

Architect Tombazis passes away at 85, but his connection to the Shrine will last forever

Creator of a serene landscape, he designed the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity

The Greek architect Alexandros Tombazis, author of the project for the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity and initial designer of the Presbytery of the Prayer Area, died on 24 June at the age of 85.

The rector of the Shrine of Fatima, Fr. Carlos Cabecinhas, sent a message of condolence to his family and co-workers, expressing his deep sorrow at the death of the architect whose name “will always be linked to the Shrine”.

Alexandros Tombazis was the winner of the competition launched in 1997 to build a large covered space for assemblies. The capacity of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary was proving insufficient to accommodate all the pilgrims and, since the 1970s, the Shrine had harboured the desire to provide a space for celebrations that could bring the faithful together in a comfortable way, from an aesthetic, theological, anthropological, physical and psychological point of view.

With the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, the architect inaugurated “the architectural landscape in Cova da Iria that respects the canons advocated by the so-called minimalist architecture and that can well be characterised as the architecture of silence”, says Marco Daniel Duarte, director of the Museum of the Shrine of Fatima.



Tombazis’ work in Fatima emerged “in the wake of the aesthetic movements that, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 21st century, positioned architecture in the epistemological debate that defended the serenity of the built landscape in its relationship with the natural landscape and with the scale of the human being”.

The architect “was thus responsible for one of the most striking religious spaces of contemporary times”, Marco Daniel Duarte also describes.

The dialogue between the new basilica and the Prayer Area stems “above all from the large beams that extend the longitudinal axis from the tower of the old basilica”. These same beams “also allow the interior to be visually unobstructed and for the natural light, filtered through the canvas of the roof, to appear as the protagonist of the architectural work”.

Architect Tombazis also drew up the initial part of the design for the Presbytery of the Prayer Area, which was inaugurated as part of the celebration of the Centenary of the Apparitions in 2016.

As secretary of the Environment and Construction Department of the Shrine of Fatima at the time, António Valinho remembers the Greek architect as “a very sensible, delicate and thoughtful man, in addition to the great professional quality and friendly manners that also characterised him”.

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