

Meditation 7:

Blessed Carlo Acutis, Witness of Faith

At the sight of the spires of Chartres Cathedral, our faces light up. There she is, the one we desire, the one towards whom we are walking! We smile as we approach the goal of this pilgrimage. It is the same with our life which is a pilgrimage towards Heaven; we must be animated by the desire for Heaven and be permanently inhabited by this little virtue of Hope.



Pope Francis says: “Hope teaches us to smile.” The influence of Blessed Carlo Acutis is a good example of this. This teenager like so many others, in his jeans and sneakers, knew how to prepare his soul for Heaven, bringing many other people in his wake.

Major ideas

- The life goal of Carlo Acutis is total union with Jesus
- Love of God cannot be dissociated from love of neighbour
- We are all expected in Heaven
- Faced with a brutal and unexpected ordeal, Carlo offers his sufferings for those who neglect the road to Heaven

Being united with Jesus, this is my life goal

An only child, Carlo was born in London on May 3, 1991 into a wealthy family, before moving to a chic area of Milan. He is a pampered child, but yet, at the heart of this smooth existence, the little boy cultivates an intense inner life, initially unsuspected by his parents. He had this specificity: he put Jesus at the centre of his life.

Coming from a Catholic but non-practicing Italian family, Carlo Acutis demonstrated a deep and ardent faith from an early age.

He enjoys praying in churches and, during family trips, he insists his parents visit shrines in the area.

Carlo is a teenager like any other, who has many friends, loves football, music and animals (three dogs and two cats).

He is noticed by his teachers for his good results and appreciated by his classmates for his good humour, his generosity and his kindness towards everyone. “What will make us beautiful in the eyes of God will be the way we love him and our brothers,” he said. This is what he will strive to implement.

The love of God

Carlo takes care of his interior life through a life of prayer and especially through the sacraments. “The Eucharist is my highway to Heaven,” he liked to repeat.

On June 16, 1998, at the age of 7, he made his first communion. From then on he decided to go to Mass every day, without ever deviating from this rule. He always finds a “grown-up person” to accompany him there. His meditation when he receives communion impresses everyone. He said: “If we approach the Eucharist every day, we go straight to paradise; the more we communicate, the more we will become like Jesus, and already, on this earth, we

will have a foretaste of paradise.” Whether before or after Mass, he always sought to stop in front of the Tabernacle, in adoration before the Lord truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

At the high school chaplaincy, Carlo exerts a certain influence through his example. He conveyed to his comrades in particular the importance that the Eucharist had for him. He was surprised that many could spend more time with their eyes glued to a rock band than in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

In a way, Carlo questions us: And you, how much time do you spend talking with Jesus, one on one? When you pass a church, do you ever stop there?

He also said this: “After the Holy Eucharist, the holy rosary is the most powerful weapon to fight against the devil and the shortest ladder to Heaven.” He also committed himself to reciting the rosary every day.

Love of neighbour

The Love of God trains us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Carlo shows great charity towards the poorest. He spends his free time visiting the elderly and saves his money to give it to those most in need. He often said: “Happiness is having one’s gaze turned towards God. Sadness is looking at yourself.”

Seeking to go beyond the boundaries of his social environment, the teenager converses with the poor, bringing them sleeping bags and meals... His passion for Heaven even leads him to talk with followers of other religions. Rajesh, a Hindu employed by his parents, was “contaminated and struck down” by the teenager’s deep faith and he converted thanks to him. Carlo was exceptionally gifted with computers. (From the age of 9 he knows how to read computer programs, creates websites, etc.). Everyone was impressed by his abilities, so much so that his friends, like the engineers, long-qualified computer scientists, saw him as a little genius. A programming professional testifies: “I was amazed at his competence in the field of programming. At 15 he was at the same level as me who published books used in universities and businesses!”

