

Pope sends message for inauguration of new tower at Barcelona basilica

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The newly completed Tower of the Virgin Mary at Barcelona’s Basilica of the Holy Family stands as a beacon of hope for those who suffer in the world today, Pope Francis said.

In a message Dec. 8 for the inauguration of the basilica’s second highest tower, the pope said the 12-point illuminated star that crowns the tower is a reminder that Mary is the “star of the new evangelization” and helps “us believe once again in the revolutionary nature of tenderness and affection.”

Remembering the poor, the elderly, young people, those affected by the pandemic and those “living through times of trial,” the pope said that “the star of the tower of Mary shines for all of you.”

Construction on the church, often referred to as Sagrada Familia, its name in Spanish, began in 1882, and is considered the masterpiece of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí, a Catholic whose cause for sainthood is underway.

While the church initially was set to be completed by 2026 in time for the 100th anniversary of Gaudí’s death, construction halted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and pushed the completion of the basilica to an undetermined date.

In his message, the pope noted that the 452-foot-tall tower’s inauguration coincided with the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which proclaims how, “in perfect harmony with God’s plan for her, the Virgin Mary became the most holy, humble, docile and transparent before God.”

“Gaudí wanted this mystery to crown the portal of faith – the first one he built – so that, as we recite the prayer to the Holy Trinity, we would learn to be, like Mary, a temple of this mystery, and to worship God in spirit and in truth,” the pope said.

The Spanish architect, he added, wanted the Tower of the Virgin Mary to represent “a portal of hope” for the suffering.

The tower also serves as a reminder to Christians not only to pray for the poor and the excluded, but also to reflect on “how much responsibility we have” in their suffering.

Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to follow Mary’s example through “daily gestures of love and service” that manifest “the immaculate beauty of our mother.”

“From the encounter with Christ, may you grow in fraternity, in the proclamation of the Good News of the Gospel to young people, in welcoming the poor and the marginalized, in the discernment proper to those who have a fine-tuned ear to know how to listen to the Spirit and a heart totally disposed to fulfill what he asks of us,” the pope said.