

A B A R C E L O N A S T O R Y · 1 8 8 2 — 2 0 2 6

Sagrada Família

Gaudí's stone forest and the slow art of building a world

Presented June 10, 2026 · 100 years after Gaudí



Not just a church. A model of the world.

Sagrada Família was meant to answer a crisis: if modern life was becoming industrial, secular and disordered, how do you rebuild a sense of moral and spiritual structure in the city?

Gaudí turned that brief into something larger: **a building that behaves like nature, speaks like religion, and feels like emotion — all at once.**

Three forces, one system

● ***Nature***
provides the rules

● ***Faith***
provides the meaning

● ***Craft***
provides the execution

An expiatory temple, built by a city to itself.

The project began in the 1870s, driven by the Asociación de Devotos de San José. Their intent was explicit: build a Templo Expiatorio — a temple of atonement on behalf of a society they believed had drifted off course.

"The building itself becomes a physical act of repentance — not just a church to attend, but a process of atonement made visible."

1882

First stone laid

1883

Gaudí takes over

Donations only

Funded by the public

Multi-generational

Slowness is the point

Barcelona was rewriting itself — and losing itself.

By the late 19th century the city was exploding: factories, the Eixample grid, a new bourgeoisie, working-class districts in distress, anarchism in the air. The Catholic Church felt its cultural authority slipping. Modernity felt thrilling and destabilising at once.

Industry

Speed, productivity, material progress

Urban life

Anonymity, scale, fragmentation

Religion

Trying to retain moral and social glue



ANTONI GAUDÍ · 1852 —
1926

04 · GAUDÍ'S WORLDVIEW

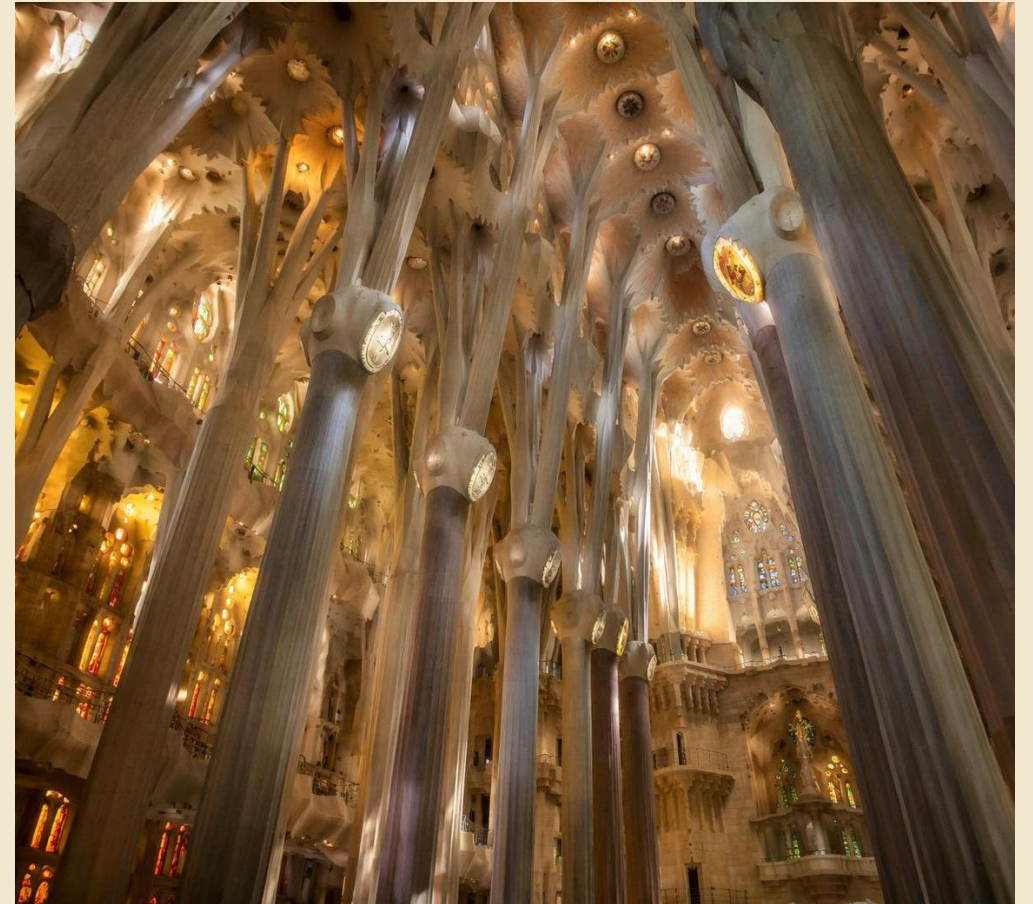
Architecture as revelation, not invention.

