



Interview

Interview transcript with Begoña Cantera

Begoña Cantera, an engineer and part of Henkel for almost 20 years, is today Account Sales Engineer at Henkel Ibérica within the Adhesive Technologies business. For more than a decade, she has been the technical lead behind one of the company's most unique projects: the collaboration with the Sagrada Familia.

With her, we explore a story of innovation, challenges, and commitment.

- **The Sagrada Familia, one of the world's greatest architectural icons, will complete the Tower of Jesus in 2026, coinciding with the centenary of Gaudí's death and becoming the tallest basilica in the world. What was it like to be part of this once-in-a-lifetime project as part of Henkel?**

It has been an incredible opportunity and, above all, a great personal satisfaction.

Gaudí knew that the solution did not exist in his time and trusted that future generations would find it.

Being able to contribute a reliable solution to such a demanding project—and to a symbol of Barcelona, my city—has truly been a dream come true.

- **Gaudí's architecture posed unique structural challenges, far ahead of its time. What was the major technical challenge posed by the Sagrada Familia, and how did Henkel's adhesive expertise help make it possible and turn Gaudí's vision into reality?**

The greatest challenge faced by the Sagrada Familia throughout its history was the construction of the six central towers—without a doubt the most complex part of the entire project—both in terms of height and structural and symbolic demands.

To make this possible, the Sagrada Familia developed an innovative system known as the Tensioned Stone Panel System, based on a modular logic like a Meccano set: stone pieces are assembled into panels, panels into levels, and ultimately into the full tower. It is a hybrid system combining stone, steel, and post-tensioning bars.

The key challenge was finding a reliable way to connect stone and steel so that they could behave as a single structural element.



This is where Henkel came in, providing a solution capable of bonding, sealing, and distributing loads. This ensures that the entire structure functions as a solid and durable whole and delivers the structural performance required by the project.

- **In this case, was the solution designed specifically for the Sagrada Familia, or was it based on an existing Loctite technology that you tailored to the project's needs?**

Initially, we considered developing a specific adhesive for the project. However, thanks to the breadth of our Loctite portfolio, we decided to evaluate existing solutions.

After rigorous testing and validation, we identified Loctite EA 9497 as the most suitable solution. From that point onward, we carried out a project-specific characterization to ensure its performance under real-life conditions and provide the highest guarantees of reliability and durability.

In this way, we started from a proven solution but technically adapted it to respond with complete confidence to a unique challenge such as the Sagrada Familia.

- **Once the solution had been identified, what were the key characteristics of Loctite EA 9497 that made it so critical for this project, and what kind of volume are we talking about to make it happen?**

Loctite EA 9497 was key because it had to withstand extremely demanding conditions: humidity, a saline environment due to the proximity to the sea, temperature fluctuations of more than 20°C, and constant vibrations, including from the metro running beneath the basilica.

It is a solution designed to adhere to both stone and steel, fully seal the joints, and perform without cracking. It doesn't just bond—it seals, fills gaps, and prevents movement, making the entire structure behave as a single unit. This is also made possible by an optimized viscosity that ensures the adhesive reaches all contact areas.

To give an idea of its performance, one square meter can support the weight of approximately 100 adult people.

In addition, it has enhanced durability and accelerated construction. In total, around 24 tonnes were used for the six central towers, which clearly reflects the scale of the project.



- **Beyond technical performance, how has this solution helped accelerate the construction of the Sagrada Familia?**

The impact has been enormous. By enabling the modular construction system, Henkel's solution has allowed the project to move forward at a pace that was previously unimaginable. Assembly processes have been optimized and timelines significantly reduced. To put it into context, what would have taken between 50 and 60 years using traditional methods has been completed in approximately 8 years of effective work.

And this is something we are especially proud of, as it has helped ensure that the completion of the Tower of Jesus Christ—the tallest, at 172.5 meters—coincides with Gaudí's centenary, making the Sagrada Familia the tallest basilica in the world.

- **A project of this scale is ultimately about people. What kind of team has been involved from Henkel and for how long?**

This project has been made possible through the collaboration of many people and companies, each contributing their expertise.

From Henkel, around 20 professionals have been involved over the past decade—since the project began in October 2015—forming a multidisciplinary team of technical, commercial, and logistics experts.

But beyond our own team, success has relied on a full ecosystem: distribution partners, engineering and construction collaborators, quarry specialists, and of course the teams at the Sagrada Familia.

Henkel has acted as the technological link, integrating the bonding of the project's key materials. But ultimately, this is a collective success. It is this collaboration that has allowed our generation to contribute to making Gaudí's dream a reality.

- **This milestone coincides with Henkel's 150th anniversary. Both Fritz Henkel and Antoni Gaudí were visionaries of their time, driven by a long-term perspective. What does it mean to you that, more than a century later, their visions meet in a project like the Sagrada Familia?**

For us, the fact that this milestone coincides with our 150th anniversary worldwide has a very special, almost symbolic meaning.



Fritz Henkel and Antoni Gaudí were contemporaries, two visionaries who understood that real impact is built by thinking about the future.

Gaudí conceived a project he knew he would never see completed, trusting future generations to find the solutions. And Fritz Henkel founded a company with that same vision: one based on continuous innovation and anticipating what lies ahead.

That, in 2026, on the occasion of Henkel's 150th anniversary, we are able to contribute to the completion of the Sagrada Família is, in many ways, the meeting point of these two visions. *A dream conceived for the future, built generation after generation. Two visions connected across time.*

As a company, we are proud to transform engineering into legacy and to be part of a work that will endure for generations. We make it happen.