ENGLISH

INFORMATION BOOKLETS

Basílica Sagrada Família

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Basílica Sagrada Família

Nativity façade, cloister and portal of the Rosary

As he knew he would never be able to finish the whole Temple, Gaudí chose to build one façade, a section of the cloister and a portal to serve as models for those who would follow in his footsteps.



Sculpture group on the Nativity façade, by Jaume Busquets.



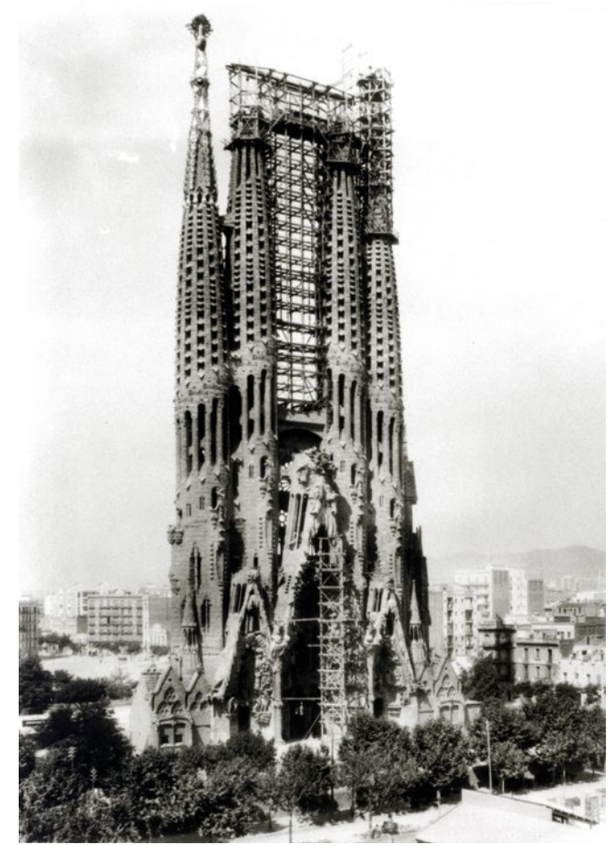
View of the whole Nativity façade.

The façade of the joy of Jesus' birth

This was the first façade to be built, overseen directly by Gaudí, who monitored every last detail, architectural, decorative and symbolic.

The Nativity façade, located in the east, on Carrer de la Marina, is on the transept of the Temple. It explains the birth of Jesus, meaning the incarnation of the Son of God, and expresses the "joy and hope of life". This is why Gaudí wanted the whole façade to be an exultation of divine creation, of all living beings in nature. Construction began while Gaudí was alive and, although he only lived to see the bell tower of Saint Barnabas completed in 1925 (the other three, dedicated to the apostles Simon, Jude Thaddeus and Matthias, were completed in 1930), he left strict instructions on how to proceed.

Although the three façades of the Temple cannot be taken separately, because the contents are connected and we can find elements that allude to the birth, death, resurrection and glory of Jesus on all three, this façade is, as we've said, a celebration of the joy of life and the splendour of nature. This is why it is full of representations of animals (scallops, hens, various birds, ducks, eagles, etc.) and plants (roses, almond trees, cherry trees, lilies, passion flowers, etc.) celebrating and praising the birth of Jesus. To make the figures on this façade as life-like as possible, the sculptures were moulded from real human and animal models. Once the plaster model had been taken, Gaudí put it on the façade to see how it looked and if he was happy with the results, the final version in stone was made.



The Nativity façade with the completed Saint Barnabas bell tower (1925).

The Nativity façade expresses the "joy and hope of life". This is why Gaudí wanted it to be an exultation of divine creation.

Structure of the façade

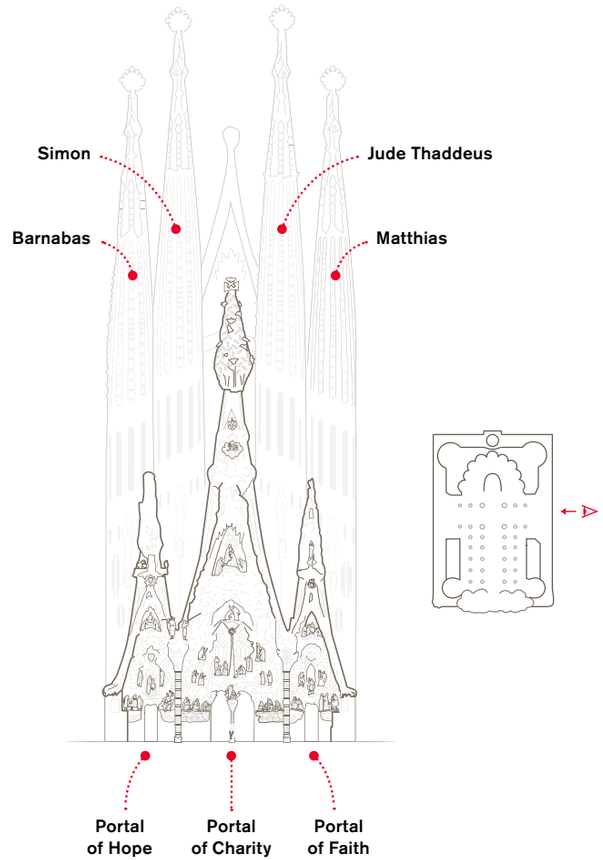
The structure of this façade shows that Gaudí gave each architectural element meaning. Among others, it has three portals, one for each member of the Holy Family.

