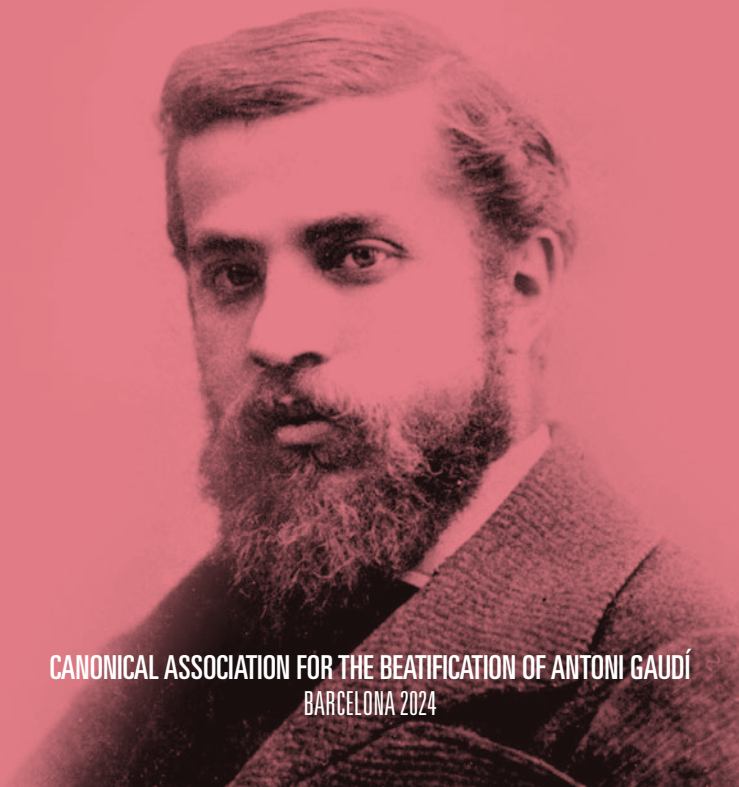


ANTONI GAUDÍ

(1852-1926)

GOD'S ARCHITECT



CANONICAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF ANTONI GAUDÍ
BARCELONA 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

On 7 November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI consecrated the altar and the still unfinished Basilica of the Sagrada Família, presenting to the world the most emblematic work of God's servant Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1852-1926). At the same time, the Holy Father called attention to the man who designed it, world renowned for his contributions to architecture, praising his closeness to the Word of God, the liturgy and nature, all of which inspired his work. Some years earlier, in 1982, Saint John Paul II was the first Pope to visit the Sagrada Família and noted that the Basilica had possessed significant strength from the very beginning.

Based on the booklet published previously by the Association for the Beatification of Antoni Gaudí and documents compiled to draft the "positio", the Canonical Association for the Beatification of Antoni Gaudí, established in December 2023 by Cardinal Joan Josep Omella, Archbishop of Barcelona, would like to dedicate this booklet to all the devotees and supporters of the cause to have Gaudí declared a saint. This is done with the knowledge that many people, past and present, have considered Gaudí a man of Christian virtue who led an exemplary life. The man known as "God's architect" showed extraordinary technical skill, which made him an all-time architectural genius and he was also deeply spiritual, a Christian who achieved the religiousness of mystics.

Piety was an essential part of Antoni Gaudí's spirit. His admiration for the work of the Creator, his piety before God and his reverence for the sacred were all elements of his personality and his work. Additionally, Gaudí was a genius and, therefore, a creator himself. Creation is a labour of love because love is, in essence, innovative and diffusive. Gaudí addressed this love to God, although he was also involved in human matters through beauty, the path God gave him to excellence. His great masterpiece, the Sagrada Família, is a celebration of the Heavenly Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the earthly trinity (Jesus, Mary and Joseph). As an expiatory temple, it is the fruit of small donations from so many people from a wide variety of countries and cultures, all attracted to the humble beauty of a church in praise of the Creator.

This booklet aims to share the deeply spiritual Christian dimension of a man who was an example of a saintly life with all Christians and well-intentioned people and for him to be invoked, if the Church sees worthy, as our intercessor with God.

