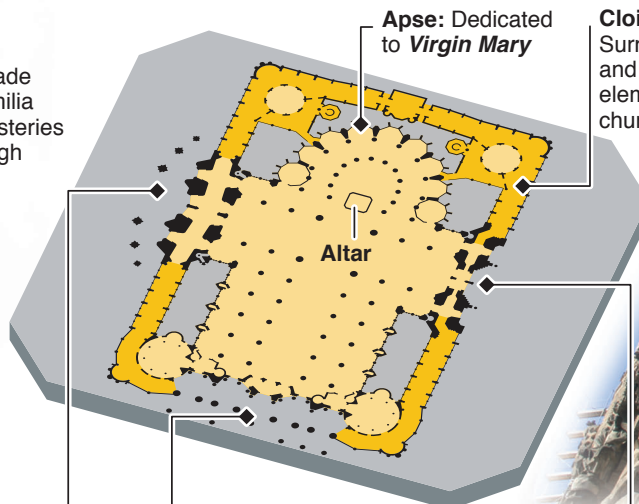
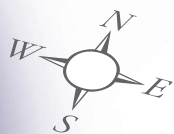


# Sagrada Familia opens for worship

Nearly 130 years after construction began, Barcelona's Sagrada Familia – the unfinished masterpiece by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi – is to be consecrated by Pope Benedict XVI. The church, which follows the tradition of cathedrals in the middle ages when building work spanned generations, is due to be completed by 2026, the centenary of Gaudi's death

## Design

Envisaged as Bible made of stone, Sagrada Familia relates history and mysteries of Christian faith through complex symbolism conveyed by Gaudi's unique Art Nouveau architecture



**Cloister:**  
Surrounds and links all elements of church

**Apse:** Dedicated to *Virgin Mary*

**Altar**

## Decoration

Eight of 18 towers built to date. Completed bell towers – on façades – are capped with pinnacles decorated with colourful Venetian mosaics and crowned with double-sided cross reminiscent of bishop's mitre

**Bell tower stairs:** Spiral, snail shape reveals Gaudi was inspired by passion for nature



## Passion façade

Begun in 1954 according to drawings and instructions left by Gaudi. Facing west, into setting sun, it depicts pain of Christ's death in harsh, austere manner

**Crucifixion:** Façade features highly dramatic sculpture groups by artist **Josep Maria Subirachs**

**Gospel doors:** Bible text in various languages cast in 8,000 bronze letters on doors of Passion façade

## Glory façade

Largest façade, begun in 2002, will be main entrance to church when finished. Facing south, it shows how man can attain glory through practice of virtue and fruit of redemption

## Spires

Status of 18 towers determined according to hierarchy

- 1 Dedicated to **Jesus Christ** (170m), crowned by 15m-high cross
- 2 Dedicated to **Virgin Mary** (120m)
- 3 Four 125m towers, dedicated to **four evangelists**
- 4 Lower bell towers represent **12 apostles** (98-112m)

Sections completed

**Main nave**  
Length: 45m

## Nativity façade

Completed in Gaudi's lifetime, and most reflects his influence. Faces East, into rising sun, symbol of Christ's birth. It focuses on more human aspects of Jesus's life, particularly in his early years

**B Birth of Christ:** Situated in central portico, includes sculptures typical of nativity scene

**A Tree of Life:** Cypress – symbol of eternal life – crowned with Tau (Hebrew initial for God); cross (symbol of Jesus); and dove (Holy Spirit)



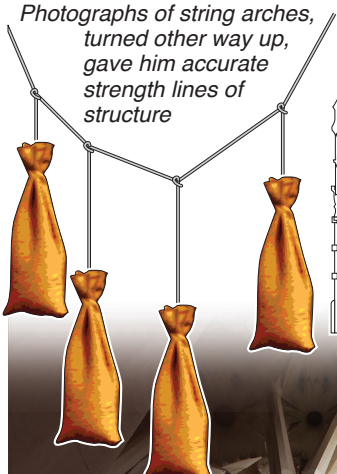
When complete, Sagrada Familia will be world's tallest church

Sagrada Familia: 170m

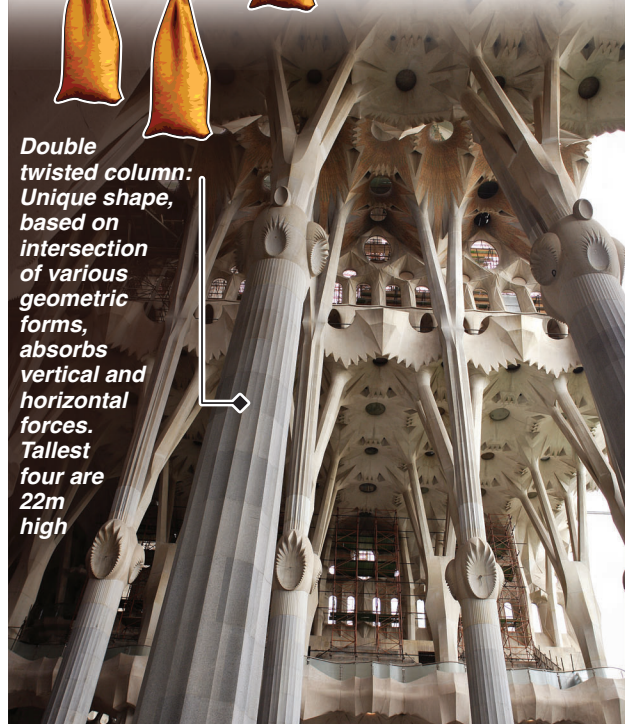
## Structure

Striving to improve on Gothic architecture, Gaudi studied weights to optimise structural behaviour. His leaning, tree-like columns and hyperboloid vaults dispensed with need for buttresses to support building

