Brief history of Temple construction

Gaudí was always aware that, given the size and complexity of the Sagrada Familia, he would never see it finished and would require help from the following generations.

Apse under construction in 1892.
Much has been said of the origins of the Temple of the Sagrada Família, often mentioning the fact that Josep Maria Bocabella visited Rome and Loreto in 1871. In truth, however, we have to go a bit further back in time. Bocabella, who was highly devoted to Saint Joseph, founded the Asociación Espiritual de Devotos de San José (Spiritual Association of the Devotees of Saint Joseph) in 1866, and the magazine El Propagador de la Devoción a San José, in collaboration with Father José María Rodríguez, who was the editor. The purpose of the association and the magazine was to ask for Saint Joseph to intercede on behalf of the Church. At the same time, Father Josep Manyanet, who worked in the Urgell diocese for families proposing the model of the Holy Family, learnt of the initiative Bocabella and Father Rodríguez were promoting and became a member of the association and subscribed to the magazine. But that’s not all, on his travels, he met Bocabella and his family, and the two developed a close relationship. This led Father Manyanet to share with Bocabella and Father Rodríguez his inspiration that a national temple should be built in honour of Saint Joseph and the Holy Family. Unsurprisingly, the idea was heartily welcomed and when Bocabella returned from Loreto in 1871, after visiting Rome to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Holy Father’s pontificate, he went back to Father Manyanet’s idea. So, on 31 December 1881, for 172,000 pesetas, they acquired 12,800 m² of land in the former town of Sant Martí de Provençals, now part of Barcelona’s Eixample district, to build an expiatory temple, meaning it would be funded exclusively with alms from the faithful to absolve humanity’s sins. They commissioned diocesan architect Francisco de Paula del Villar to build the church, with the works beginning in 1882. Just a year later, however, due to disagreements with Bocabella, he was replaced with a young architect, Antoni Gaudí, who over the years created a much more ambitious project, both architecturally and symbolically. It even covered the surrounding areas, submitting proposals for the space around the Temple to the City Council in 1916.
Layout of the Basilica

Although the Temple has a basilica form, the architectural innovations Gaudí proposed are clearly visible at the Sagrada Familia.

The Sagrada Familia started off with the layout of medieval cathedrals, but was then modernised in terms of the building processes, functionality and symbolism.
The Temple in 1933, seven years after Gaudi died, while Domènec Sugranyes was in charge of the works.

Aware that he wouldn't be able to finish the Temple, Gaudi decided to build up so that the part he could finish would serve as a model for the architects that would come after him.
Brief history

The history of the Basilica is getting on in years, but even more in milestones, as so much has gone on here.

1882  Project designed by Francisco de Paula del Villar.
On 19 March, Bishop Urquinaona lays the cornerstone of the Temple.

1883  Antoni Gaudí takes over the project, while still working on other buildings.

1885  Chapel of Saint Joseph inaugurated in the crypt and first masses held.

1891  Work begins on the Nativity façade.

1914  Antoni Gaudí begins working exclusively on the Temple, until his death.

1925  Saint Barnabas bell tower on the Nativity façade is completed.

1926  Gaudí dies and his disciple Domènec Sugranyes takes over the project.

1936  The Sagrada Familia is vandalised during the Spanish Civil War. Plans and photographs are burnt and the plaster models, smashed.

1958  On 19 March, the feast of Saint Joseph, a sculpture group representing the Holy Family is put in place, created by Jaume Busquets.

1961  Museum created to explain historical, technical, artistic and symbolic aspects of the Temple to visitors.

1966  Quintana dies and Isidre Puig i Boada and Luís Bonet i Garí take over.

1977  Bell towers on the Passion façade completed.

1978  Construction begins on the façades on the side naves.

1983  Franscisc Cardoner i Blanch takes over the project.

1985  Jordi Bonet i Armengol is named head architect and site manager.

1986–2010  The foundations for all the naves, columns, vaults and façades on the main nave, the transepts, crossing and apse are built and, on 7 November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI consecrates the Temple and declares it a minor Basilica.

2005  The Nativity façade and crypt are named UNESCO world heritage.

2011  2010 Barcelona City Award in Architecture and Urban Planning goes to the Temple nave.

2012  Jordi Faulí takes over from Jordi Bonet as head architect and site manager for the works on the Temple of the Sagrada Familia, which carry on according to Antoni Gaudí’s plans.

2016  Construction begins on the towers of the Evangelists, the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ.
Work is completed on the western sacristy and the cloister of Our Lady of Dolours.

2018  The cross is put in place on the top of the pediment on the Passion façade.

2021  Inauguration of the tower of the Virgin Mary and lighting of the morning star.

2022  Completion of the towers of the Evangelists Mark and Luke.
Gaudí was always aware that, given the size and complexity of the Sagrada Família, he would never see it finished and would require help from the following generations. They would have to continue developing the general project that he had established, with the technical innovations of each era.

**Given its complexity, the Sagrada Família has been built in different cycles and at different rates, but the project has carried on and now its completion is on the horizon.**
Glossary

Altar Table-shaped construction on which the Eucharist is celebrated.

Apsé Part of a church, normally with a semicircular floor plan, that sticks out from the rear façade and generally houses the presbytery and the altar. The apse tends to be surrounded by an even number of small or apse chapels.

Asociación Espiritual de Devotos de San José (Spiritual Association of the Devotees of Saint Joseph) Founded in 1866 by Josep María Bocabella, this association, which came to have 600,000 members, used its magazine El Propagador de la Devoción a San José and the magazine El Propagador de la Devoción a San José. He also published numerous religious books and booklets.

Bocabella i Verdaguer, Josep Maria (Barcelona, 1815–1892) A fervent Catholic who was highly devoted to Saint Joseph, book merchant Bocabella decided to foster devotion to this saint and founded the Asociación Espiritual de Devotos de San José (Spiritual Association of the Devotees of Saint Joseph) and the magazine El Propagador de la Devoción a San José.

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.

Crossing Square space, generally topped with a dome, shared by the transversal and longitudinal naves of a church. This term can also be used to refer to the whole transversal nave of a church, more commonly known as the transept.

Crypt Church or chapel located below the main church.

Major basilica The four main churches in Rome, considered the first in Christianity: Saint John Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, Saint Paul Outside the Walls and Saint Peter in the Vatican.

Manyanet i Vives, Josep (Tremp, 1833–Barcelona, 1901) Sant Josep Manyanet. Ordained priest in 1859, he was devoted to the Holy Family and promoted this model tirelessly throughout his life. He founded the institutions Fills de la Sagrada Familia and Filles de la Santa Casa de Natxaret. He was beatified in 1984 and canonized in 2004.

Minor basilica Honorary title bestowed by the Pope on churches in the Christian realm that are important given their history, size and the veneration they inspire as places of worship.

Presbytery Part of a church, located at the back of the central nave, that houses the main altar. It is often raised above the rest of the church and reserved for clerics.

Sacristy At a church, the place, generally off the presbytery, where sacred vessels and vestments are stored, and where the priests change for their liturgical functions.

Transcendent Transversal nave of a church that forms a cross with the main nave.

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