Barcelona, 10 June 2024 Anniversary of
the death of God's servant



2. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Antoni Gaudí i Cornet was the son of Francesc Gaudí i Serra, a pot smith from Riudoms, and Antònia Cornet i Bertran, also from a family of pot smiths in Reus. He was born in Reus on 25 June 1852 and was baptised the following day at the Sant Pere Apòstol priory parish in the same city. He died in Barcelona at Hospital de la Santa Creu on 10 June 1926 three days after being run over by a streetcar.

Gaudí was the youngest of five siblings. Rosa, the oldest, died young leaving behind a daughter, also called Rosa, who was Gaudí's niece. The second, Francesc, was a doctor and also died young. The other two, Maria and Antoni, didn't survive childhood. Antoni Gaudí lived in Reus until he was sixteen (1868), when he moved to Barcelona to live with his brother. His mother died in 1876. He studied architecture in the Catalan capital and practised this profession until his death. The last twelve years of his life were devoted in body and soul to building his masterpiece: the Basilica of the Sagrada Família.

During his childhood, spent in Reus with frequent stays in Riudoms, particularly at the Mas de la Calderera country home, Gaudí showed great interest in nature and organic shapes. Gaudí's imagination was mainly born out of constantly observing trees, stones, plants and rocks, studying

the textures and colours of nature. He would later say that nature was his teacher as an architect. Gaudí spent a lot of time as a child and teenager exploring the areas just outside of Reus and Riudoms, observing the shapes in nature. At the same time, he did his secondary studies at Col·legi dels Pares Escolapis in Reus, where early on he showed a proclivity for geometry and drawing.

Gaudí always reminded people that he was a geometrician and, therefore, an architect. And this was clear in the works he submitted while studying at the School of Architecture of Barcelona, which he graduated from in 1878. Even then, his style was so unique and ahead of his time, influenced by Catalan Gothic and the organic shapes of nature, that one of his teachers, Elies Rogent, said on his graduation day, “We have given a degree to a madman or a genius, time will tell.”

The newly minted architect began working on several projects. He wanted to make a name for himself and also needed to contribute to the delicate family finances. His great opportunity, however, came in 1883. Providentially, Josep Maria Bocabella, the founder of the Spiritual Association of the Devotees of Saint Joseph, commissioned him to build the Basilica of the Sagrada Família, a project that would define his career and that he would work on until his death. For over 40 years, the Sagrada Família was Gaudí’s dream. A dream that grew both inside him and out, spiritually and architecturally.

Gaudí's works, both secular and religious, came in quick succession and were full of contrasts. He designed Palau Güell (1888), bursting with colours, for his patron Eusebi Güell, as a symbol of the first Barcelona Universal Exposition. At the same time, he was working for the priest Saint Henry de Ossó on the convent and school of the Teresians located on Ganduxer street, an austere, highly spiritual building that expresses the teachings of Saint Teresa of Jesus. The inner workings of a heart that strove to bring him closer to God, his enormous workload, the difficulties in Astorga and the death of one of his mentors, the Bishop of Astorga and fellow Reus native, Joan Baptista Grau, who had introduced him to the liturgy of the Church, led Gaudí to question the true meaning of his life. During Lent in 1894, excessive fasting put him on death's door. He was saved by the future Bishop of Vic Josep Torras i Bages, his main mentor alongside the oratorians of Saint Philip Neri, where he took confession. In 1894, Gaudí went through a crisis of spiritual growth that would be beneficial in the long run, as it put him firmly on the path to saintliness.

Gaudí began a period full of activity in 1898, as he continued working on the Sagrada Família. He once again felt God's presence in his life, stronger than ever, and his architecture filled with Christian references, above all crosses like the ones atop the Bellesguard villa, Casa Batlló, the roofs of La Pedrera and the entrance to Park Güell. And he built the schools at the Sagrada Família (1909), which he paid for per-

sonally, so the workers' children could receive an education in Christianity and civic duty, helping combat social violence. Christian symbols are found throughout the city and his architecture incorporates them with incomparable artistry and unique architecture, drawing attention and admiration for their strength. After 1912-1914, his niece Rosa now dead, Gaudí began to step away from all his other projects, including his grandiose intervention at the Cathedral of Mallorca after the death of his friend Bishop Pere-Joan Campins, and the crypt at the church of Colònia Güell, where the works stalled when his friend and patron Eusebi Güell fell seriously ill. He channeled all his efforts into the Sagrada Família. His sole concern at this point was the models of the naves, the Nativity façade, the studies of the bell towers, the mosaics for the spires on the towers, and the humble candelabra and lamps he designed himself for the crypt at the Sagrada Família.

