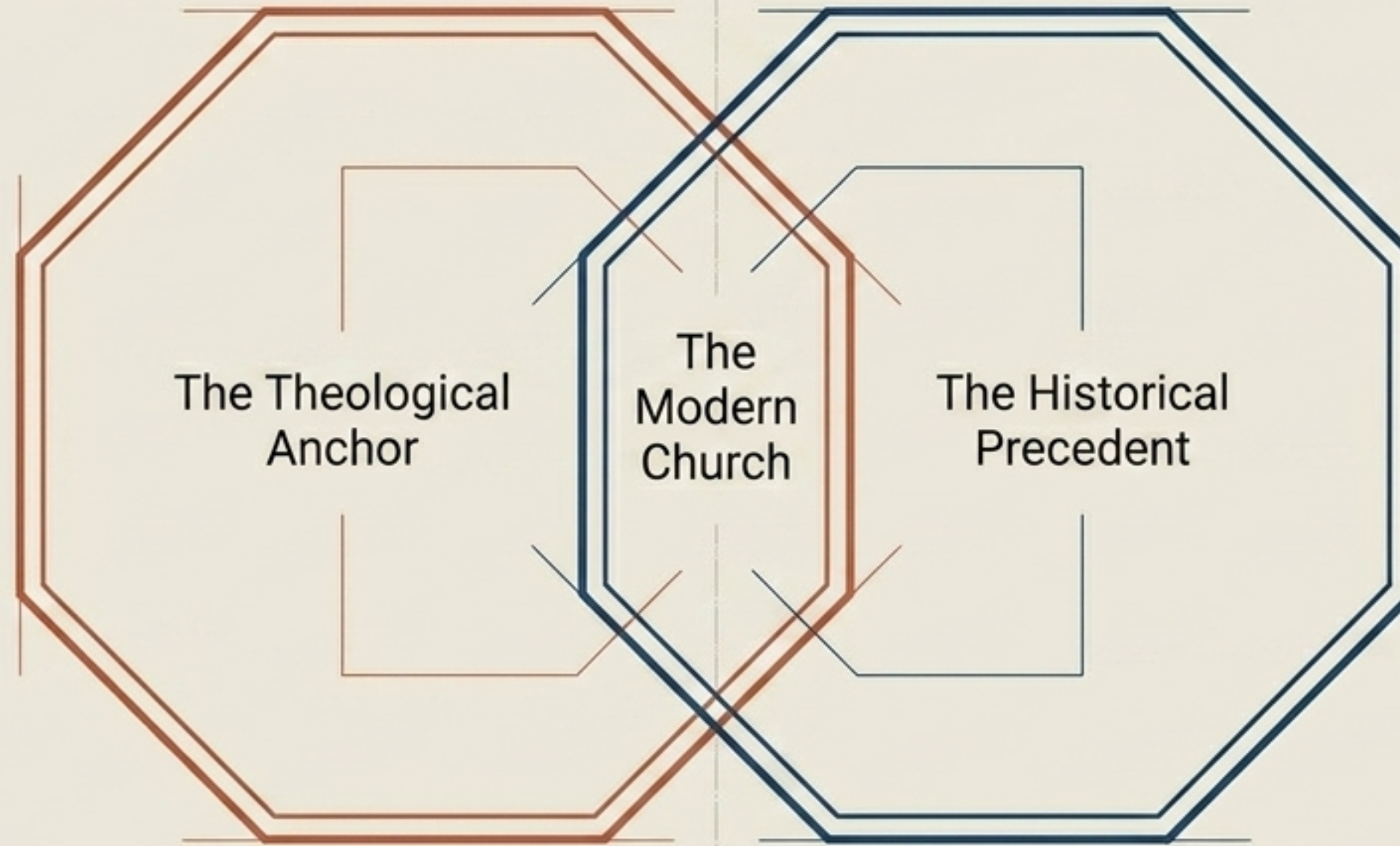
The Sightline Engine

To ensure visitors could experience the landscape exactly as Jesus did, Barluzzi engineered specific visual channels. Each side of the church features a long, relatively narrow window. These windows are precisely calibrated to eye-level from the interior walkway, forcing the architecture to fade away and perfectly framing the Sea of Galilee.



