

AN ASPECT OF THE VISIT OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE SAGRADA FAMÍLIA

On the 7th of November we anticipate the visit of Benedict XVI for the consecration of the Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família, a historical event which represents the third visit of a Pope to the city of Barcelona. Prior to this we know only of the visit to Barcelona of the antipope Benedict XIII, Cardinal Pedro de Luna, on the 19th of September of 1409, when at Bellesguard he married King Martín I, the Human, with Margarita de Prades. These were the times of the Western Schism when from Avinyó and then from Barcelona and from Peñíscola, Benedict XIII disputed the Triple Crown with Gregorio XII, the Venetian Angelo Correr, a dispute which did not end until the Council of Pisa, or subsequently, that of Constanza.

On the 6th of August of 1522 the recently elected Pope Adrian VI, Adrian de Utrecht, was in Barcelona during a strong storm which obliged the boat of the new Pope to remain in Barcelona.

He visited the tomb of Santa Eulalia in the Cathedral and, when the storm calmed, he once again set sail for Italy. He had been elected Pope but had not yet been crowned.

On the 7th of November of 1982, Pope John Paul II arrived from Zaragoza by helicopter, and he went to Montserrat, the Sagrada Família, the Cathedral and the Camp Nou.

With this being the third Pope in Barcelona, it must be understood that Benedict XIII is not recognised on the list of Popes, which is why when Cardinal Francisco Orsini was elected Pope in 1424 he chose the name of Benedict XIII. This therefore means that the current Pope Benedict XVI is the second Pope to visit the Sagrada Família and the fourth to visit Barcelona, as a Pope, between 1409 and 2010.

The first stone of the Sagrada Família was laid on the 19th of March of 1882 by the Bishop of Barcelona Josep Urquinaona Bidot (1814-1883) while the consecration of the Basilica Temple took place on the 7th of November of 2010, 122 years later, due to the building not being finished. Such an extensive period represents an authentic history, complete with good and bad moments. There was the changing of the first architect, the beginning of the management of the building works by Gaudí, which conferred upon the building its own unique personality and style, retained until current times by the architects who succeeded Gaudí.

Pessimistic moments were experienced in 1915 when through lack of funds the building work was on the point of stopping; there was the tragic moment in 1936 when the building work was violently damaged. From 1939 the restoration gradually began, which has continued uninterrupted, despite the aversion of certain groups who are against the continuance of the building work. Gaudí said that in the Sagrada Familia everything was providential and although there may be some who do not believe in Providence and who, at various times, thought to convert the Temple into a faux-ruin, a car park or into a high speed train station, the personality of the building and particularly of the architect Gaudí, have provided the driving force behind the continuity of the building work.

By following this rationale, one can arrive at the much commented arguments of Stephen Hawking. This reputable scientist has negated the existence of God in the belief that the Creation is due solely to natural causes, particularly the Law of Gravity, and not the actions of an all-powerful superior being.

One could find a certain parallelism in the reasoning of Hawking and the particular manner of creating architecture on the part of Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí did away with scientific concepts, particularly those of a mathematical nature, which generally surround architectural construction, and, on the contrary, he carefully studied the phenomenon of equilibrium as inherent in architecture.

He observed, perhaps ingeniously if you will, how Nature creates from earliest times, balanced constructive elements in the trees, the skeletons of mammals or the clouds. Then, with intelligence and common sense, he transferred these shapes, on the basis of catenary arches or elements from regulated geometry, to construction and he thereby obtained totally balanced compositions, straight from Nature, without passing through the intellectual filter of mathematical calculus.

The law of gravity is not an invention of Newton's, it has always existed and if the English scientist grasped it with the falling of an apple from the branch of a tree, this does not mean that the law of gravity itself invented the apple.

Gaudí said that when God created the world Saint Thomas had not yet written the "Summa Theologica", from which can be clearly deduced that Theology has always existed, while the scientific study of creation had to wait until the XIII century, when Saint Thomas wrote the famous Summa. Mathematical science can explain, with logical arguments, many natural

phenomena which Stephen Hawking himself says have existed since the beginning of time.

It is therefore logical to think that these phenomena were created by a superior being, while what science can explain is solely an investigation into the practical consequences of the laws interpreted by men of science, who do not necessarily express the way of thinking of men of faith, who in turn have the perfect right to firmly believe in the divine origin of the universal laws.

The Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família consecrated personally by the Holy Father, duly studied, may provide valuable arguments for the defence of religion and spirituality, whilst extolling the thinking of Gaudí, based on the clearest and most transparent exercise of common sense.

Joan Bassegoda Nonell, President of Amics de Gaudí