In November 1925, Gaudí left the house at Park Güell to live on the work site, in his workshop at the Sagrada Família. The man who had always dedicated his life to God had now moved into his very house. The tower of Saint Barnabas rose into the sky above Barcelona and sailors could see it standing there from afar. It was just one of eighteen towers, but also a symbol of what was to come, of the new Jerusalem rising into the sky.

Gaudí, who lived an austere life, isolated himself from anything that could distract him from his only goal. His energy was fading and everything inside him was focused on God. The architect, who continued visiting Sant Felip Neri church near the Barcelona cathedral every day, was run over by a streetcar the afternoon of 7 June 1926 on Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, near Plaça de Tetuan. Assumed to be a beggar, he was taken to Hospital de la Santa Creu, a centre for paupers. His condition was very serious and all of Barcelona was shaken by the accident. Finally, after repeating "Amen" three times, Antoni Gaudí died the afternoon of 10 June. He was almost 74 years old. Many came out to honour him at his viewing, leaving written proof of their affection. His funeral procession, simple yet drawing masses, crossed the streets of Barcelona and the people cried, "A saint has died!" Gaudí's remains were laid to rest in the chapel of Our Lady of Carmel, in the crypt of the Sagrada Família.

3. ANTONI GAUDÍ'S SPIRITUALITY

Three types of intelligence converged in Gaudí. The first is spatial intelligence, which allowed him to innovate in his calculations and imagine the interior and exterior spaces of his buildings before they were built. The second is logical and mathematical intelligence, which made him particularly good at calculating geometric figures. The third is spiritual intelligence, which allowed him to delve into the sacred mysteries through the powerful symbols of the religion of Christ's disciples.

These three types of intelligence were intertwined and complementary. The most decisive, however, was the third. The driving force behind Gaudí's creative genius was his spiritual love, a love that was for God and his fellow man. That's why the main reference for the Sagrada Família is the new Jerusalem, which is for God. The Book of Revelation 21:2 reads, "I saw the new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God, out of Heaven, adorned as a bride prepared for her husband." So, Gaudí designed a great church that rises towards instead of coming down from Heaven, evoking the city of God.

At the Sagrada Família, everything is vertical, everything rises up and reaches for the heights. The eighteen towers are a message of Christian hope in the heart of the city, visible to all and standing there for future generations. Verticality is much more significant than horizontality at the Basilica, which points from the earth towards the sky. Gaudí wanted pilgrims and visitors, when looking at the Sagrada Família, to look to God from their place on earth. In fact, in all of his works, from the smallest pieces to his grand architectural designs, Antoni Gaudí aimed to raise man up to the Infinite.

Gaudí's spirituality, his inner life, was nourished by the foundational principles of Catholicism. And it was this spirituality, that of a person who had not studied theology in an academic setting but experienced the mysteries of faith, that he expressed in his work. Gaudí's architecture radiates Catholic faith, which Gaudí lived naturally, without intellectual complications, above all after 1894.

His buildings drink from the font of Christian symbology. Architecture is used to serve the symbol, and the symbol is translated into physical shapes of extraordinary beauty. Everything Gaudí touched was made beautiful, drawing from God's beauty, because the roots of his creativity lie in the sacred mysteries and their symbolic expressions.

Gaudí's spirituality was based on the principles of the Catholic faith, as expressed in the Catechism of the Church, in taking part in the sacraments, above all daily mass and communion and the sacrament of reconciliation, and the practice of devotions, above all the Rosary to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Via Crucis. On the other hand, his spirituality was also deeply liturgical. Gaudí followed the liturgical calendar, particularly the so-called "high seasons" (Advent, Lent and Easter), enthusiastically participating in the Paschal Triduum and Christmas Triduum. He also fasted during Lent and frequently recited prayers or short invocation, often saying in reference to the Sagrada Família, "Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and soul."

