

The Expiatory Temple of the Sacred Heart

Background

This amazing structure stands on the summit of Mount Tibidabo (1692 ft. above sea level) overlooking Barcelona, Spain. It took 59 years to complete (1902-1961). During St. John Bosco's visit to the city in 1886, the citizens gave him the parcel of land on the mountain as a gift to construct a large basilica similar to the Sacro Cuore basilica in Rome or Sacré Coeur in Paris. Hence, this basilica is also dedicated to the Sacred Heart (called *Temple Sagrat Cor* in the native Catalán).



In the middle of its construction, the temple was a victim of the vitriolic anti-Catholic attacks of the Spanish Civil War, having its façade and artwork vandalized and the statue of Christ torn down. It weathered the storm and was officially consecrated during the 35th Eucharistic Congress held in Barcelona in 1952.

The reason why it is called an “expiatory” temple is that the journey from the dark crypt, through the lightsome basilica, to the pinnacle of the structure symbolically represents the soul’s journey of sin and repentance to the heights of sanctity.

Arti-Facts

- A tiny hermitage stood on the mountaintop and was incorporated into one side of the huge basilica.
- The statue of the Sacred Heart at the pinnacle of the spire is made of bronze and has a viewing platform at its base from which visitors can see the entire city of Barcelona and surrounding areas.
- Styles of architecture: crypt: Romanesque (exterior), Neo-Byzantine (interior); basilica: Neo-Gothic.
- The basilica is full of beautiful religious art: dozens of statues, many of which are founders of religious orders such as Don Bosco himself; stunning stained glass windows; Stations of the Cross made from alabaster; and exquisite mosaics in the crypt.
- The twelve pillars that form the external frame of the church are each topped by the statue of one of the twelve Apostles. Inside the frame are four smaller towers surrounding the main tower and spire.

