

Carlo Acutis: The New Young Saint

John Scally lives in Dublin.



Two of the constant messages of Pope Francis to young people are that God loves them and the Church needs them. This is one of the reasons why it is appropriate that this month he will canonise Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager who died in 2006. A gamer and computer programmer who loved the Eucharist, he will be the Church's first millennial saint.

Carlo Acutis was born on 3 May 1991 in London, where his father was working. Just a few months later, he moved with his parents to Milan, Italy.

From an early age, Carlo had a special love for God, even though his

parents weren't especially devout. His mother said that before Carlo she went to Mass only for her First Communion, her confirmation and her wedding. But as a young boy, Carlo loved to pray the rosary. After he made his First Communion, he went to Mass as often as possible at the parish across from his elementary school.

Carlo's love for the Eucharist was evident when he said, 'There are queues in front of a concert, in front of a football match, but I don't see these queues in front of the Blessed Sacrament.' His mother stated that 'for

him the Eucharist was the centre of his life’.

Such was his witness of faith as a child that he led adults to convert and be baptised. Rajesh Mohur, who worked for the Acutis family as an au pair when Carlo was a boy, converted from Hinduism to Catholicism because of Carlo’s witness. He had taught Rajesh how to pray the rosary and told him about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Rajesh said that one of the things that most impressed him as a non-Christian was the witness of Carlo’s love and concern for the poor – how he interacted with the homeless man who would sit at the entrance of the church and would bring Tupperware dishes filled with food out to vulnerable people living on the streets.

When Carlo became a teenager, he volunteered to help poor people who came to the Capuchin day centre and hostel and assist the Missionary Sisters of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Carlo wasn’t afraid to defend church teaching, even in situations when his classmates disagreed with him. Many of Carlo’s high school classmates remember Carlo giving a passionate defence for the protection of life from the moment of conception when there was a classroom discussion about abortion.

A faithful friend, he was noted for standing up for kids at school who got bullied, especially those with disabilities.

He was fascinated with computer coding, taught himself some of the basic coding languages and loved playing video games. He used his computer and internet skills to help

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put together an exhibition on eucharistic miracles that has gone on to be displayed at thousands of parishes on five continents. He was convinced that the scientific evidence from eucharistic miracles would help people to realise that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist and come to Mass. He had conversations with his gaming buddies about the importance of going to Mass.

When he was just fifteen, he was struck by a virulent and fatal form of leukaemia. In less than two weeks Carlo was dead. Before his death in 2006, he offered his sufferings for Pope Benedict XVI and for the Church: ‘I offer all of my suffering to the Lord for the Pope and for the Church in order not to go to purgatory but to go straight to heaven.’

He was buried in Assisi. Thousands came to pray at his tomb at the time of his beatification in October 2020.

A saint inspires us to become the best versions of ourselves. One of Carlo’s enduring messages to us today is that caring comes from God’s care for us. This has implications in terms of our relationship with God – if we do not know God ourselves, we cannot bring God to others.