



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND BARCELONA

(NOVEMBER 6-7, 2010)

**HOLY MASS WITH DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH  
OF THE SAGRADA FAMILIA AND OF THE ALTAR**

***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Barcelona*

*Sunday, 7 November 2010*

(Video)

*[In Catalan:] Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,*

“This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep. ... The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:9-11). With these words from the first reading that we have proclaimed, I wish to greet all of you taking part in this celebration. I extend an affectionate greeting to their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain who have graciously wished to be with us. I extend a thankful greeting to Cardinal Lluís Martínez Sistach, Archbishop of Barcelona, for his words of welcome and for his invitation to me to dedicate this Church of the Sagrada Familia, a magnificent achievement of engineering, art and faith. I also greet Cardinal Ricardo María Carles Gordó, Archbishop Emeritus of Barcelona, the other Cardinals present and my brother bishops, especially the auxiliary bishop of this local church, and the many priests, deacons, seminarians, religious men and women, and lay faithful taking part in this solemn ceremony. I also extend a respectful greeting to the national, regional and local authorities present, as well as to the members of other Christian communities, who share in our joy and our grateful praise of God.

Today marks an important step in a long history of hope, work and generosity that has gone on for more than a century. At this time I would like to mention each and every one of those who have

made possible the joy that fills us today, from the promoters to the executors of this work, the architects and the workers, all who in one way or another have given their priceless contribution to the building of this edifice. We remember of course the man who was the soul and the artisan of this project, Antoni Gaudí, a creative architect and a practising Christian who kept the torch of his faith alight to the end of his life, a life lived in dignity and absolute austerity. This event is also in a certain sense the high point of the history of this land of Catalonia which, especially since the end of the nineteenth century, has given an abundance of saints and founders, martyrs and Christian poets. It is a history of holiness, artistic and poetic creation, born from the faith, which we gather and present to God today as an offering in this Eucharist.

The joy which I feel at presiding at this ceremony became all the greater when I learned that this shrine, since its beginnings, has had a special relationship with Saint Joseph. I have been moved above all by Gaudí's confidence when, in the face of many difficulties, filled with trust in divine Providence, he would exclaim, "Saint Joseph will finish this church". So it is significant that it is also being dedicated by a Pope whose baptismal name is Joseph.

What do we do when we dedicate this church? In the heart of the world, placed before God and mankind, with a humble and joyful act of faith, we raise up this massive material structure, fruit of nature and an immense achievement of human intelligence which gave birth to this work of art. It stands as a visible sign of the invisible God, to whose glory these spires rise like arrows pointing towards absolute light and to the One who is Light, Height and Beauty itself.

In this place, Gaudí desired to unify that inspiration which came to him from the three books which nourished him as a man, as a believer and as an architect: the book of nature, the book of sacred Scripture and the book of the liturgy. In this way he brought together the reality of the world and the history of salvation, as recounted in the Bible and made present in the liturgy. He made stones, trees and human life part of the church so that all creation might come together in praise of God, but at the same time he brought the sacred images outside so as to place before people the mystery of God revealed in the birth, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this way, he brilliantly helped to build our human consciousness, anchored in the world yet open to God, enlightened and sanctified by Christ. In this he accomplished one of the most important tasks of our times: overcoming 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. Beauty also reveals God because, like him, a work of beauty is pure gratuity; it calls us to freedom and draws us away from selfishness.

We have dedicated this sacred space to God, who revealed and gave himself to us in Christ so as to be definitively God among men. The revealed Word, the humanity of Christ and his Church are the three supreme expressions of his self-manifestation and self-giving to mankind. As says Saint

Paul in the second reading: “Let each man take care how he builds. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:10-11). The Lord Jesus is the stone which supports the weight of the world, which maintains the cohesion of the Church and brings together in ultimate unity all the achievements of mankind. In him, we have God’s word and presence and from him the Church receives her life, her teaching and her mission. The Church of herself is nothing; she is called to be the sign and instrument of Christ, in pure docility to his authority and in total service to his mandate. The one Christ is the foundation of the one Church. He is the rock on which our faith is built. Building on this faith, let us strive together to show the world the face of God who is love and the only one who can respond to our yearning for fulfilment. This is the great task before us: to show everyone that God is a God of peace not of violence, of freedom not of coercion, of harmony not of discord. In this sense, I consider that the dedication of this church of the Sagrada Familia is an event of great importance, at a time in which man claims to be able to build his life without God, as if God had nothing to say to him. 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 a space of beauty, faith and hope which leads man to an encounter with him who is truth and beauty itself. The architect expressed his sentiments in the following words: “A church [is] the only thing worthy of representing the soul of a people, for religion is the most elevated reality in man”.

This affirmation of God brings with it the supreme affirmation and protection of the dignity of each and every man and woman: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple? ... God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple” (1 Cor 3:16-17). Here we find joined together the truth and dignity of God and the truth and dignity of man. As we consecrate the altar of this church, which has Christ as its foundation, we are presenting to the world a God who is the friend of man and we invite men and women to become friends of God. This is what we are taught in the case of Zacchaeus, of whom today’s gospel speaks (Lk 19:1-10), if we allow God into our hearts and into our world, if we allow Christ to live in our hearts, we will not regret it: we will experience the joy of sharing his very life, as the object of his infinite love.

This church began as an initiative of the Association of the Friends of Saint Joseph, who wanted to dedicate it to the Holy Family of Nazareth. The home formed by Jesus, Mary and Joseph has always been regarded as a school of love, prayer and work. The promoters of this church wanted to set before the world love, work and service lived in the presence of God, as the Holy Family lived them. Life has changed greatly and with it enormous progress has been made in the technical, social and cultural spheres. We cannot simply remain content with these advances. Alongside them, there also need to be moral advances, such as in care, protection and assistance to families, inasmuch as the generous and indissoluble love of a man and a woman is the effective context and foundation of human life in its gestation, birth, growth and natural end. Only where love and faithfulness are present can true freedom come to birth and endure. For this reason the Church advocates adequate economic and social means so that women may find in the home and

at work their full development, that men and women who contract marriage and form a family receive decisive support from the state, that life of children may be defended as sacred and inviolable from the moment of their conception, that the reality of birth be given due respect and receive juridical, social and legislative support. For this reason the Church resists every form of denial of human life and gives its support to everything that would promote the natural order in the sphere of the institution of the family.

As I contemplate with admiration this sacred space of marvellous beauty, of so much faith-filled history, I ask God that in the land of Catalonia new witnesses of holiness may rise up and flourish, and present to the world the great service that the Church can and must offer to humanity: to be an icon of divine beauty, a burning flame of charity, a path so that the world may believe in the One whom God has sent (cf. Jn 6:29).

Dear brothers and sisters, as I dedicate this splendid church, I implore the Lord of our lives that, from this altar, which will now be anointed with holy oil and upon which the sacrifice of the love of Christ will be consumed, there may be a flood of grace and charity upon the city of Barcelona and its people, and upon the whole world. May these fruitful waters fill with faith and apostolic vitality this archdiocesan Church, its pastors and its faithful.

*[In Catalan:]* Finally, I wish to commend to the loving protection of the Mother of God, Mary Most Holy, April Rose, Mother of Mercy, all who enter here and all who in word or deed, in silence and prayer, have made this possible this marvel of architecture. May Our Lady present to her divine Son the joys and tribulations of all who come in the future to this sacred place so that here, as the Church prays when dedicating religious buildings, the poor may find mercy, the oppressed true freedom and all men may take on the dignity of the children of God. Amen.

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