News

Journalists visit a working area at outside Sagrada Familia, the basilica in Barcelona, Spain.

Journalists visit a working area at outside Sagrada Familia following a news conference to announce an update on the works of the basilica in Barcelona, Spain, Sept. 18. Over a century in the making, the Tower of Jesus Christ, designed by the famed Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí, will soon crown the Basilica of the Holy Family, making it the tallest Catholic church in the world. (OSV News/Reuters/Albert Gea)

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Over a century in the making, the Tower of Jesus Christ, designed by famed Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí, will soon crown the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, making it the tallest Catholic church in the world.

In a pre-recorded statement sent to OSV News Sept. 23, Jordi Faulí, the head architect overseeing the basilica's construction, said that while the central spire and its terminal have been completed, workers are now focused on the cross that will crown it.

"The cross is made up of seven large pieces that are assembled here and will then be lifted with the crane. The intention is to finish the cross in the next few months," Faulí said.

At over 564 feet in height, the tower, upon completion, will make it the tallest Catholic church in the world, surpassing the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, which stands at 518 feet.

It will also surpass the Ulmer Münster Lutheran church in Germany, which stands at 530 feet, making it the tallest church of any denomination in the world.

Construction of the basilica began in 1882, and is considered a masterpiece of Gaudí, a Catholic whose cause for sainthood is underway. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the basilica faced numerous delays and challenges in its over 140-year construction, including the Spanish Civil War and the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the main building is expected to be completed in 2026, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Gaudi's death, work on statues and other areas of the basilica is expected to continue until 2034.

Sagrada Familia head architect Jordi Fauli points at a cross during a news conference to anno

Sagrada Familia head architect Jordi Fauli points at a cross during a news conference to announce an update on the works of the basilica in Barcelona, Spain, Sept. 18. (OSV News/Reuters/Albert Gea)

In an interview with The Associated Press published Sept. 22, Xavier Martínez, the basilica's general director, said the tower is expected to be completed either "at the end of this year or the beginning of 2026."

"This is an important moment in the history of the building of the Sagrada Familia because it will reach its maximum height," Martínez told AP. "We are used to seeing skyscrapers like those in the United States (go up), but it is remarkable that in the 21st century we are building a cathedral."

According to the basilica's website, the Tower of Jesus Christ is "the heart of Gaudí's project" that "plays a fully starring role in architectural terms," given that it is the basilica's most prominent feature.

Faulí said that once the Tower of Jesus Christ is completed, workers will focus on building the Chapel of the Assumption, which will be located behind the basilica's apse.

The chapel, he said, will feature "a hyperbolic dome, topped with a cross" and will be a blend of architectural and artistic detail that will include sculptures of angels and saints, including St. Joseph Oriol, a Spanish priest from Barcelona canonized by Pope Pius X in 1909, and St. Roch, who is highly venerated in Spain as the patron saint against plagues.

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