The world is already designed by God. The architect's job is not to invent, but to understand and continue that logic.

- Architecture is not self-expression, but revelation.
- Beauty is not subjective — it reflects divine order.
- Every element should carry symbolic weight AND structural necessity.
- Late Gaudí becomes monastic — devoted almost entirely to the basilica.

Gaudí designed a stone forest, not a church interior.

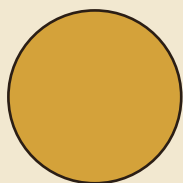
Step inside and the building behaves like an environment, not an object. Columns tilt, branch and split as they rise. The ceiling reads as canopy rather than ceiling. Each column angle aligns with a real force vector — the branching is how the basilica stands up.



- ***Columns as trees*** Branching distributes load across multiple paths
- ***Vaults as canopy*** Hyperboloids resist deformation, feel weightless
- ***Geometry as engine*** Order with variation — never quite repeating
- ***Light as forest*** Diffused, filtered, moving through the day

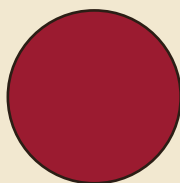
Light as photosynthesis, not illumination.

Stained glass isn't random colour. It's a gradient — warm tones for the east and morning, cool tones for the west and evening. Light moves through the basilica like sunlight through a forest canopy: filtered, diffuse, alive.



