

5th Sunday in the Easter Season (C)

Respect Life Youth Contest

**St. Agnes Cathedral 11:00am Catholic Faith
Network Mass Homily¹**

Most Reverend John O. Barres

May 19, 2019

John 13:31-35: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another This is how all will know that you are my disciples. If you have love for one another.”

Venerable Carlo Acutis was an Italian teenager who lived from 1991-2006 and died of leukemia at the age of 15. Pope Francis declared him Venerable on July 5th 2018 and his cause for canonization is gaining momentum.

If you google Carlo Acutis, you will find the picture of a winning young man with a charismatic smile in a blue blazer with a blue and gold tie.

He attended the Istituto Leone XIII, a high school run by the Jesuits in Milan. Carlo probably would have been very comfortable here in the Diocese of Rockville Centre as a

1 This homily adapts some of the material Bishop Barres used in a May 17, 2019 homily he preached to Chaminade students.

student in one of our fine Catholic schools or a parishioner in one of our evangelizing parishes.

Carlo was a computer whiz and he was on Fire with a love for the Mass and the Body and Blood of Christ. His parents brought him to some of the shrines in Italy that celebrate Eucharistic miracles and these stories captured his imagination and set on fire his spirit of “Eucharistic Amazement.”

He was known for documenting Eucharistic miracles around the world and cataloging them all onto a website that he himself created in the months before his death from leukemia.

As he battled cancer and faced death, Carlo focused on the Eucharist. He focused on Eternal Life and the sanctity of human life.

In his Apostolic Exhortation to the Young People of the World entitled *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis cites the heroic holiness of Venerable Carlo Acutis: “Carlo was well aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising and social networking can be used to lull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity. Yet he knew how to use the new communications technology to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty. Carlo didn’t fall into the trap. He saw that many young

people, wanting to be different, really end up being like everyone else, running after whatever the powerful set before them with the mechanisms of consumerism and distraction. In this way they do not bring forth the gifts the Lord has given them; they do not offer the world those unique personal talents that God has given to each of them. As a result, Carlo said, ‘everyone is born an original, but many people end up dying as photocopies.’ Don’t let that happen to you!” (104-106)

This was Venerable Carlo Acutis’ gift. He teaches us that young people are called to be heroically holy -- not tomorrow, not ten years from now, but today!

The young Carlo who died at the age of 15 lived John 13 heroically: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples. If you have love for one another.”

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis traces the impact of the great young saints of the Old Testament, the New Testament and of Church history. Their lives were rays of light that radiated from a variety of biblical passages like John 13.

Young saints keep the Church young, vital and evangelizing. Young saints shake up the Church from its lethargy and reawaken a missionary spirit in her.

Young saints teach us the connection between a reverence for the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and a reverence for the sanctity of human life.

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), the patron saint of journalists, gave this advice to young people: “Be who you are and be that well...Be who you are and be that well.”

We all discover who we are in the flames of the love of Jesus Christ.

Today at this 11am Mass at St. Agnes Cathedral, we celebrate Catholic middle school and high school students and parishioners who refuse to be bland photocopies of a consumeristic and social media addicted culture.

They are true and courageous “Originals”, who love the Word of God and the Eucharist, and who stand up creatively and courageously for the Gospel of Human Life.

Like Venerable Carlo, they use social media to evangelize and they use a variety of mediums to express the Church’s Gospel of Life teaching: essays, poetry, music, video design, youtube interviews, photography, bookmarks, murals and art. Many of them attend the Annual March for Life in Washington DC.

We are grateful for their prophetic witness and we celebrate the Holy Spirit driven creativity in which they express that witness.

The sanctity of human life is making progress around the country as we have seen in recent news cycles the progress of heartbeat legislation in various states.

One critical exception is our own State, the Empire State. Our legislators and Governor passed a horrific Reproductive Health Act in the last few months which permits abortion right till birth and even infanticide.

This legislation is horrific and tragic and our young people today are standing up in the public square to educate and inspire all generations about the sanctity of human life, the foundation of every other human right.

Our young people here today teach Catholics of all ages that if we are lukewarm in our Catholic faith, if we simply drift and let the tide of the world, the flesh and the devil, and the seven capital sins direct us, we very quickly become bland, meaningless, purposeless photocopies.

Today, with the inspirational witness of our young people, let's all reclaim our baptismal call to holiness and mission. Let's be true Originals! Or in the words of Venerable Carlo's native Italian tongue, let's be true "Capolavoros"!

"Capolavoro" in English means "Masterpiece." Each one of us is God's Original Masterpiece with a specific mission in the Church that is connected to every other baptized person's mission and critical to the overall mission of the Church to the World.

As your Bishop, as your Servant and as your Successor of the Apostles on Long Island, I am very proud of each one of you and am very grateful to each of you for your desire to embrace heroic holiness and the path of young saints like Venerable Carlo Acutia.

Thank you again for being an Original and not a bland photocopy!

Please join me in thanking these inspirational young people!