This façade, like all the Temple façades, is topped with four bell towers that begin from a square floor plan and become round after a few meters. Between these towers are the three portals on this façade, framed by stalactites expressing the cold temperatures at Christmas and each finished with a symbolic pinnacle: on the central portal, a cypress; on the sea end, a rock from Montserrat mountain; and on the northern end, Eucharistic sprigs with the symbols of an eye (all-seeing God) and a hand (all-powerful God).

Façade of the transept

The themes developed on the lower part of the façade are structured around Christmas and Jesus' childhood. The three large portals are dedicated, from left to right, to the theological virtues of Hope, Charity and Faith. They are separated by columns on the top, which have palm fronds, and above them, a pair of trumpeting angels announcing Jesus' birth (also a reference to the trumpeting angels of the Apocalypse), created by sculptor Llorenç Matamala i Piñol. These columns rest on top of turtles. The one on the left-hand side is a sea turtle, closest to the sea, and this column bears the name Joseph. This is because the portal on the left, the portal of Hope, is dedicated to Joseph. The column that separates the portals of Charity and Faith, however, rests on a tortoise, as it is closest to the mountain, and bears the name of Mary, at the centre of the portal of Faith.

The windows on all three portals feature rosaries (the one in the centre has ten beads; the one on the mountainside, nine, and on the sea end, seven).



And we can't forget all the elements on this façade that remind us that, with his birth, Jesus allowed us to overcome sin, symbolised on the central column by a snake crushed by Jesus' genealogy and the gate opening up. Also, the turtles at the foot of the columns and the chameleons on either side of the façade are fleeing down, away from evil.

Façades on the side naves

In addition to the part of the façade on the Temple transept, we must also mention here the façades on the side naves, which are topped with six triangular pediments on each façade (east and west) with various points to let light in. Each pediment has a basket of fruit in ceramic *trencadís* mosaic, by Etsuro Sotoo, following Gaudí's models. The twelve baskets, which contain twelve types of fruit laid out according to the time of year (loquats, cherries, plums, peaches, pears, apples, almonds, figs, persimmons, chestnuts, oranges and pomegranates), take us back to New Jerusalem, where the tree of life produced a crop for each month of the year. They represent the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the good deeds carried out with this inspiration.

We also find the same type of finish (triangular pediments with ceramic decoration on top) on the façades of the central nave. In this case, however, the *trencadís* mosaic by Sotoo represents white and red grapes, on which rest a chalice and shafts of wheat with a host on top, as symbols of the Eucharist (of its two elements: **the bread and the wine**).

Baskets with fruit (top) and grapes and wheat shafts (bottom), done in ceramic *trencadís* mosaic by Etsuro Sotoo.





Symbolism of the façade

1 X, tau cross and dove: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2 Cypress, the tree of life.
3 Pelican, symbol of the giving of life.
4 Monogram of Jesus.
5 Barnabas.
6 Simon.
7 Jude Thaddeus.
8 Matthias.
9 Chameleons.

Portal of Charity (Jesus)

10 Coronation of Mary.
11 Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.
12 Star of Bethlehem.
13 Nativity.
14 Genealogy of Jesus Christ.
15 Snake in the Garden of Eden.
16 Adoration of the Magi.
17 Adoration of the shepherds.
18 Angel singers and musicians.

Portal of Hope (Joseph)

19 Saint Joseph's boat.
20 Monogram of Mary.
21 Mary and Joseph's wedding.
22 Jesus showing a wounded dove to Joseph.
23 Saint Joachim.
24 Saint Anne.
25 Flight into Egypt.
26 Massacre of Innocents.
27 Sea turtle.