Gaudí didn't leave behind any written proof of his spiritual ups and downs. He didn't give us a "Story of a Soul" like Saint Therese of the Child Jesus or a "Journal of a Soul" like Pope Saint John XXIII. We have to discover his spiritual journey through his work, through his personal history, his attitudes, from the words of those who knew him and the people and readings that influenced him. Noteworthy among these people who influenced him were his three bishop friends (Torras i Bages, Grau and Campins) already discussed in the biographical notes, and several priests: Saint Josep Manyanet, founder of the Fills de la Sagrada Família; poet Jacint Verdaguer, prince of Catalan literature; and Jesuit scholar Ignasi Casanovas, founder of Biblioteca Balmes. Gaudí belonged to the community of Catalan intel-

lectuals of his time and as a young man took part in several scientific excursions. It is important to note his friendship with poet Joan Maragall.

Among the readings that enriched his spirituality, the Bible and three key bedside books are particularly noteworthy. Gaudí read the Holy Scriptures in Latin and Spanish (the Torres Amat Bible), *L'Année liturgique*, by Dom Prosper Guéranger in French and the Roman Missal and Ceremonial of Bishops in Latin. The foundations of Gaudí's spiritual life came from the *Catecisme de la Doctrina Cristiana*, written by Josep Domènec Costa i Borràs, Archbishop of Tarragona, which Gaudí most likely learned before his first communion in Reus, which explains the topics Gaudí chose for the Glory façade. A cultured, educated man, in his final years of life Gaudí only read religious works, on the life of Jesus, his miracles and the Gospels. It is important to remember that the three façades of the Sagrada Família are dedicated to the three mysteries of the life of Jesus: the Incarnation (Nativity façade), Redemption (Passion façade) and Second Coming (Glory façade).

What Gaudí was experiencing internally was, therefore, very closely tied to his architectural work. For example, the way Gaudí used his childhood catechism shows how the Sagrada Família is in itself a great stone catechism on the sacred mysteries. Gaudí put the altarpieces on the outside of the Basilica on the three façades, making them grandiose

explanations of the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. In fact, the whole Basilica is an open book, a Gospel in stone, with the Trinity as its core topic. Everything is focused on the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but also the sacraments and the Church as the people of God and the sacrament of salvation. Gaudí's spirituality anticipated the updates imposed by the Second Vatican Council. He was a precursor of these changes. Additionally, the metaphysical foundation of Gaudí's work is Christian metaphysics. Gaudí was introduced to this by his spiritual reference, Dr Josep Torras i Bages, Bishop of Vic, and Fr Ignasi Casanovas, who were inspired by Saint Thomas Aquinas and the writings of Jaime Balmes, an author Gaudí respected highly. Plus, Bishop Campins and the community in Mallorca in the early 20th century led Gaudí to read some works by the Blessed Ramon Llull while living in Palma. Thomas Aquinas and Ramon Llull each created their own theological synthesis, different but both showing great intellectual strength, which can be seen reflected in some of Gaudí's ideas and options. So, the desire for comprehensiveness in architecture, typical of Gaudí's work, finds parallels in the theological and philosophical thinkings of Llull, which were also holistic. And the correspondence between God and creation is equivalent to the relationship between the visible and invisible. Reality can only be understood when humans understand that God is communicating with them through his creations. This is why Gaudí said that nature, creation, was his teacher.

Gaudí's spirituality was channelled through his vocation to create a physical expression of God's work. He felt he was called to create an architectural work imbued with Christian symbology, to make clearly visible the greatness of faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is why the Creed or Symbol of the Faith occupies the most visible part of the Glory façade, as a symbol of what the Basilica of the Sagrada Família is and aims to be: Christian architecture inspired by the Gothic style but seeking perfection. Gaudí felt called by God to express the sacred mysteries through his architecture, based on his strong inner spiritual experience of these mysteries. As Gaudí himself wrote in The Manuscript of Reus the summer of 1878, a great church "must inspire the feeling of Divinity with its infinite qualities and infinite attributes." Gaudí felt this very strongly and that is what allowed him to convey it. The Sagrada Família is a unique combination of vertical space and depth, and also a humanising space where people feel small but not overwhelmed. The majesty of God is not destroyed by human beings. Quite the contrary, it is dignified and elevated.

