

Who says you can't be a saint?



On Thursday, November 24, 2016, Cardinal Angelo Scola closed the diocesan phase in the canonization process for Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian boy who died in 2006 of leukemia. He was a well-loved teenager who devoted himself to prayer and daily Mass as well as computer programming, film editing, website creation, editing and layout of comics.

According to the website for his canonization process, “Carlo was gifted at anything related to computers so that his friends, and the adults with computer engineering degrees, considered him a genius. Everyone was amazed by his ability to understand the computer secrets that are normally accessible only to those who have completed university.”

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One of his most significant computer ventures was cataloguing all the Eucharistic miracles of the world. He started the project when he was 11 years old and wrote at the time, “The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven.” He then asked his parents to start taking him to all the places of the Eucharistic miracles, and two and half years later the project was completed.

Acutis researched over “136 Eucharistic miracles that occurred over the centuries in different countries around the world, and have been acknowledged by the Church” and collected them into a virtual museum. Besides creating a website to house this virtual museum, he helped create panel presentations that have traveled around the world.

According to the introductory panel, “In the United States alone, thanks to assistance from the Knights of Columbus, The Cardinal Newman Society and The Real Presence Association and Education, with the support of Cardinal Edmond Burke[*], it has been hosted in thousands of parishes and more than 100 universities.” The panels have traveled to all five continents and have inspired many by their amazing photographs and beautiful stories.

Acutis once said, “To always be close to Jesus, that’s my life plan.” In his brief life on earth he achieved that goal and remained close to Jesus in whatever he did, whether it was praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament for hours, creating websites, or going to school like every other teenager.

You don’t have to be a good student to be holy

His mother said about him, “His immense generosity made him interested in everyone: the foreigners, the handicapped, children, beggars. To be close to Carlo was to be close to a fountain of fresh water... [he] understood the true value of life as a gift from God, as an effort, an answer to give to the Lord Jesus day by day in simplicity.” She further pointed out, “I should stress that he was a normal boy who was joyful, serene, sincere, and helpful and loved having company, he liked having friends.”

He remains an inspiration, especially to teenagers who aren’t sure whether they could be both holy and “normal” and individually unique. “All people are born as originals,” he said, “but many die as photocopies.” To die as an “original,” Carlo maintained, was to be guided by Christ, and to look at Him constantly.

While he may have led a devout prayer life — he went to Mass everyday — Carlo was very much interested in being a teenager in the 21st century. While his interests were very broad, he also found to time volunteer for work with children and the elderly for, as he said, “Our aim has to be the infinite and not the finite. The Infinite is our homeland. We have always been expected in Heaven.”

The next stage in the canonization process is to send all the biographical works accumulated to Rome to be reviewed by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. If approved, the cause for Carlo Acutis will proceed and the Holy Father can declare him to be “venerable.”

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