



## PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL OF SOZA

XII | XVI-XVII Centuries

The Parish Church of Soza has been identified as the church of *Sanctus Michael* of Soza since 1229, being described in the List of churches of the bishopric of Coimbra.

It has the particularity of having two patronages, the first instituted by King Sacho I in 1193 and confirmed by King Afonso II in Coimbra in 1218 to the Order of Rocamador, and a second instituted by King Afonso V to the Order of St. James as a perpetual Commendation of the same, for the donation made to João de Sousa, the Romanesque, which later, through his descendants, would pass to the administration of the House of Lafões.

It was the most important and profitable church in the district of Vagos, with successive reconstructions, the last one dating to the second half of the 16th century. The reconstruction work ended in 1693, according to the date inscribed on the high choir inside. It preserves a "miraculous image of the crucified Christ" in a chapel established by Fr. Francisco de Pavia in 1629, date engraved on the pedestal of a column inside. The original chancel altarpiece is in limestone, and is credited as the work of the Coimbra renaissance. The relief contains an image of St. Michael, currently on the rear façade of the church. Two images remain, one Gothic (14th century) and the other Renaissance (16th century) from the early worship of Our Lady of Rocamador, both in polychrome limestone, as well as an image of St. Lucia.

In 1747, the chancel's altarpiece in gilded woodcarving was applied and the image of St. Michael was made in polychrome clay.

In 1971, it underwent an expansive requalification project which lasted until 1974, based on a 1967 project by the architect, Maria Adosinda Gamas de Albuquerque. It shortened the chancel, lined the walls of the nave with tiles and removed the integrated movable heritage, including the five gilded altarpieces and the pulpit, which was converted into a table and presbytery celebration.

In the square at the back of the church there is a Mannerist transept in limestone from 1659, with a semi-circular dome featuring symbols of the crucifixion in circular paintings and an entablature decorated with cherubs in high relief, protecting the polychrome image of the crucified Christ. This crossing is known as Our Lady of the Angels (because there was a Chapel with this name located next to it), or Maria Tomé, who commissioned the crossing. There are two running hypotheses: one that Maria Tomé built it in gratitude for the miracle of the Restoration of Independence in Portugal; another was that Maria Tomé, victim of an epidemic, stood up in her coffin before being buried in the opposite chapel of Our Lady of the Angels.

The crossing's pedestal bears the inscription: "*Maria Thome mandov feazer esta charola por sva devasam 1659*".

The feast in honour of Our Lady of the Angels is celebrated on the first Sunday of September and the feast of St. Michael on the last weekend of September.

**Timeline:**

**1088-01-11** – Soza is mentioned in the donation by Sisnando Davides, leader of Coimbra, to a hermitage of St. Christopher "*inter uilla socia et uilla Iliavo*".

**1193-10-15** – D. Sancho I donates the Town of Soza to the friars of the church of Santa Maria of Rocamador "*Ecclasiae Sancta Mariae de Rupe Amatoris de Villa quae vocatur Socia et Fratribus ibidem*".

**1209-03-00** – King Sancho I exempts the Cathedral of Coimbra from the annual payment of some churches in exchange for the Church of Soza, which the king had given to the Church of Rocamador.

**1255** – King Afonso III ensures the Mamarrosa estate to Fr. Hugo, Prior of Soza of the Order of Santa Maria of Rocamador, which his brother King D. Sancho II had given him.

**1747-09-08** – Application of the main altarpiece with a "modern style" and an exquisite image of the Archangel St. Michael is placed on the same main altar, ordered for the occasion of the visit of Rector Tomé do Sacramento e Brito.

**1721-05-17** – The Church of Soza is described in the parish records provided by the rector, Simão Ferreira de Aguiar.

**1758** – The Church of Soza is described in the parish records provided by the rector, Tomé do Sacramento e Brito. The altar of the Blessed Sacrament, the altar of Saint Anthony, the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and the altar of the Lord, Jesus were located in the nave.

**1843-09-27** – Fire and ruin of the palace adjoining the church, where the grantees and the rector lived. It was located where the parish cemetery exists today and would have connected the interior tribune to the chancel.

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Portugal, Aveiro, Vagos, Soza