4. BEAUTY AND SOURCES OF INSPIRATION: THE BIBLE, LITURGY AND NATURE

Beauty is one of the paths to God, both the beauty of the things he created and the beauty of art, which is a human creation. Therefore, artistic creation must be overflowing with beauty to truly praise and recognise God the Creator, and to elevate to him all those who contemplate and admire it. Gaudí proposed going from the visible to the invisible (“per visibilia ad invisibilia”), discovering the Creator through the things our sight and other physical senses can detect. Taking an expression from Greek philosophers, Gaudí said that “beauty is the beacon of truth, which in the end is God himself”. So, those who search the laws of nature to define their artistic pieces are working with the Creator.

Beauty is therefore not about luxury or complications. The Sagrada Família is beautiful, not luxurious. It awakens emotions, feelings of joy and peace, and creates a sensation of inner brightness, bringing about a desire to be part of that beauty, making it part of one’s life. Saint Pope John Paul II said, “Every genuine art form in its own way is a path to the inmost reality of man and of the world. It is therefore a wholly valid approach to the realm of faith, which gives



human experience its ultimate meaning.” Beauty strips human beings of their egotism, their inner prison, and opens up a space inside them for transcendence, the infinite and mystery, all while fanning their desire for eternal happiness.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote that beauty broadens the horizons of human awareness, pointing us beyond ourselves, towards the ultimate Mystery: God. According to this Pope and theologian, beauty plays an essential role, which Plato also noted: it gives man a healthy shock, draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation. It pierces him like a dart, reawakening him, opening the eyes of his heart and mind so he can fly. In his homily at the consecration of the Sagrada Família on 7 November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI said, “Antoni Gaudí brilliantly helped overcome the division between human consciousness and Christian consciousness, between living in this temporal world and being open to eternal life, between the beauty of things and God as beauty. Antoni Gaudí did this not with words but with stones, lines, planes and points. Indeed, beauty is one of mankind’s greatest needs; it is the root from which the branches of our peace and the fruits of our hope come forth.”

Pope Benedict XVI also said, “In this masterpiece, Gaudí shows us that God is the true measure of man; that the secret of authentic originality consists, as he himself said, in returning to one’s origin which is God. Gaudí, by opening his

spirit to God, was capable of creating in this city [of Barcelona] a space of beauty, faith and hope which leads man to an encounter with him who is truth and beauty itself." This was echoed by Bishop Josep Torras i Bages, one of Gaudí's references, who believed contemplating beauty is to contemplate one of the attributes of God reflected in nature. Landscapes, buildings, music, they can bring people closer to God. The contemplation of beauty, whether at a magnificent church like the Sagrada Família or a humble natural space, brings about a conversion of the heart.

Gaudí had three sources of inspiration: the Bible, the liturgy and nature. The Bible is the first revelation of God, given to his Son, Jesus Christ, to fill the world with his love and the Holy Spirit was later sent to update it. God created the world and strives to preserve the world he created, and he counts on us to care for the beings he created, starting with human beings, particularly the poor and marginalised. Pope Francis expressed this in his encyclicals "Laudato si'" and "Fratelli tutti". Secondly, Gaudí saw the Christian, and specifically Catholic, liturgy as a complete work of art, a lifestyle that strengthens the bonds between God and those who participate in the liturgical action, whether on earth or in Heaven. Finally, for Gaudí nature evokes the immensity of God and so we can say that the earth is sacred, with the plants that inhabit it, the rocks atop it, the water that flows there and the food it gives, for man and beast.

Gaudí loved the earthly liturgy, which is a reflection of the heavenly liturgy. He believed the liturgy is the lesson in the purest form of beauty. It is seeing the invisible, expressing what cannot be expressed, finding the sublime in everyday things. The liturgy, through beauty, leads to contemplation. Liturgical prayer is a continual return to the beauty of God. So, the Basilica of the Sagrada Família, and any other church, is a container for the mystery, the liturgy, celebrated within. Gaudí carefully studied where to put the choirs, cloisters, presbytery, altar, naves, sacristies, portals, stained-glass windows and lanterns, which bring light into a space that is meant to express the greatness and simplicity of God-made-Man. Gaudí's deep Catholic faith and respect for the liturgical traditions of Catholicism can be seen in each element, space and area he created for contemplation and adoration.