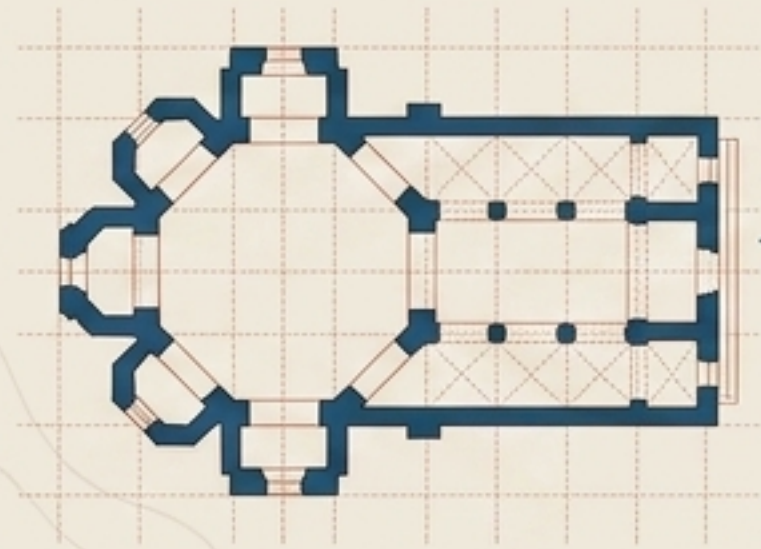
The Dual-Purpose Octagon

With the landscape framed, Barluzzi needed a physical shape for the building. He chose an eight-sided structure to serve two distinct, overlapping purposes. First, it is a literal manifestation of the text: each of the eight sides mathematically corresponds to one of the eight "Blessed are..." statements in the Gospel of Matthew.

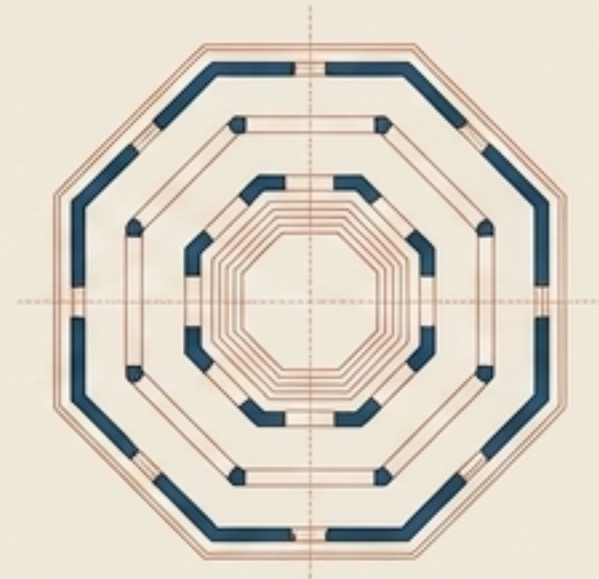


The Memorial Shape Matrix

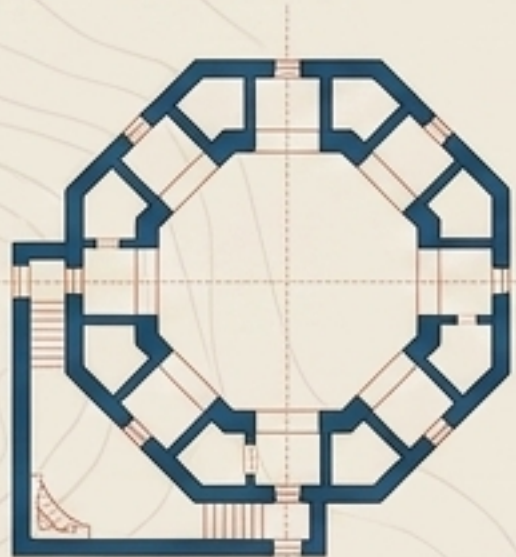
Barluzzi's octagon was not merely a textual pun; it was a deeply historical choice. In the ancient Roman and Byzantine world, an octagonal structure was the standard architectural form used to commemorate a significant event or person. By utilizing this shape, Barluzzi visually linked the modern 1930s construction to the ancient memorials of the region.



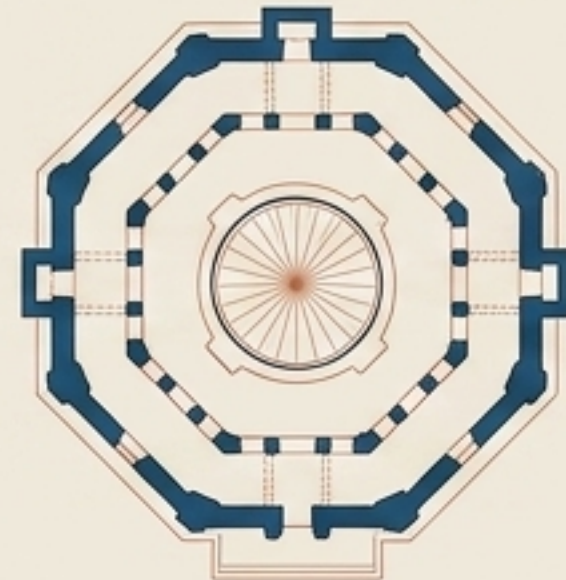
Capernaum
(Ancient Church)



Kathisma
(Road to Bethlehem)