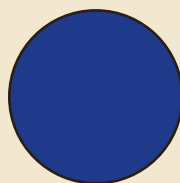
Amber

Morning



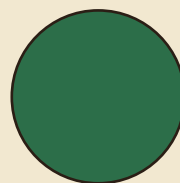
Ruby

Midday



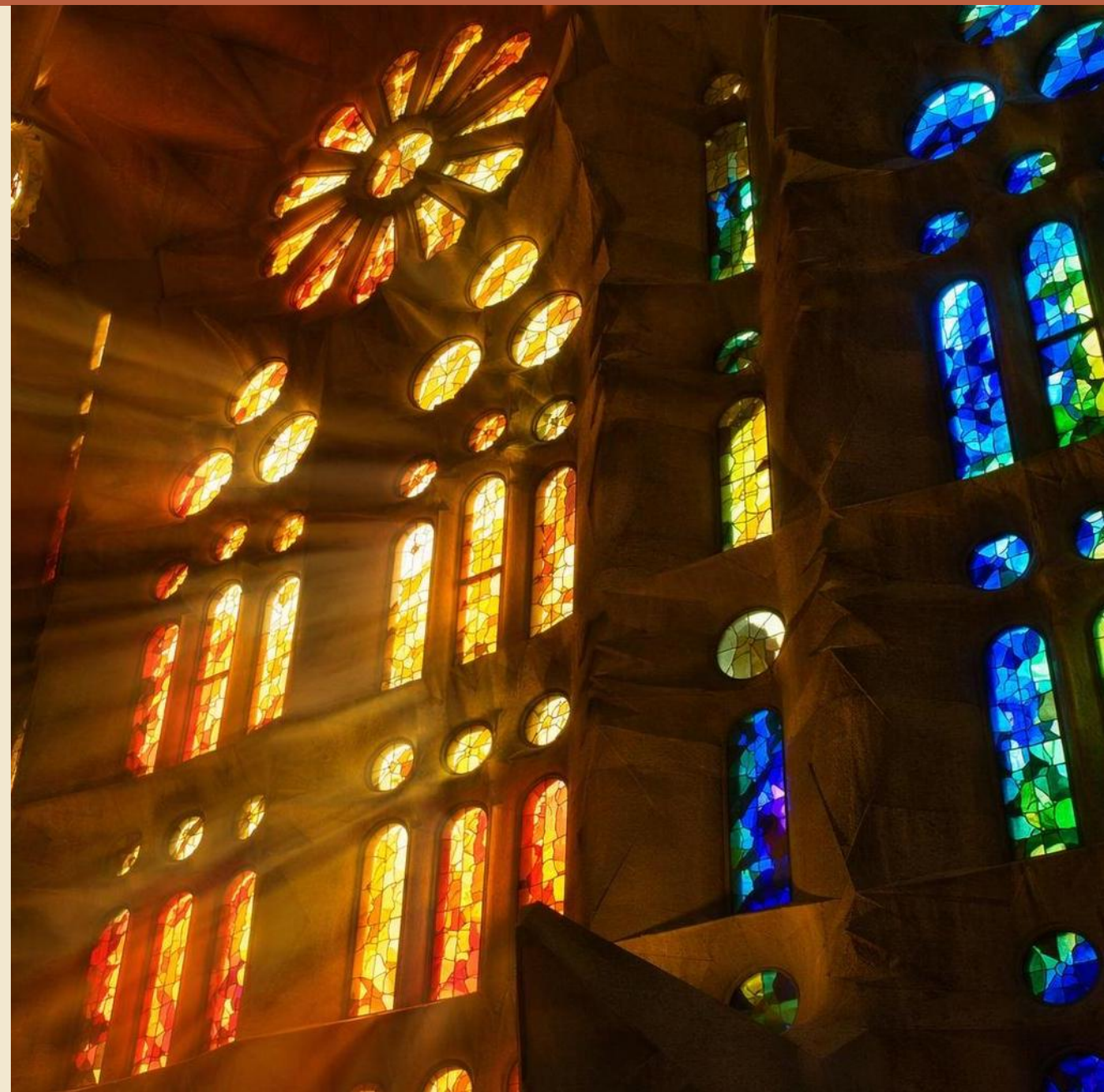
Sapphire

Evening



Emerald

Constant



Two façades. Two incompatible emotional truths.

Gaudí understood that a single surface couldn't hold birth and death at once — so he split the exterior into two emotional worlds.



Nativity

Birth of Christ

- Tone — joy, fertility, celebration
- Form — dense, organic, flowing
- Material — soft, growing, biological
- Experience — immersion



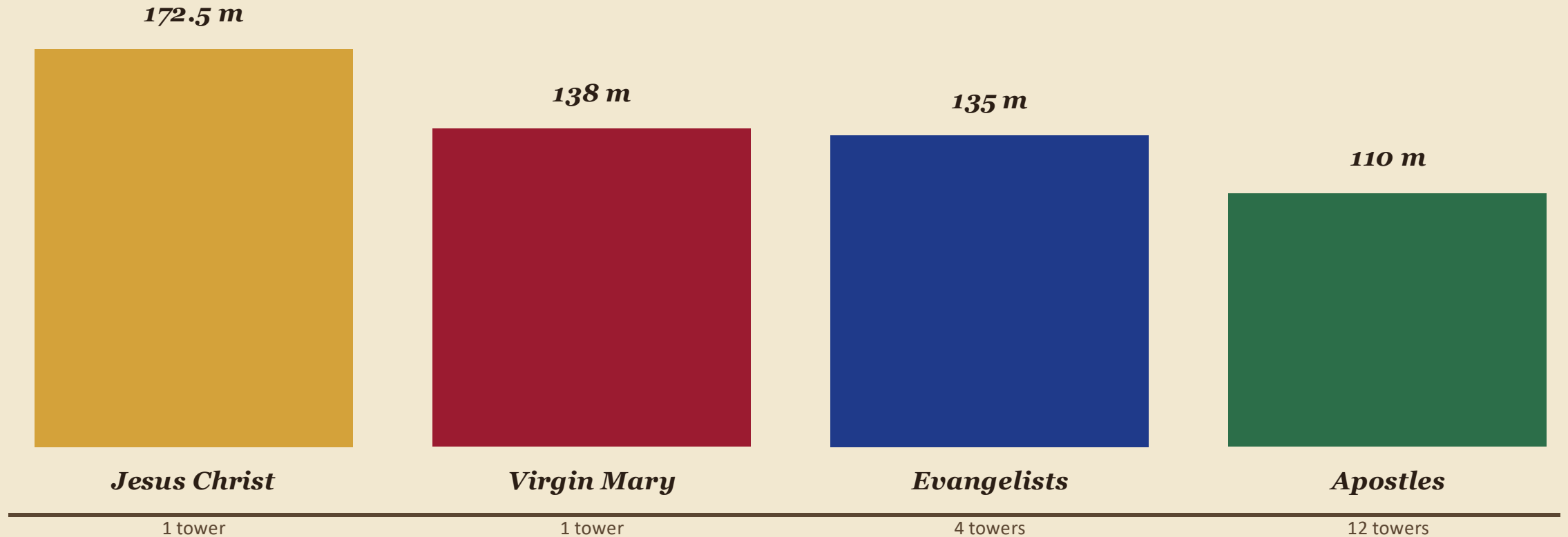
Passion

Suffering and death

- Tone — pain, austerity, inevitability
- Form — sparse, angular, confrontational
- Material — hard, cut, skeletal
- Experience — confrontation

Eighteen towers — a vertical map of heaven.

The towers aren't a skyline feature. They're a hierarchy of meaning, arranged by importance rather than symmetry.



THE 2026 MOMENT

The Tower of Jesus Christ.

172.5 metres — deliberately one shy of Montjuïc. Gaudí's rule: human creation should not surpass God's.

