

# ‘God’s architect’ on path to sainthood

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*Due date: Builders now say the Sagrada Familia will be completed next year, although works on a controversial staircase are expected to continue until 2034.*

**Can a building make us better people? For many, Antoni Gaudi’s famous basilica is proof that the best architecture raises the human spirit.**

## What’s happening?

Barcelona’s Sagrada Familia **basilica** will cost £314m to build and take 144 years. But when it is finished it will be the tallest church in the world.

Now, its designer, the Spanish **architect** Antoni Gaudi, has been made “venerable” by the **Catholic** Church. This is the first step towards becoming a **saint**.

## Find out more

Gaudi spent 40 years of his life building the basilica and, after his death, left all his money to the Church.

Visitors to the Sagrada Familia are often filled with wonder and awe.

A growing number of scientific studies appear to show that buildings can change people’s mood, behaviour and even outcomes in life.

Offices with lower ceilings make workers more focused. Patients in poorly lit hospital rooms have higher death rates.

In some cases, a lack of money limits an architect’s aims. In other cases, they prioritise buildings that attract attention.

In 2026 the Sagrada Familia will finally be finished, one hundred years since the architect’s death. Even if Gaudi never becomes a saint, he will always be remembered for this **unique** building.

**Can a building make us better people?**

## Some say

Yes! The buildings people live and work in affect their mood, their **mental health** and even their life outcomes. Architects have always known that buildings shape behaviour.

## Others say

No! Most buildings are simply **practical**. An architect cannot be told they must make the people who live in their buildings “better”. Most are limited by money, materials and space.

### Some people say

*"The straight line belongs to men, the curved one to God."*

**Antoni Gaudi (1852 – 1926), Spanish architect**

*What do you think?*

### Six steps to discovery

#### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you have a favourite building?

#### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: How many people visit the Sagrada Familia each year?

#### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

#### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - Do you think the buildings you live in change your behaviour?

#### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - In groups, come up with three principles for designing schools to make sure that children treat each other well and learn as much as possible.

#### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Design a new building for your school. What features should it have?

### Glossary

**Barcelona** - A city in Spain's Catalonia region, known for its architecture and art.

**Basilica** - An ancient Roman public building.

**Architect** - Someone who is qualified to design buildings and supervise their construction.

**Catholic** - Follower of the Catholic church, a Christian denomination with over a billion followers worldwide, led by the Pope.

**Saint** - A person who is officially recognised by the Christian, especially Catholic, Church as having lived in a good and holy way. Saints often have miracles attributed to them.

**Unique** - Different to everything else.

**Mental health** - The part of your health that has to do with your mind, your thoughts and feelings.

**Practical** - With a useful purpose.