Portal of Faith (Mary)

28 Immaculate Conception of Mary.
29 Monogram of Joseph.
30 Presentation of Jesus at the temple.
31 Jesus preaching at the temple.
32 John the Baptist.
33 Zechariah.
34 Joseph and Mary at the temple.
35 Jesus working as a carpenter.
36 Mary's visit to Elizabeth.
37 Tortoise.















Representation of the tree of life on the Nativity façade.

Central portal or portal of Charity

The cypress (the tree of welcome) that crowns this portal represents the tree of life and is topped with a cross (Christ) in the shape of a tau, the first letter in the Greek word *Theus* (God); an X, representing the Father embracing the Son; and on top of the tau, a dove with its wings open, alluding to the Holy Spirit. The cypress tree, therefore, is topped with the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), while on its branches sit white doves that have found shelter in the tree, as symbols of the men and women who have been saved by Christ's redemption and welcomed with the love of God. Below the cypress tree, and hanging from its trunk, there are two staircases, one of virtue and one of holiness, which symbolise the paths humans must take to divinity.

A bit further down, we find an egg, the symbol of Easter, and therefore the resurrection of Jesus, with a crown, showing the power of the Son of God. There is also a pelican feeding its chicks. Jesus gives himself as sustenance in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Below this group, we see the monogram of Jesus, on either side of which there are two angels incensing him.

Each of the three portals on the Nativity façade is dedicated to one of the members of the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph.



This central portal is dedicated to Jesus, so just a quick glance shows us various sculptural groups representing scenes from the origins and birth of Jesus, like a huge crèche. **At the very top, Mary is crowned by Jesus** in the presence of Joseph; below, the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary; below, the star of Bethlehem; and below that, the Nativity group, with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, flanked by the bull and the mule. To the left, the adoration of the Magi; and to the right, the adoration of the shepherds. And dotted around the façade, we find sculptures of the singing angels and musical angels that praise his birth, as well as all nature with birdsong.

The sculpture groups of the Nativity and the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary are the work of Jaume Busquets, while the scenes of the adoration of the shepherds and the Magi were created by Joaquim Ros i Bofarull. The singing and musical angels, the plaster models of which were destroyed in the Spanish Civil War, are by Japanese sculptor Etsuro Sotoo, the same artist responsible for the doors for the three portals on this façade.

Portal of Hope

As we've said, this portal is dedicated to Joseph, as Jesus' father and the universal protector of the Church, so he is very present here. Below the mountain of Montserrat, the ship of the Church is captained by Saint Joseph, representing how Joseph guides the universal Church, and the monogram of Mary with the letter M, a crown and a star. From top to bottom, the sculpture groups on this portal represent Mary and Joseph's wedding, Jesus showing an injured dove to Joseph, watched to the left and right by Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, respectively, Jesus' grandparents; and a bit further down, next to the door, we see to the left the flight into Egypt and, to the right, the massacre of Innocents.

Portal of Faith

The Virgin Mary is the protagonist on this portal, which is why we find her from top to bottom. Eucharistic sprigs frame a representation of the Immaculate Conception of Mary with a lamp with three spouts alluding to the Trinity. Below, we find the monogram of Joseph with a J and some lilies. Further down, representations of the presentation of Jesus at the temple; Jesus preaching at the temple, with Zechariah on his left and John the Baptist on his right; and below them, also on the right, Joseph and Mary finding their son at the temple. Behind them, we see Jesus working as a carpenter; and to the left, the sculpture group of Mary's visit to Elizabeth.

