Bishop of Leiria-Fatima presided over the dedication of the new altar of the Shrine



Bishop of Leiria-Fatima presided over the dedication of the new altar of the Shrine

The Greek architect Alexandros Tombazis and the architect Paula Santos designed this new altar.

The bishop of Leiria-Fatima, António Marto, presided today over the celebration of the liturgical dedication of the new altar and over the blessing of the presbytery in the prayer area of the Shrine.

During the homily of the celebration, before thousands of people, the prelate explained the symbolism of the act of blessing, emphasizing, “The altar of the Eucharist is the altar of the mercy of God”.

The bishop António Marto mentioned the importance of the Eucharistic, where “Jesus resurrected becomes truly present with all his mystery of love with which he gave himself until death on the Cross” place that is “the supreme expression of mercy of the

one who fully gives himself and gives everything to overcome all the distances, to extend forgiveness, to re-establish communion, to overcome hate and violence, to heal the wounds of the human heart, to give new life, to bring peace".

"This is the mystery of his given body and poured blood that we celebrate in the altar of the Eucharist, where we receive it in communion. The altar of the Eucharistic is also the altar of mercy, he pointed out.

For the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, this dedication asks us "to accept the self-giving Jesus regarding the same request that Our Lady made to the Little Shepherds" and this means "to offer him our flesh, with the humbleness and courage of Mary" so that He can continue to live among men, to give him our hands to caress the little and the poor; to give our arms to host and support the week and work for those in need; to give our mind to think and to create projects in the light of beatitudes and works of mercy: and, above all to offer our heart to love and to make decisions according to God's will."

And then, he also asserted" we will be tools of God's mercy so that Jesus can take action in the world through us."

The bishop António Marto greeted the participants of the national pilgrimage of catholic youth, the "Fatima Jovem 2016" one of the 21 registered groups this Sunday in the Shrine of Fatima, most of them Portuguese.

"Dear young people, take the flame of merciful love to the environments of your daily life, to all the people who live in the suburbs so that the mercy of God can flow from generation to generation", he stated. Them, he asked the support to build "a church with a big heart, close to the injured and the humiliated of the history, a church that serves the poorest".

The new presbytery, where the altar is inserted is a "brand new construction" by the Greek architect Alexandros Tombazis, the same who signed the project of the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, and by the architect Paula Santos.

The intervention area of the works that started in March 2015, occupies part of the old presbytery that was disassembled, the staircases of the Prayer Area and the Colonnades.

The intention of the new presbytery is also to be perceived as a work of art, in its whole and in each element, and to achieve a harmonious integration in its surroundings.

It has three crucial points – the altar, the pulpit and the chair – to which is added the cross and the stand for the statue of Our Lady as key elements of that space. The new presbytery will hold 120 concelebrants and it will be 2.4 metres lower compared to the previous structure, in order to be closer to the assembly.

The structure, in front of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, will replace the presbytery, which set the shape of the Prayer Area since 1982, date of the first visit of Pope John Paul II to Fatima.

The new presbytery has two floors, the lower floor is underground and it's mainly intended to support services, Tabernacle and Sacristy. It has direct access to the

presbytery floor by stairways and by lift. The project required the redesign of the staircase, which kept the same type of limestone of the current region.

Besides the roof structure, the construction includes, an elevating wall close to the place where is staying the Statue of Our Lady, which will provide a cut-off; a sculpture of Fernanda Fragateiro in the back wall of the Presbytery; a cross and a sculpture of Christ Resurrected made by Filip Moroder Doss and the pulpit, the altar, the presidential chairs, designed by the architect João Mendes Ribeiro.

The design of these three last elements followed specific criteria in order to adapt to the liturgical and functional prerequisites of each piece, synthesizing a number of symbolic meanings and of consistency. It was intended that these elements could give rise to a meaningful and expressive whole but also a functional whole in absolute harmony with the liturgical nature that is inherent to them.

In the design of each of the three pieces, all the important premises of the Implementing Project for the Presbytery of the Prayer Area were taken into account, to which efforts were made to address it in the best-integrated manner possible.

Highlight goes to the Cross and to the Christ resurrected, two pieces designed by the sculptor Filip Moroder Dosso, with 2.40 and 3 metres high respectively that symbolise the mystery of salvation.

According to Rector Carlos Cabecinhas, this work achieved its double purpose; it provided the prayer area a functional presbytery that ensures, simultaneously, a symbolic expression trough an architectural quality.

Concerning the anniversary pilgrimage of May, which is already taking place in the Shrine, “the pilgrims can expect a preparation of our liturgical celebrations so that they can have the best experience of faith but also a broadening of service offer so that the visitors can be enriched by other type of celebrations about Fatima and the Message of Fatima.

---

www.fatima.pt/en/news/bishop-of-leiria-fatima-presided-over-the-dedication-of-the-new-altar-of-the-shrine-2016-05-08