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PRESS RELEASE

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The IABSE Outstanding Structure Award to: The Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Fatima, Portugal

The Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Fatima, Portugal, has been awarded the 2009 IABSE Outstanding Structure Award. The Award recognises the most remarkable, innovative, creative or otherwise stimulating structures completed within the last few years. The Outstanding Structure Award Committee was chaired by Mr Loring A. Wyllie Jr., USA.

The new Church in Fatima was designed to be a large covered space for 9000 pilgrims also able to accommodate other, non-religious, activities, while not disturbing the continuity of the historical place.

It is located between the historic Basilica and the Pastoral Centre with easy access for large numbers of people. Basic principles of the design encompass a sensitive approach to the site, interaction with the existing elements of religious activities and an architecture that uses simple means to evoke the desired religious effect, while at the same time being a fully functional multi-purpose hall.

Three basic elements, a rectangle, a circle and a linear element intersecting these, are the geometric elements that dominate the architecture. The whole complex is developed semi-underground so that the apparent volume of the Church is reduced, gently rising from the existing square level.

The main structure is circular and despite its size embraces the pilgrims generously while maintaining the feeling of a Church, giving a panoramic view of the interior space and providing the desired monumentality. The walls of the building are clad in sandstone and have minimal openings. The roof structure is designed so as to provide excellent daylight through north-facing clerestory windows. The roof is intersected by two concrete beams, which rise towards the altar in a counter movement to the down-sloping of the floor. It emphasises the vertical focus related to the purpose of the place and incorporates south-facing natural lighting that emphasizes the procession from the entrance to the presbytery.

The Award Presentation will take place on September 9, 2009, at the Opening Ceremony of the 33rd IABSE Symposium in Bangkok, Thailand.

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The International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering (IABSE) comprises 4'000 members in 100 countries. Founded in 1929, IABSE deals with all aspects of planning, design, construction, maintenance and repair of civil engineering structures. To fulfil its mission, IABSE organises conferences and publishes a quarterly journal, Structural Engineering International, as well as books and reports. The Association has a number of technical groups and presents awards in recognition of outstanding contributions in the domain of structural engineering.

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