 Reading time: 4 min.

Located on the highest peak of the Collserola mountains, offering a beautiful view of Barcelona, the Tibidabo Salesian House has a special history, linked to Don Bosco's visit to Spain in 1886.

The name of the hill, "Tibidabo", derives from the Latin *Tibidabo*, which means "I will give you", and is derived from some verses of Holy Scripture: "… *et dixit illi haec tibi omnia dabo si cadens adoraveris me"*, "… and he said to him: All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). This sentence is uttered by the devil to Jesus from a great height, showing him the kingdoms of the earth, trying to tempt him with the riches of this world.
The old name of the Barcelona hill was *Puig de l'Àliga* (Eagle Hill). The new name "Tibidabo", like other biblical names (Valley of Hebron, Mount Carmel, etc.), was given by some religious people who lived in the area. The choice of this new name was made because of the majestic view it offers over the city of Barcelona, from a height that gives one the feeling of dominating everything.

During his trip to Spain, on the afternoon of 5 May 1886, Don Bosco went to the basilica of Our Lady of Mercy, patron saint of the city of Barcelona, to thank her for the favours he had received during his visit to the city and for the Salesian work he had begun in Sarrià. There, some gentlemen from the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul approached him, gave him the ownership of a piece of land at the top of Tibidabo and asked him to build a shrine to the Sacred Heart of Jesus there. They asked him this favour "to keep firm and indestructible the religion that you have preached to us with such zeal and example and which is the inheritance of our fathers."

Don Bosco's reaction was spontaneous: "I am overwhelmed by this fresh, unexpected proof you give me of your piety and faith. Thank you, but you must realize that in this, you are the tools of Divine Providence. As I was leaving Turin to come to Spain, I was thinking to myself, now that the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome is almost completed, I must look for some other way to honor the Sacred Heart and promote devotion to it. An interior voice bade me to be calm, assuring me that here I would be able to gratify this vow. That voice kept repeating to me, '*Tibi dabo, tibi dabo*!' Yes, gentlemen, you are the tools of Divine Providence. With your help, a shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will soon rise upon that mount. Everyone will find there an opportunity to receive the holy sacraments, and your charity and faith – of which you have given me so many beautiful proofs – will be remembered forever."

(MB XVIII,114).

On 3 July of the same year, 1886, the now Venerable Dorothea de Chopitea, promoter of Salesian work in Barcelona and facilitator of Don Bosco's visit to the city, financed the construction of a small chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart on the same hill.
The church's construction project was significantly delayed, mainly due to the appearance of a new project to build an astronomical observatory on top of Tibidabo, which was eventually built on a nearby hill (Fabra Observatory).
In 1902, the foundation stone of the church was laid and in 1911 the crypt of the current Tibidabo sanctuary was opened in the presence of the then Rector Major, Fr Paul Albera. A few days after the opening, the latter was named the "Expiatory and National Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" in accordance with a decision taken at the 22nd International Eucharistic Congress held in Madrid at the end of June 1911. The work was completed in 1961 with the erection of the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, seventy-five years after John Bosco's visit to Barcelona. On 29 October 1961, the church received the title of minor basilica, granted by Pope John XXIII.

Today, the church continues to attract large numbers of pilgrims and visitors from all over the world. It warmly welcomes all those who come to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whatever reason, giving them the opportunity to receive the message of the Gospel and to approach the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. It is at the same time a parish entrusted to the Salesians, even though it has few permanent parishioners.
For those who have come with the intention of spending some time in prayer, it also makes available the materials offered by the Pope's World Prayer Network, of which the church is a member.
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is continued during the day, and the practice of adoration at night is encouraged.
And to those who wish to make a retreat, accommodation and food are provided within the Salesian structure.
A work dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus desired by Providence through St John Bosco, which continues its mission through history.

Fr Joan Codina i Giol, sdb
Director Tibibabo

Photo gallery Salesian House in Tibidabo

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