172.5 m

Final height of the central tower

100 years

Since Gaudí's death (1926 → 2026)

1882

Year the first stone was laid

10 June 2026

Blessing of the Tower of Jesus Christ

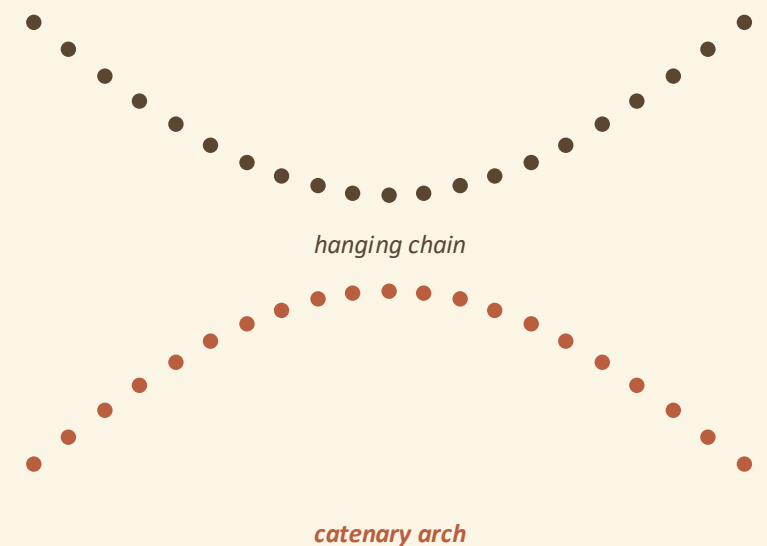
Gaudí let gravity design the building.

A straight beam fights gravity. A catenary arch agrees with it. Gaudí built hanging-chain models: strings for structure, weights for loads. He let the model hang, photographed it, then flipped the image — that became the building.

"He was running live simulations using rope and gravity — parametric design, decades before computers."

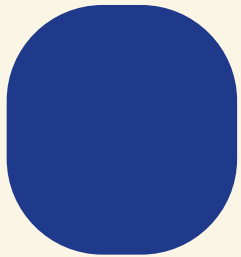
FROM HANGING CHAIN

TO LOAD-OPTIMISED ARCH



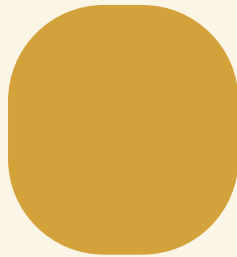
Strange-looking shapes, ruthlessly logical geometry.

Gaudí built almost everything from a small family of natural-feeling surfaces. They look organic. They're actually disciplined geometry — each one a way to carry weight with less material.



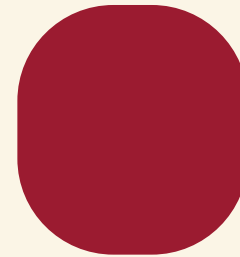
Hyperboloid

Strong, stress-distributing — like a cooling tower



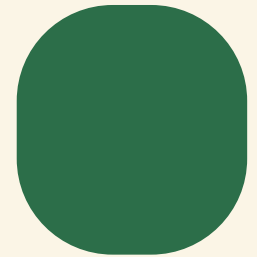
Paraboloid

Channels loads smoothly — like a satellite dish



Helicoid

Spiraled strength and directional movement



Ruled surface

Curves built from straight lines — easy to build, strong

Five reasons it feels human, not just impressive.

01 *It refuses perfection*

Variation everywhere — like nature, never exactly repeating.

02 *The sacred is grounded in real life*

Figures, animals, fruit — the everyday folded into the holy.

03 *Emotion is staged, not resolved*

Birth and death sit in different visual languages.

04 *The experience is bodily*

Shadow, light, height, silence — choreographed for the body.

05 *Holiness becomes close, not distant*

God as present and embedded, not remote.

A building that refuses to sit in one time.

Sagrada Família is a 19th-century idea, damaged in the 20th, completed with 21st-century tools, and consumed by a global audience. Its contradictions are not bugs.

Faith

vs

Tourism

Designed for devotion, processed at scale

Originality

vs

Reconstruction

Civil War destroyed parts of the workshop

Gaudí's vision

vs

Subirachs' Passion

Stylistic rupture, deliberately not imitating

Symbolic ambition

vs

The current city

The Glory façade staircase still contested



THE LAST WORD

*It doesn't present the sacred as something above you —
it builds a world where the sacred feels entangled with how life actually is:*
complex, uneven and alive.

Sagrada Família · 1882 — ongoing

Tower of Jesus Christ blessed · 10 June 2026