Many Sunday afternoons, Gaudí went to the breakwater in the port of Barcelona to look at the sea, the light in the sky, the water and movement of the waves. When he lived in Reus, he was captivated by the beach at Platja del Miracle in Tarragona. Nature, for him, was a revelation of God, the second after the one we received in his Word. At the Sagrada Família, the Bible and the liturgy inspire the symbolism, while nature and geometry explain the architecture, all inextricably intertwined. Since he was a child, Gaudí learned to observe and contemplate nature as the work of God and a source of inspiration. He didn't see nature as something to dominate, but as a diligent teacher, an open book where one can read everything they

need to nourish human creativity and its models. Gaudí copied nature in his sculptures and transformed it in his architecture. For example, the Sagrada Família has tree-columns (nave, Nativity façade) and bone-columns (Passion façade), while in the crypt at Colònia Güell the columns are geological. It all sings the praises of God.

5. PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

Antoni Gaudí is a Christian who lived Christian virtues extraordinarily, both the “theological” (faith, hope and charity) and the “cardinal” (temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude), as well as some other complementary virtues (poverty, humility, obedience and chastity). In a word, as we showed in the “positio”, which is the document justifying the cause for the beatification of Gaudí submitted and accepted by the Holy See, he practised Christian virtues to a heroic degree and had a reputation for sanctity. This is backed by public and private reactions, often anonymous, to his death and the crowds that came out to accompany his funeral procession.

Antoni Gaudí was a man of faith, which he received from childhood and was reaffirmed above all after fasting for Lent in 1894. From that time, his inner man was reinforced, closer to the grace of Jesus Christ and the constant practice of the sacraments as a continued means of sanctification. Faith in God and his providence were deeply rooted in his life and filled everything he was and did. One of his favourite phrases in this sense was: “In the Sagrada Família, everything is providential.” Everything happens according to God’s will and design, both the things that allow the works on the Basilica to advance and the delays due to financial hardships

and unforeseen circumstances of all sorts. For example, the many months Gaudí had to wait for the Venetian mosaic to arrive from Italy for the tower spires. Gaudí never lost one bit of his trust in God. He knew that building the Sagrada Família was God's will, and that nothing should upset him. He said, "My client is not in a hurry."

This is the reflection of a believer and an architect who was used to having to set deadlines for the works he built. Whenever people asked him when the Basilica would be finished, he would half-jokingly reply, "Saint Joseph will finish it. It will be done when Heaven wills it." This was Gaudí's faith, shared by those who have been involved in the works and those who understand that we all depend on divine providence. Naturally, the Basilica is the result of human work, and this is why Gaudí said, "The project is in God's hands and in the will of the people." His vocation was a combination of what God had given him (exceptional architectural skills) and what he could give the people (a church that is a house of prayer and praise to the Almighty). Gaudí said, "The architect does his work living among the people and looking to God." Gaudí was rooted in his land and his country, while looking to God, elevating his construction towards Heaven, into the sky.

The Letter to the Hebrews reads, "Faith is the assurance of what we hope for, being certain of what we cannot see" (11:1). Faith and hope are closely tied. One who believes,

hopes and one who hopes, believes. Gaudí was a man who lived for the future as if it were the present, and contemplated the present looking to the future. When Gaudí welcomed a group of visitors and told them about the Sagrada Família, the Basilica was still open, with no roofs, full of half-cut stone blocks, scaffolding everywhere and a few walls standing. But Gaudí spoke to those visitors as if the Basilica were already finished and, what's more, he described the religious ceremonies that would be held there "in situ": the altar ministers entering in a cloud of incense, the congregation singing wholeheartedly, the organs playing at full volume, the bells filling the city with their sounds. None of this was visible, it was all yet to be created. But it came alive before the eyes of the visitors who listened on, enthralled by the explanations of a man who believed and hoped, who had the vision of one touched by the grace of God.

Antoni Gaudí firmly believed in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. The Glory façade of the Sagrada Família evokes the final destiny of human beings, and how we must live in order to attain eternal life. Gaudí based this on the conviction that human life has a transcendent purpose, it is neither meaningless nor predestined. We are beings created for eternity. We die with no right to appeal, leaving behind a corruptible life, but we are born into eternal life. Human life doesn't reach its peak in time and space, it is made for eternity. This is the ultimate purpose of human existence.