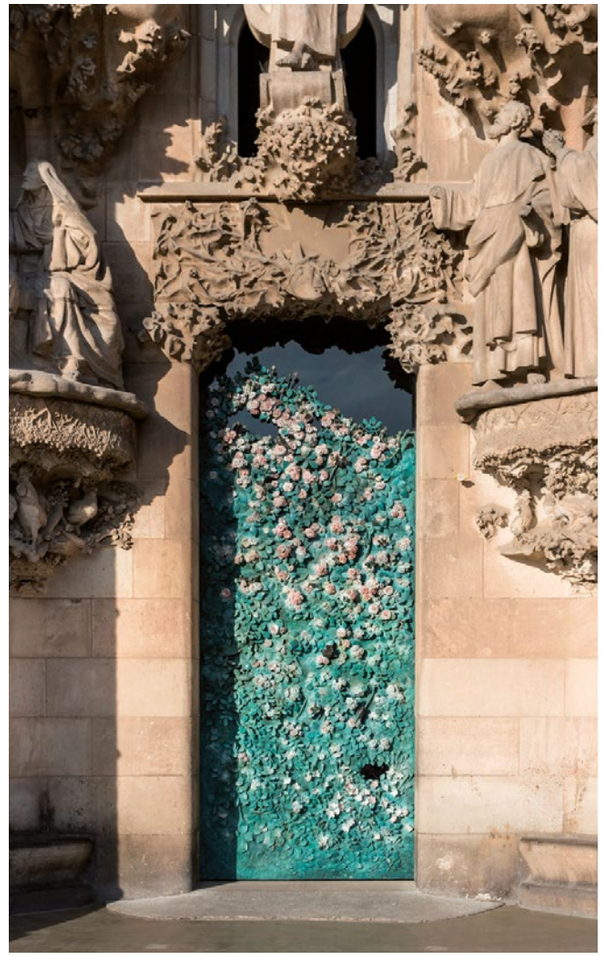
The doors on the Nativity façade

The doors on the Nativity façade also follow Gaudí's vision: celebrating the joy of life, through nature.

The doors have a strong inner core of stainless steel covered in coloured bronze panels.







From left to right: the portal of Hope, portal of Charity and portal of Faith.

As Gaudí's project only showed the location of the entrances on the Nativity façade, without any detail, in 2000 the Fundació Junta Constructora del Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família decided to hold and invitation-only contest to find the best solution for these doors. Etsuro Sotoo won the contest with a proposal that aims to stay true to Gaudí's work method, inspired by nature.

As we have explained, the Nativity façade expresses the joy of Jesus' birth and all the elements of creation celebrate his arrival in the world. This is why Sotoo decided to use plant and animal motifs on the four doors on these three portals.

The doors have a strong inner core of stainless steel covered in coloured bronze panels. The pediment or upper transom of the doors combines bronze and clear glass. All the doors were hung in 2014 and 2015.



Close-ups of the doors on the portals of Charity (top), Faith (middle) and Hope (bottom).

Portal of Charity

The doors on this portal were the first to go in. There are two double-leaf doors that, on a bed of ivy, feature squash leaves and flowers and lilies, as well as various insects including beetles, bedbugs, wasps, flies, grasshoppers, butterflies, centipedes, crickets, bees, ladybirds, caterpillars, spiders, ants and dragonflies. The pediments of the doors on this portal are the only ones that have inscriptions crowning the bronze work, which can only be read from inside the Temple. The door on the right reads: "Deus caritas est", which translates as "God is love" (First Letter of Saint John 4:8). And the door on the left reads: "Caritas numquam excedit", which translates as "Love never ends" (First Epistle to the Corinthians 13:8). Sotoo also decorated the inner side of the door leaves, with the musical notes of the traditional Catalan Christmas song "El cant dels ocells".



Portal of Faith

On this single-leaf door, wild roses abound, because it is the door that leads to the portal of our Lady of the Rosary, leading to the cloister of the same name, which Gaudí said should be covered in roses.



Portal of Hope

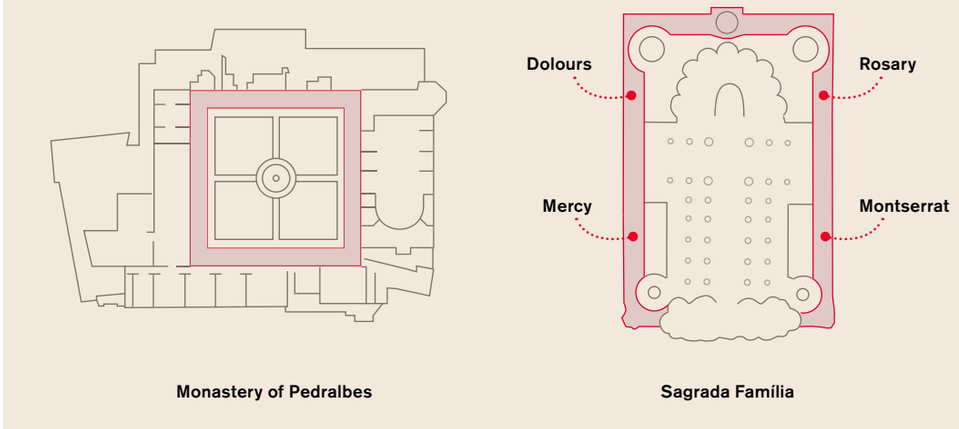
Like the Portal of Faith, this is a single door, but here the main elements are water plants native to the Nile, reeds with purple lilies and white daisies, all of which represent the beauty and hope of life.

The cloister

The cloister, an element commonly found in historical churches, is also part of the Sagrada Família, but not in its standard location. And there is a reason for this.

