

Home Retreat

The Life of Blessed Carlo Acutis - A Saint for our Time...

When Pope Benedict XVI came to Britain in September 2010, he issued an invitation to all young people: “Be Saints!” he said. When you think of saints perhaps you think of men & woman who lived long ago, like Saint Peter or saint Benedict.



The word Saint often brings to mind a quiet voice and piously folded hands. But I want to share with you the story of an incredible young man – Carlo Acutis – an ordinary teenager who lived and died incredibly!



Carlo Acutis

Approved for beatification in 2020, this modern tech savvy teenager lived a holy and pure life centered on the Eucharist and serving others. He died at only 15 years of age and yet in his short life he inspired many. He is patron of the internet.

So who was **Carlo Acutis**?

Born in Milan, Italy, on the 3rd May 1991, Carlo Acutis, was baptized in London where his father was then working - in the Servite Church of Our Lady of Dolours. His parents were not practicing Catholics at the time – his mother had only been to Mass three times – for her first Holy Communion, her confirmation and her wedding!! Later on it would be Carlo who dragged his parents to Mass!

He became a very holy and mature young man for his age. He attended daily Mass when he could and prayed frequently before the Blessed Sacrament. The Rosary and Our Lady were dear to him. Carlo was full of life and joy and had many friends, yet he never treated those less fortunate of his friends as any lower than ones who, like him, were from a wealthy background. And he would always defend those who were bullied or marginalized.

Yet Carlo was no misfit. He was marvelously gifted in many things of modernity: computer programming, film editing, website creation, comics, and such. He played soccer. He would even go on to compile a wonderful exhibit and collection of resources of all the Eucharistic Miracles on the web. He was aware of his weaknesses and learned self-control, limiting his use of video games and play station to just one hour a day. Purity was very important to him.

Carlo was unusually wise and religious for such a young man who would go on to die at the mere age of 15 from a surprise form of deadly leukemia. He shared as much of his faith as he could, especially the wonder of the Eucharist and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. And yet despite the fact that it might not seem very common in these days for a young person to be so religious, his peers did not make fun of him for sharing what he did because they could see that it came straight from his heart, that he truly believed what he was talking about. One time, in one of his classes, as evidence of how special he was, he was the only one against abortion in a heated school debate.

Carlo highlighted five ways to live and become close to God. You might call it his spirituality:

Firstly, frequent Holy Communion. He said that the “Eucharist is my highway to Heaven.” And “the more we receive the Eucharist, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven.”

Secondly, Eucharistic Adoration. He was attracted by the devotion of his patron Saint, Francis of Assisi, to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. “If go out in the sun we get a sun-tan. If we get in front of Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints.” He would especially use this time of prayer for souls in purgatory

Thirdly, having a spiritual guide and going to confession regularly. Even as a young boy, Carlos would visit his spiritual director once a month usually going to confession. “The only thing we must fear is sin.”

Fourthly, devotion to the Blessed Mother and the saints. “I never fail to keep the most gracious appointment of the day – recitation of the Holy Rosary.” He called the rosary, “the shortest ladder to heaven.”

And **fifthly**, Charity. Carlo is quoted as saying: “To be a saint we need to love.” From an early age Carlo showed himself to be generous in self-giving. He befriended everyone: janitors, door keepers immigrants. He used his pocket money to buy sleeping bags for the homeless and hot drinks for beggars. He volunteered in the soup kitchen run by the Missionaries of Charity. After his death there were many testimonies from the people he had helped: “The boy died young because he was dear to Heaven,” said one man. Sometimes he would secretly help the maid with her work so that she could finish early and go home to her family. When he became ill, he offered his sufferings for the Church and the Pope.

In October 2006, aged just 15, Carlo was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia. He patiently accepted his sickness as a participation in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. His spiritual director said, “if only we could celebrate Mass with something of the faith of Carlo Acutis.”

On the 11th October he entered a coma and died on the 12th October 2006 after receiving the sacrament of the sick. His remains were buried in his beloved Assisi. The process for raising him to the altars, declaring him a saint, began almost immediately and his body was transferred to the Shrine of Renunciation in Assisi.

Then in Nov 2016, the medical council for the Congregation for the Causes of Saints expressed a positive opinion on an alleged miracle attributed to Carlo – a young boy from Brasil aged just 7 years, suffering from a severe disease of the pancreas, who was blessed with a relic Of Carlo Acutis given by Carlo’s mother, who was cured instantly. Carlo was declared “Blessed” on 10th October 2020, which means that he can be venerated in the liturgy of the Church – his feast day is 12th October.

Let us commend ourselves and especially the young people we know to the intercession of Blessed Carlo Acutis, that they may have something of his enthusiasm, his holiness and his deep humanity:

O God our Father,

we thank you for giving us Carlo,

a model of life for young people,

and a message of love for all.

You made him fall in love with your son Jesus,
making the Eucharist his “highway to heaven.”

You gave him Mary as a beloved mother,
and you made him, through the Rosary,
a cantor of her tenderness.

Receive his prayer for us.

Look above all upon the poor, whom he loved and assisted.

Grant me too, through his intercession, the grace
that I need (mention your intention).

And make our joy full, raising Carlo among
the saints of your Church,
so that his smile shines again for us
to the glory of your name. Amen.