

Sanctuary of the Renunciation
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Homily for the Memorial of Blessed Carlo Acutis

We find ourselves together again to commemorate liturgically Carlo, one year after his beatification. What appears to our eyes is so impressive that it is difficult to explain without a plan that comes from above. God chooses his messengers. Carlo is a messenger.

We are in an era where everything has become faster, even the years that go by. Carlo's year then, has become supersonic. His simple and smiling figure, his essential message, the sympathy that he inspires, have become a worldwide phenomenon. Let us add into the mix the widespread diffusion in the media.

But let us not forget that usually, to spread so quickly, messages are needed that mainly tickle the unconventional itches. So many banal messages, many stars from every field of music, sport and, alas, even debased sex, crowd our videos and our social networks. Rarely is there any interest in the Gospel and those who live it.

Carlo's case emerges in this way also for this reason. Here, we find a message of good that is popular. And we ask ourselves: how is it possible that a boy becomes so popular, who had nothing of bad about him, and, indeed, in terms of chastity, had an impeccable behavior? Today, if a boy holds fast to chastity, he risks the sarcastic grimaces of his peers and the media forces him to swim against the tide.

Carlo speaks to the hearts of many young people. The reason is to be found in the fact that, beneath all the trivializations of life, a spark of good always remains within us that God knows how to rekindle with a new flame. Carlo is God's "lighter." He has an extraordinary ability to rekindle what Jesus calls the "smouldering wick" (*Mt 12:20*). He does it with his smile. He is a witness of joy. When you see him even in a photo, you are struck by that light on his face. He speaks to you of a different beauty, the one that sin has defaced, but which the Spirit of God holds in store in the depths of each one of us. It is the beauty of creation, as it came from the hands of God, and which today humanity is beginning to rediscover even in the environment, pushing young people to be indignant at a violated and devastated nature. Carlo celebrates the creation of God. He celebrates it when he climbs a

mountain or dives into the water, when he takes his dogs for a walk or when he holds his saxophone, when he identifies with his computer or when he travels between the sanctuaries of Italy and beyond, like a globetrotter of the spirit, eager to grasp the signs of God everywhere. Thus echo the words that the Bible makes us hear in the mouth of God regarding creation: “God saw that it was good” (*Gn* 1,25). What Francis of Assisi expresses with his canticle of Brother Sun, Carlo expresses with his radiant face and his love for life.

We can understand, therefore, why he strikes our society, so tried by sadness, doubt, self-seeking and the cult of the image. Carlo doesn't care about his self-image: “Not I, but God”. He makes no secret of being original and seeking originality, but that which comes from God, because we all came from God's hands as original. He makes his own the words that we have just heard from Saint Paul: “Whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” (*Phil* 4,8).

In this year that separates us from his beatification, Carlo's “work” has certainly increased, so to speak, and the fruits are being seen! By now, there are so many, in every part of the world, who rely on him. They call on him for help, like a generous intercessor. And they experience that it is not in vain. Often answers arrive that touch the heart and sometimes give the sensation of a grace obtained, which makes us imagine that we are not far away from the miracle that will be used for his insertion into the book of saints.

From above, Carlo works on the project for a happier world. He is dedicated to forming a generation of young people who are like him, who do not burn their freedom into thin air. His recipe is anything but trivial: he knew well that the most beautiful things are also the most suffered and fought for. He knows and says, with his life, that the joy of the Gospel comes from the cross. Wasn't the disease that killed him within two weeks a cross for him? He accepted it, offering his sacrifice for the Church. He knew that the cross, accepted with Christ, is the source of life. It is the promise of Jesus: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (*Jn* 15:11).

This program hinged everything on the Eucharist. The sacred host, the bread with which Jesus presents himself in every Holy Mass with his sacrifice to become the nourishment of our life, literally kidnapped Carlo's heart. His love for the Eucharist had the ardor of that of Francis. His daily attendance of Mass, his apostolate with the exhibition of Eucharistic miracles, are the expression of a motor that made his entire life Eucharistic. His definition of the Eucharist as a highway to heaven

– a boyish image, one would say, perhaps too common a language for such a great mystery – in reality, hides a theological density. It expresses the direction of travel and the speed that the Christian life assumes when it hinges on the Eucharist. It is heaven on earth. In fact, what is paradise if not living with Jesus in the joy of the Trinity and in the company of Mary, the Angels and the Saints? Jesus told us clearly in the Gospel just proclaimed: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them” (*Jn 6:56*). Making Jesus our All: this is the ideal of the Christian life. The Eucharist, celebrated well and adored, allows us to live from Jesus. Carlo calls us to the Eucharist, not to himself. For this reason, at the entrance to our Sanctuary, we have placed the image that portrays him together with Francis and both point to Jesus. Whoever comes to the Shrine of the Renunciation, to honour Francis and Carlo together, must recall this. We go first and foremost to Jesus. He is our love, and Francis and Carlo are our educators and companions.

We ask Carlo, in this, his liturgical memorial, to instil within us his love for the Eucharist, as we prepare to receive it under his smiling and joyful gaze.