**Calculating stress:** Gaudi built model with weights hung from strings to simulate shape of inverted building. Photographs of string arches, turned other way up, gave him accurate strength lines of structure



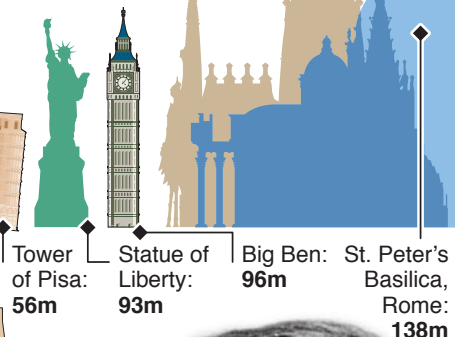
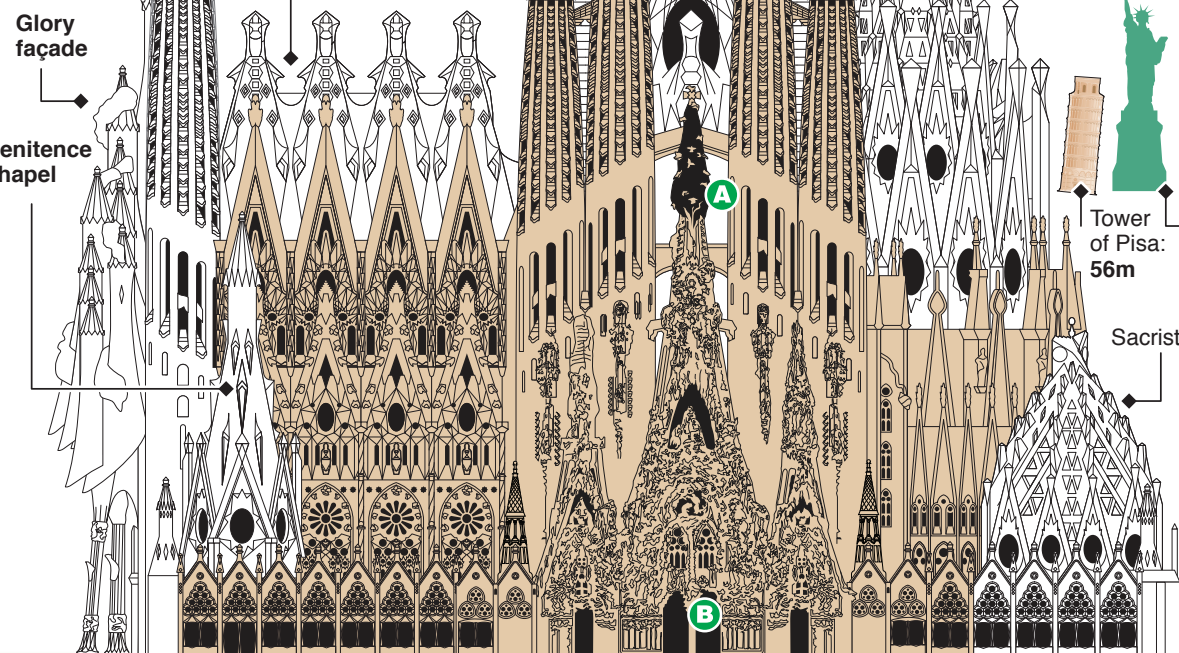
**Double twisted column:** Unique shape, based on intersection of various geometric forms, absorbs vertical and horizontal forces. Tallest four are 22m high



**Naves:** Tree-like, branched columns – 36 in total – support vaults, giving appearance of lush forest

**Glory façade**

**Penitence chapel**



**Sacristy**

**1882:** Work on Sagrada Familia, conceived by Catalan publisher **Josep Bocabella**, begins by public subscription in neo-Gothic style

**1926:** Gaudi dies after being run over by tram, aged 73. Work continues under direction of his close associates

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

**1884:** Following arguments between Bocabella and first architect over budget, Gaudi takes over project, discarding neo-Gothic style and proposing more monumental solution

**1930s:** Many of Gaudi's models and plans destroyed by anarchists during Spanish Civil War  
**1950s:** Construction, based on combination of reconstructed models and modern adaptations, resumes

**1980s:** Director **Jordi Bonet** introduces computers for design and construction process  
**2000s:** New technology allows stone to be carved by computer-controlled CNC milling machine

**Nov 7, 2010:** With central nave covered, Pope consecrates church and proclaims it a Basilica

**2026:** Intended completion date

**CRYPT**  
Burial site of Antoni Gaudi. Gaudi worked on church tirelessly for over 50 years, living as virtual hermit in workshop on site for last 12. When questioned about slow pace of works, he is said to have replied, **"My client is not in a hurry"**

Pictures: Jordi Bou, Getty Images

Source: www.sagradafamilia.cat

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