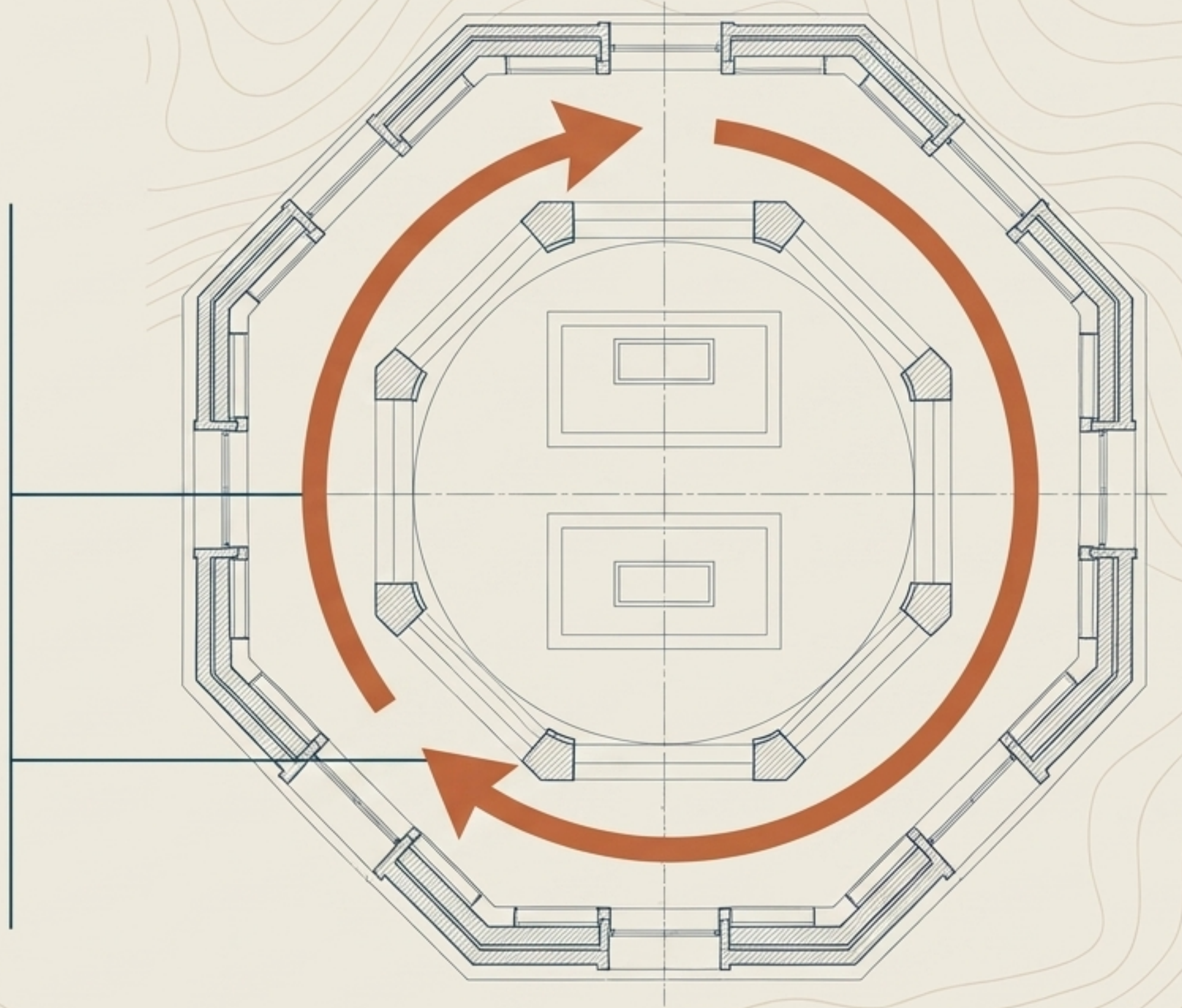
Caesarea
(Octagonal Church)



Dome of the Rock
(Octagonal Mosque)

The Flow of Worship

Standard church architecture dictates linear movement: visitors walk down a central aisle and sit in pews facing a front altar. Because Barluzzi designed this space to be a panoramic viewing engine, he disrupted this tradition. Visitors are intended to walk in a continuous circle around the central altars. This 360-degree flow ensures the viewer engages with the landscape from all sides, reading the landscape alongside the text.



The Erased Dedication

Because the church was commissioned by an Italian order of Franciscan Sisters and inaugurated in the late 1930s, the original mosaic floor featured a dedication to the leader of Italy at the time: Benito Mussolini.

Following the events of World War II, this dedication became deeply problematic. The controversial section of the mosaic was carefully removed and replaced with a new inscription.

To this day, tour guides still occasionally receive requests from visitors asking to see the "Mussolini Church."



The Living Landscape

Today, the Mount of Beatitudes serves as a highly active pilgrimage site for Catholics, non-Catholics, and secular tourists alike. Visitors can stay overnight in the adjacent hotel or book **private altars** positioned down the slope for spiritual activities. Ultimately, Barluzzi succeeded in his impossible task. He built a masterpiece of modern pilgrimage by realizing that the most sacred artifact on the mountain was the view itself.