The Apostle Paul said, “Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:14). Gaudí said, “First you need love, then technique.” Before constructing the building, and while the walls rise up, it is important to remember that God is love, and that we are on this earth to love each other. It is possible to build on love. Without love, everything is precarious and will topple over. Gaudí loved people and things, without being dependent on or a slave to them. He was short-tempered, as people from that region are known to be, but he was aware of this and recognised he had never been able to fully keep his character in check.

Saints are forged amid unfinished projects, but they never lack proximity to the Father, the company of the Son and the fire of the Holy Spirit. They are never lacking in love received or given. Gaudí served as guardian to his sickly niece, Rosa, for many years, from the time she was orphaned until she died. He cared for that unfortunate girl, giving her a father, loving her and raising her. Something similar can be said of Llorenç Matamala and Carles Mani, artist friends he helped and stood by when they had cancer, and Francesc Berenguer and the workers at the Sagrada Família, who he helped through many illnesses and sorrows. Gaudí sheathed himself in love for the poor and the sick, and made sure the workers’ children had a decent school. Love transformed him, and he ended up giving up everything for God’s glory.

Of the cardinal virtues, it is significant to remember an episode that happened when the Sagrada Família was going through very hard financial crisis (1914-1915). Gaudí became a beggar, a mendicant walking the streets of Barcelona asking for money for the Temple works. To do so, he had to practice the cardinal virtues: prudence in his speech, justice in his request, fortitude in the face of the frequent rejections and temperance in tackling this difficult task. Gaudí told Josep M. Dalmaes, the grandson of the founder of the Spiritual Association of the Devotees of Saint Joseph who accompanied him in this fund-raising, that it had been very difficult for him and that he had to be humble, accepting any amount people would give, often very little or nothing at all.

The evangelical virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience were constants in Antoni Gaudí's life. As a young man he had never turned away from a good meal or nice clothes, and sought society's recognition, yet he died in abject poverty and austerity. So much so that after the accident that cost him his life he was mistaken for a beggar and sent to the paupers' hospital, where he had previously said he wanted to be taken. And, providentially, that is what happened. He embodied the phrase "ad maiorem Dei gloriam", for the greater glory of God. Additionally, Gaudí lived as a layman and bachelor, voluntarily, choosing never to marry. Remaining single was another of his offerings to God. He wanted to marry and, as it wasn't possible, he told himself it was God's will. Finally, Gaudí practised obedience to God by accepting

the mission to build the Sagrada Família, to Jesus' Gospel and to the Church, the mother of many children. Gaudí was obedient to his spiritual guide and tried to do what it says in the Letter to the Ephesians, "Let all kinds of submission to one another become obedience to Christ." (5:21).



6. PATH OF MYSTICISM

Gaudí, the architectural genius, didn't make his art the centre of his life. The centre was his experience of the Absolute, which goes beyond intellectualism and aesthetics, and into his heart, which in the words of the psalm "longs for you, O God." (42:2). Gaudí's sanctity culminated in the mystical path, which was its climax. It consists of four elements: providence, ascension, sacrifice and glory.

Regarding providence, Gaudí firmly believed that we are guided by providence. He said this because he had experienced an inner communion with God and had full faith in his designs. As Pascal said, everything is grace. Everything is the fruit of divine compassion. Gaudí put himself in God's hands at all times, and that made him more self-confident and less zealous to finish the Sagrada Família in his lifetime. In fact, Gaudí noted that religious buildings in their essence must be lasting, like the religion they are home to. Building a great church is necessarily a long process, which must be measured in God's time.

In terms of ascension, mystics become closer to God and spiritualise things from this world. Ascension includes both elements. Gaudí didn't take earthly realities and spiritualise them, he polished the materials he worked with and gave them a beauty that sprung from his own spirituality. This is

why the Sagrada Família exudes a beauty steeped in God, a God close to the architect, who is filled with his spirit and in whose image he lives and acts. Verticality was key in Gaudí as it is in the Sagrada Família: he rose up and joined God as the eighteen towers rise into the heavens.

