



God's Influencer

THE FIRST MILLENNIAL SAINT

BY FRANCES FAIRS

Recently, I had a conversation with a young man who had just finished school and he told me that he had hoped to be an “influencer” after school. An “influencer”? Thanks to my teenage children, I now understand that an influencer is someone who has a large online presence because of their specialised knowledge, “authenticity”, or innovative approaches to sharing their message. It would be fair to say that quite often, the values of influencers don't often align with Gospel values. Fame, wealth and power are the goals they seek and this attracts the attention and admiration of countless followers, often millions of young people.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, has been dubbed ‘God's influencer’, and will become the Church's first millennial saint in 2025. Carlo, a teenager who was interested in computer programming, video games, and photography will become a patron saint of the internet.

What strikes a chord with me about Blessed Carlo's short life is that his parents were not particularly religious and, in fact, his mother had only set foot in a church three times before Carlo was born: for her First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage.

It was Carlo's Polish nanny, Beata, not his family who taught Carlo to pray and about God. Just like the great work of SRE Catechists, it was through her prayers, conversations and example, that seeds of faith were planted and nurtured in the young Carlo.

Carlo was a remarkable child, whose wisdom was beyond his years. At age 7, he received his First Holy Communion and declared to his mother, “To be united to Jesus: This is my life plan.” Carlo attended daily mass and received reconciliation when he could.

It was Carlo's love for the Eucharist that inspired a deep conversion in his mother. According to the postulator promoting his cause for sainthood, he “managed to drag his relatives, his parents to Mass every day. It was not the other way around; it was not his parents bringing the little boy to Mass, but it was he who managed to get himself to Mass and to convince others to receive Communion daily.”

Carlo created a website to share Eucharistic miracles to help others realise that Jesus is present at every Mass. He is quoted as saying “people who place themselves before the sun get a tan; people who place themselves before the Eucharist become saints.”

His witness of faith online and in person led many to convert and be baptised. Carlo even converted the family's Hindu au pair, Mohur, who said that one of the things that most impressed her as a non-Christian was the witness of Carlo's love and concern for the poor.

In 2006, at age 15, Carlo was diagnosed with untreatable leukemia and died shortly after. At his request he was buried in Assisi because of his love for St Francis. Blessed Carlo will be canonised during the Church's Jubilee of Teenagers, 25–27 April 2025. ■

Facts about Blessed Carlo Acutis to share with the children in your classes

1. Carlo died when he was only 15 years old, but his short life is a great example to all of us.
2. Carlo's family were not churchgoing Catholics, not at first at least. It was Carlo's Nanny who first taught Carlo about Jesus and answered his questions.
3. Carlo's love of Jesus, especially in the Mass, inspired his whole family and many others to go back to Mass and believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.
4. Carlo created a website, using his knowledge of coding to tell others about Eucharistic Miracles around the world. He did this because he wanted others to know that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist and how important Mass is.
5. Carlo wasn't afraid to talk about his faith and Church teaching even when his classmates disagreed.
6. Carlo was kind and courageous. He was known for standing up for kids at school that got bullied and included those who were left out.
7. Carlo loved video games. He had conversations with his gaming buddies about the importance of going to Mass and confession. He had learned that video games are highly addictive and so limited his gaming to under 2 hours per week.
8. Carlo helped the poor and homeless and from age 9, would give sleeping bags, food and necessities to those in need. His concern and love of the poor was one of the reasons that one of his nannies converted to Catholicism.
9. Carlo will become a Saint during this special Jubilee year, during the Jubilee of teenagers (25–27 April).