



Preparation

You will need to able to show images on a large screen and make the hall darker, to show these images at their best.

If your class have been involved in a design-and-make project, this assembly provides an excellent opportunity for a few individuals to show-and-tell what they've made.

Introduction

We're going to be doing some big thinking and imagining this morning! First of all, here's a big question: *What do you think you were put here on Earth to do?* Let's all be quiet and think about that for a moment. If you found that really difficult, this might help you:

What are you really, really good at making or doing? (At home, or school, or somewhere else.) Answering that question might help you to work out that first big question. *What do you think you were put here on Earth to do?*

Development

Now we're going to be doing some imagining. Close your eyes if it helps. Ready?

Imagine, you are standing outside a large building, with high towers stretching up into the sky. It's a sunny day. The walls of the building are covered in sculptures of people, almost life-size. Who are those people? What are they doing? In front of you are some massive doors that seem to be covered in large leaves. As you look closer, you see the leaves are made of metal, and covered in small creatures - ladybirds, beetles, snails. You step inside the building... and it's like entering a massive cave, or maybe it's a multi-coloured rainforest. There are curved giant pillars stretching up to the roof like massive tree trunks. There are high windows, catching the bright sunlight. The ceiling is a network of strange symmetrical patterns. And all around you, there are people just standing there, looking amazed!

That's what you get when you first walk into the Basilica of the Sagrada Familia, in Barcelona.



It's a giant church – but unlike any other church you've ever been in. Some visitors stop, open-mouthed. Am I really seeing this? What is this place? Others take lots and lots of pictures, but cameras really can't do it justice. It's big, it's all around you, and there's just so much to take in!

When you look at the Basilica from outside, it still looks... strange. What are those giant words written on the roof, and those weird shapes? Why are there cranes still lifting and placing giant pieces of stone? Isn't it finished?

There's a strange story about this place, about the man who designed it. Do you remember my question at the beginning? What do you think you were put here on Earth to do? His story might give you a few clues.

Antoni Gaudi was a strange young man. As he grew up in Spain, his teachers couldn't really work out what to do with him. He was so shy, and often missing school because of illness. But he loved being outdoors. He was fascinated by the shapes of the natural world. Snail-shells. Trees. Leaves. Skeletons. Sea-creatures. The tails of fish. The wings of birds. Antoni was interested in them all. He kept asking questions. Why is a bird's tail that shape? What job does it do? Nature was making him think incredibly hard. When he left school, he tried all sorts of jobs, but couldn't settle. In the end, he decided to become an architect (someone who designs buildings) and went to college. Student life was fun, he loved stylish clothes and being seen about town at the best restaurants and theatres – but his college didn't know what to make of him. Was he a fool or a genius? They weren't sure. But he could draw, and kept asking questions like...

Why do some buildings look better when they're covered in ivy?

If you're going to have a door handle, why not make a door handle that feels good to hold?

If you're going to make a chair and sit on it, why not do it so that the chair has a really comfortable shape to fit your bottom?



He liked making models. It helped him to think. Does that bit of the roof look right? Maybe not. Let's adjust it a bit. How does it look now? After leaving college, he heard about a hotel being redeveloped that needed some new lampposts designed. Antoni showed the owners some drawings and a model, was given the job, and did it well.

He applied for more design jobs. A kiosk for selling newspapers. A factory. A glass showcase for advertising gloves. He was getting noticed. Bit by bit, along came bigger commissions. A wine cellar, some park buildings. Furniture. A bridge. But as the jobs got bigger. Antoni Gaudí's thinking was getting bigger too. The money was useful, but fancy clothes didn't interest him anymore. He had always been a devout Christian, but now he was wondering, What was I put here on Earth to do?

Then it came. When he was 31, Antoni was given the job of designing a large church, a basilica, called the Sagrada Família, the Church of the Holy Family, in the city of Barcelona, celebrating the life and work of Jesus Christ. The floor-plan would take the shape of a cross. There would be sculptures, massive windows, natural colours and shapes – and it would be full of light. Gaudí worked slowly and carefully. When he died at the age of 73, work carried on, and it should be finished by... 2027! Perhaps you'll visit Barcelona one day. If you're there, visit the Sagrada Família! It's worth it.

But do you remember that question? What do you think you were put here on Earth to do?

Jesus once told a story that we now call the parable of the talents. In that story, three servants were each given some money by their boss, and told to go into business and make the most of it. Two succeeded and one failed. What are your talents? Do you even know what you're good at yet? Perhaps not! It could be that you'll discover more talents as you grow up – but then, you'll still have to work at them. There are so many talented people sitting in this room – but do they know it, yet?

Gaudí was working that all out for himself, bit by bit, rather like his Sagrada Família. His life was like that giant church, slowly taking shape, slowly working out his purpose. What will you do with your life? Let's be quiet.

Prayer

Father God, every person sitting in this room is unique and special. We all have talents. We can work things out, build things, care for others... there are so many talents. Help us all to encourage each other to discover and use our talents – and discover your purpose for our lives too, as Antoni Gaudí did. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Information for teachers

Antoni Gaudí:

Born 25 June 1852.



1878 (aged 26): Graduates as an architect.

1883 (aged 31): Put in charge of building the Barcelona Basilica of the Holy Family, or Sagrada Família, whilst also working with others on a range of projects.

1915 (aged 63): Devotes himself entirely to the Sagrada Familia project.

Died 10 June 1926 (aged 73).

Website www.sagradafamilia.org/en/

Jesus' parable of the talents can be found at either Matthew 25:14-30 or Luke 19:12-27.