

Blessed Carlo Acutis (1991-2006)

BY: MICHAEL R. HEINLEIN

Feast day: Oct. 12

The Italian teenager Blessed Carlo Acutis has captivated Catholics young and old in recent years, especially since his 2020 beatification. Although only 15 when he died of leukemia, Carlo was resolved to prioritize his life around the Eucharist. Each day found him attending Mass and spending time in prayer before the Eucharistic Lord. He believed, as he put it, “the Eucharist is my highway to heaven.” And he endeavored to share this reality with others, with a focus on Eucharistic miracles, through his virtual and online apostleship.

Born in London to wealthy Italian parents, Carlo returned to his family’s native Italy not long after his birth. Although his family was not very active in the practice of the Faith, Carlo was fascinated by it. He found in his Polish babysitter a helpful guide to his growing interest in Catholicism. As a boy, Carlo’s recently deceased grandfather appeared to him in a dream asking for prayers on his behalf. After receiving his first holy Communion at age 7, Carlo made it a point to spend time in contemplation before the tabernacle. Carlo’s guides in the spiritual life, among others, included St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic Savio and St. Bernadette Soubirous. And he reflected their respective love for the poor, virtuous living and piety.

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Although he might have been somewhat unusual in his youthful zeal for the Faith, Carlo was also very much interested in things of his peers, such as his love for video games and films. He was by all accounts a “computer geek” who studied college textbooks on the subject as early as age 9. But Carlo recognized that his talents and interests in the field must be used for good. He set limits to his use of media for personal enjoyment. Carlo’s mother has said: “Carlo was the light answer to the dark side of the web. My son’s life can show how the internet can be used for good — to spread good things.”

This meant Carlo was resolved to make use of his tech-savviness for the good of others. From age 9, he was reading college texts on computer coding. He developed websites for his high school and nearby parishes. He also created a website that cataloged all the major Eucharistic miracles ever recorded.



Carlo's generous spirit also could be seen in how he offered up his last suffering from leukemia for others, telling doctors that he knew others were suffering more than he. He said, "I offer to the Lord the sufferings that I will have to undergo for the pope and for the Church." Although he wanted to make a pilgrimage to the sites of the Eucharistic miracles he helped others come to learn about, his declining health made it an impossibility. But, having loved to make pilgrimages to Assisi, Carlo's body made one last pilgrimage there for burial after his death on Oct. 12, 2006.

Many began calling for his canonization not long after his death. On the fourth anniversary of his death, Carlo's mother delivered twin babies at age 44, and she believed Carlo was interceding for her. She also claimed Carlo appeared to her in a dream and informed his mother of his upcoming beatification and that he would be canonized soon thereafter.

Just before his death at 15, Carlo said, "I'm happy to die, because I've lived my life without wasting even a minute of it doing things that wouldn't have pleased God." Although he died at a young age, Carlo's personal holiness and discipleship left a lasting legacy. And his renown continues to grow. "To always be close to Jesus, that's my life plan," he was known to say. Now, through his witness, he inspires old and young alike to do the same.

Michael R. Heinlein is editor of OSV's Simply Catholic. He writes from Indiana. Taken from the "Inspired by the Eucharist" saint booklet.

A relic of Blessed Carlo will be here at Saint Leo Church from 4-6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 30, 2023 for public veneration and prayer.

Mass will be celebrated at 6 p.m.