Although cloisters were traditionally located outside of churches or monasteries, attached to one of the sides, Gaudí created an innovative new concept with the cloister enveloping the Temple, from both sides of the Glory façade, crossing the Nativity and Passion façades and passing through the apse, as a sort of ambulatory connecting the various chapels and sacristies. This way, you can do the path of prayer to God, processions or simply walk through to reach the chapels without having to go outside or cross the Temple naves. He gave it huge windows to allow the light in and crowned them with ogival pediments made up of a series of oculi. Furthermore, with this solution, Gaudí insulated the inside of the Basilica from the noise of the street, while also connecting the Sagrada Família with the life of the city, its concerns and hopes.

Where the cloister meets the doors to the Temple on the Nativity and Passion façades, Gaudí created portals into the cloister. He dedicated them to the different aspects of the Virgin Mary: Our Lady of Montserrat and Our Lady of the Rosary on the Nativity façade, and Our Lady of Mercy and Our Lady of Dolours on the Passion façade. This is because, in fact, the essential reference of the cloister of the Sagrada Família is Mary, who watches over the new paradise, the new Jerusalem, presided over by the tree of life.



Drawings comparing the Monastery of Pedralbes (14th century) and the church and cloister of the Sagrada Família, showing the difference in the location of the cloister.



The cloister of Our Lady of the Rosary as a model
Although, of all the portals, Gaudí only ever saw the portal of the Rosary completed, the architects who continued building the Temple after the war have based their work on his project. Meaning they have designed the sections of the cloister on the western façade by applying the new geometric shapes Gaudí had come up with in the final years of his life, in his plaster models combining hyperboloids and paraboloids.

The **cloister of Montserrat**, located on the southern part of the Nativity façade, and the cloister of Our Lady of Mercy, on the Passion façade, have been fitted for use in ecclesiastical, catechistic, educational and popular events. While the **cloister of Our Lady of Dolours**, on the northern side of the Passion façade, is home to the Liturgical path.



Portal of the Rosary

Located on the northern side of the Nativity façade, Gaudí designed it down to the last detail so it could be used as a model by those who followed in his footsteps, with its entrance portal and the lantern that covers it and the ceiling with Gothic vaults. Inside, the beautiful lantern is held up by eight Solomonic columns, each one unique. The sculptures on this portal were created by Llorenç Matamala i Piñol, who made the central image of Our Lady of the Rosary with the baby Jesus, flanked by Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine. He also sculpted the patriarchs and kings: Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon, who are on the sides of the portal, and representations of the sins of violence and greed, and of devotion to the Virgin Mary. The sculpture groups are flanked by numerous roses and rosebushes. Many of the sculptures on this portal, which was finished in 1899, were damaged during the war and later rebuilt by Etsuro Sotoo.

Our Lady of the Rosary with the baby Jesus is the central image of this portal.

Close-up of the portal of the Rosary.



Glossary

Busquets, Jaume (Girona, 1904–Barcelona, 1968) Although he began drawing, he became extremely proficient in all art techniques. Following Antoni Gaudí's advice, he opted for religious art. He became the first director of Escola Massana in Barcelona.

Casting Sculpture technique that shapes a liquid or thick material using a mould. Text refers to the process of making a negative of a person or animal by covering them with plaster strips and water.

Charity Theological virtue that consists in loving God above all else, and oneself and others through the love of God.

Cloister Covered passageway, normally square, with one or two storeys, a wall on one side and a portico or colonnade on the other, that runs around the perimeter of a courtyard, garden, etc. and connects the different parts of the building, normally a monastery, cathedral, university or similar.

Faith Theological virtue in which man believes the truths revealed by God.

Hope Theological virtue in which Christian believers trust that God will give them eternal life and help them reach it.

Incarnation The union of the divine nature of the Son of God and human nature in Jesus Christ.

Liturgical path Permanent exhibition in the section of the Basilica cloister dedicated to Our Lady of Dolours. It features a selection of liturgical items designed by Gaudí.

Matamala i Piñol, Llorenç (Barcelona, 1856–1925) Childhood friend and collaborator of Antoni Gaudí, he became an essential part of the works at the Sagrada Família, where he led the team of sculptors and model makers.

Ros i Bofarull, Joaquim (Barcelona, 1906–1991) Noucentisme sculptor, disciple of Francesc d'Assís Galí and Pau Gargallo.

Sotoo, Etsuro (Fukuoka, 1953) Japanese sculptor who has been working with the Sagrada Família since 1978.

Tree of life One of the trees in the Garden of Eden, along with the trees of science and of good and evil. Symbolically, it unites heaven and earth, its roots reaching down into hell and its branches, into heaven.

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