Regarding sacrifice, Gaudí said life is love and love is sacrifice. Gaudí understood love as an offering to God, giving of himself. In love one doesn't seek their own pleasure, Gaudí believed, but to move beyond ego and abandon all vanity. Gaudí eschewed praise and prestige, honours and awards. Behind this constant in his life there was a firm desire for what he called "a diminution of the ego", which must be done "without compensation", purely out of love. Gaudí walked the path of love, meaning of sacrifice, which required eschewing himself and emptying himself. As Jesus said, "If you want to follow me, deny yourself; take up your cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34). For Gaudí, it was essential to accept the painful fragility that characterises human life and throw himself thoroughly into constant work. Gaudí, like the Blessed Ramon Llull, was a mystic of specific things, not obscure or speculative topics or extraordinary phenomena. Level-headedness and Mediterranean light were the core of his spiritual vision, his experience of God and of reality.

Regarding glory, Gaudí was a man of vision —not a visionary or an enlightened one— which is why his open-eyed mysticism embraced the present and the future, contemplat-

ing the human and divine worlds. Gaudí saw what was there and what wasn't, with his vision he grasped the immensity, the whole. The Sagrada Família that is being built is the fruit of a vision that culminates in the vision of God, which is why both its interior and exterior reflect the qualities that belong to what we are now experiencing: the meaning of the light and the space, and the physicality. The Sagrada Família is the triumph of physical form rooted in the vision of a mystic, who saw his work as a way to participate in the glory of God. Gaudí said, "Glory is light, light gives joy and joy is the happiness of the spirit." Gaudí lived with God, contemplated him, loved him with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength (Deuteronomy 6:5).



ANTONIUS GAUDI
CORNET

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MORTUUS EST DIE 10 FEBRUARII 1948
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DIE 10 FEBRUARII 1948
HIC REQUIESCIT ANTONIUS GAUDI
CORNET MORTUUS EST DIE 10 FEBRUARII
1948 AETATIS SUAE 70 ANNI

R.I.P.

7. EPILOGUE

Antoni Gaudí was a genius artist and a mystic in the heart of the city. He was contemplative and active, solitary yet social, a hermit and a citizen, a man of deep Catholic faith, a natural creative mind who flipped things on their head and innovated, a man close to his family, his friends and his homeland. Gaudí's personal life was marked by humility and simplicity. He led an austere life, dedicated to his work, which he saw as a vocation and God's calling, while taking into account other people's needs. He was a discreet man, but deeply compassionate and generous. He was a man penetrated by saintliness and prayer. For all this he deserves to be known as "God's architect".

Gaudí created a new style of architecture, a perfection of Gothic style, which was the longest-lasting European style. He filled this architecture with Christian symbols, the mysteries of the Christian faith providing the backbone for everything he did, both in his religious and secular works. Gaudí turned faith into stone, into shapes and textures and colours, into light and depth. God gave him a gift and he made it flourish in all its glory, using it to serve the people, who he worked to serve. Gaudí wanted the Catalan people and the people of other communities around the world to get a taste of the greatness and beauty of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The work that best expresses Gaudí's ideals is undoubtedly the Sagrada Família. Here we find Gaudí's faith and his extraordinary architecture, where the great church truly is the house of God, the new Jerusalem, and the house of men, a privileged place for Christian worship. The symbiosis between Gaudí and the Sagrada Família is so close that one cannot be understood without the other. In the people's Basilica, in the heart of Barcelona's urban street grid, Gaudí created a sanctuary, a shaft of light shining from the main tower, the cross of Jesus, Lamb of God, died and resurrected, and from the other towers next to it, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the four Evangelists and the twelve apostles. Eighteen towers rise up into the sky as this new Jerusalem of the Sagrada Família!

Gaudí said, "In the Sagrada Família, everything is providential; even my becoming the architect. It is located in the centre of the city and plain of Barcelona, with the same distance separating the Temple from the sea and the mountains, Sants and Sant Andreu, and the Besòs and Llobregat Rivers." Gaudí had a dream for the city. He wanted it to have a powerful, unique, one-of-a-kind symbol. And now it does. He wanted to share the Gospel of Jesus through his works, and this wish has been granted. His saintly life showcased to all the world in a great church that attracts people from all cultures, races and religions, a work rooted in Catholic faith, open to Christians and anyone who enters in good faith.

CANONICAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF ANTONI GAUDÍ
BARCELONA 2024