
Let's not spoil this occasion! Let's not reduce Carlo Acutis to a stereotypical prayer card!

I was blessed to find myself in Assisi on Monday, October 12, the day of the inauguration of the liturgical memory of Blessed Charles Acutis, the day marking his passing from this world to Heaven. I left with a group of youths on Sunday afternoon to meet and see how much of this saintly boy is still here, while he, his person who has reached the full physiognomy of a son of God, stands before the Father. It's very important for teenagers and young people to learn about this boy who is now in Heaven; *it's equally important, however, that they relate to him, that they may see in him a chance of holiness for them.* And that will not happen if those who speak of him in the Church reduce him to a stereotypical saintly icon from a sixteenth-century Golden Legend. If a fifteen-year-old boy who conquered the fear of death is reduced to the description of his devotions, how can he be expected to be of any significance to his peers today? How can a 2020 adolescent, whose soul is incessantly scarred by violence, pornography, parental absence, consumerism exposure, accelerated experiences, etc., be expected to identify himself with Carlo Acutis' example, if all that is highlighted about the latter is the fact that he always prayed the rosary? We must admit that *the Church is unable to communicate to the young generations.* She fails to grasp its fundamental categories, those in which a common language should be found to proclaim the Gospel to them today. Therefore, goodness gracious,

let's share with them those qualities and aspects of Carlo they might relate to and be impressed by,

namely that he was a web enthusiast; that he used the Internet as a tool for spreading the faith, and that when he died, extensive research into his browsing history revealed not the slightest hint of pornography: *Indeed kids, you can use the Internet in a safe and honest way!* It's OK to say that he was from a rich family who had travelled worldwide, and did sports, and did well in school... but at the same time it should be noted that he regarded all of this - which many would desire for themselves - as simply nothing compared to his inner journey, to his relationship with God. *Indeed, boys and girls, there are better things than the best that you can imagine,* compared to what is claimed to "matter". And he was a handsome young boy, and yet he felt the vocation to the priesthood, and even more to holiness, that is, to joy: *Yes, boys, one can become a priest without being a loser.* And since he had agreed to commit himself fully to God, and to plunge into the deep waters of the Mystery, when death came he welcomed it serenely, and by overcoming the fear of death he now lives forever in God. *Yes, boys and girls, you can stop being afraid.* These are a few starting points that can be used to introduce young people to one of their peers who became a saint, a model and a sign of hope for them too. For as I wrote earlier, I was in Assisi on Monday... but the young people attending the morning celebration were only those whom I invited and arrived with me, surrounded by a multitude of old people. Unless we change our approach and vocabulary, we risk speaking only to ourselves, excluding the young generations from the joy of the Gospel, and thus enlightening role models like Blessed Charles Acutis would be overlooked, and it would be a shame indeed.

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