His relationship with screens was balanced. Carlo wanted to maintain great internal freedom in relation to their use. His passion for computing did not close him in upon himself; rather, he remained open to the needs of others. He was always available to introduce his friends to the mystery of computers because he considered it essential for a young person to know how to use a computer well. He did not hesitate to warn his friends of the dangers of the Internet, the first drift of which is to allow oneself to be drawn into this virtual world and to leave God aside.

Few people limit themselves to a search without going through other sites, other images and other videos which distract from the initial search. How much time do we spend on screens and how much time do we devote to prayer?

Pope Francis writes in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*: “The digital world can expose you to the risk of withdrawal, isolation or empty pleasure. Carlo knew very well that these mechanisms of communication, advertising and social networks can be used to make us sleeping beings. However, he was able to use new communication technologies to transmit the Gospel and communicate values and beauty.”

Indeed, he knew how to put his talents at the service of others and bear witness to his faith. His most important work was the creation of his exhibition of Eucharistic miracles. He took two years of research and travel, in which his parents also invested, to display 136 Eucharistic miracles recognized by the Church, with photographs and descriptions. Initially a simple website, his exhibition was materialised and presented on 5 continents, in nearly 10,000 parishes in the United States alone and in the most famous sanctuaries such as Lourdes, Fátima or Guadalupe. Who does better, before the age of 15?

His true openness to his neighbour was the right consequence of his search for and his love of God – Loving God and one's neighbour are one and the same. For him, he said, "life is a gift because as long as we are on this planet we can increase our level of charity. The higher it is, the more we will enjoy the eternal bliss of God."

Carlo understands that each act we perform has an eternal value. Carlo invites us to act with a view to Heaven, to do everything with great love, because only love remains.

We are expected in Heaven

Carlo wanted to be holy and this is what we too must ask God in prayer. Carlo said: "Our goal must be the infinite, and not what is finite. The Infinite is our Homeland. We have always been expected in Heaven."

He also said: "All are born as originals, but many die like photocopies." We must therefore strive towards this Goal, the sky and not "die like a photocopy" that is to say like everyone else (being fashionable, up to date with everything).

Carlo was sorry that so many people were at risk of being lost for eternity. He recorded the writings of saints who described hell and used them to catechize those who did not believe in its existence.

Through his numerous notes, his postulator, Nicolas Gori, was able to create a new exhibition entitled "Hell, Purgatory and Heaven". Through the testimonies of saints, visions of Hell or Paradise (as in Fatima, Laus...) the exhibition provides educational insight on the question of life after death, as the Word of God and the teaching of the Church answer it.

With the strength that hope provides, Carlo speaks without fear of the final ends (death, the last judgment, Hell and Paradise). He says: "We do not have a stable city here on earth, but we are looking for one for later [...] we are destined for eternity with God, "co-eternity". Death should not be seen as the end of everything. This is not the end. It's not inevitable. This is not the fatal conclusion. It is the transition to co-eternity... If we consider that we are passing through this world, if we direct our entire existence towards the beyond, then everything is ordered and filled with hope."

I offer all my suffering

At the beginning of October 2006, what was thought to be a bad flu was in reality a devastating leukemia (blood cancer). The diagnosis is violent, Carlo is condemned, although until then he had been a healthy teenager. Hospitalised, Carlo does not complain and often repeats: "I offer all the suffering that I must undergo to the Lord, for the pope and for the Church, and go directly to paradise." His parents do not leave the room, but Carlo insists that

they rest and amazes the medical staff with his concern for others and his good humour, even though he is terminally ill.

He died in the early morning of October 12, 2006, and was buried in Assisi, the city of Saint Francis, as he had wished.

At his funeral, his parents were speechless in front of the crowd of strangers, many of them poor, who flocked to the church square to pay their respects. Today, the virtues of the young man, combined with his astonishing modernity, never cease to surprise.

On the eve of his death he was able to say: "I am happy to die because I have lived my life without neglecting a single minute in things that do not please God." Could we say the same?