

# **Mother of Soon-to-Be Blessed Carlo Acutis: 'Jesus Was His First Priority'| National Catholic Register**

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## **Mother of Soon-to-Be Blessed Carlo Acutis: 'Jesus Was His First Priority'**

The technologically savvy teen who died in 2006 focused his life on growing closer to God — and drew others deeper in faith.



Carlo Acutis, who died at 15 and will soon be beatified, loved Eucharistic adoration and traveling to document Eucharistic miracles. (photo: Courtesy of Antonia Acutis)

ROME — **Antonia Acutis**, the mother of [Servant of God Carlo Acutis](#), said her son lived a life centered on God. In a phone interview Feb. 22 with the Register, one day after the Vatican announced that her “techie” son, who died in 2006 at the age of 15, [would be beatified](#), Acutis shared joyfully that this news did not come as a surprise to the family.

Acutis shared with the Register details of Carlo’s personality and the graces she believed let him live his young life “filled with God.” Explaining his draw toward documenting Eucharistic miracles, his mother revealed that Carlo had received certain mystical experiences that drew him to the Holy Eucharist, even at a very young age.

Acutis said her son, although extraordinarily obedient and mature for his age, was a young man who struggled with defects, like anyone else.

Sharing with the Register a few of her last memories with her son, Acutis emphasized that, without her faith, which she believed was inspired and increased by the life of her son, she would not have been able to fully accept his death.

She also related how his intercession allowed her to have more children. She met her husband while in England studying. They married at 24, and she had Carlo within that first year. At 44 years old, she believes Carlo interceded for her, and she became pregnant with fraternal twins, Francesca and Michele, now 9 years old. They are also very religious. They pray the Rosary each day and go to daily Mass. Antonia believes they will have a mission to continue Carlo's work in some way.

*The Vatican announced Feb. 21 that Carlo will be beatified. You are a mother of a boy recognized by the Church as worthy of veneration. Tell me about this.*

Well, most probably the mama is not so much like the son, but we are instruments of God — and sometimes he uses even the strangest instruments. I don't consider myself as good as Carlo was; but of course, I tried my best to raise my son. I gave him the freedom to live his faith and some good moral rules — but my husband and I didn't really need to give him much.

Carlo was always a very good boy, even when he was very young. We are very happy with the news of the beatification, but to be honest, we expected this. Some years ago, I had a dream of Carlo, who told me: "I will be beatified soon, and shortly after, canonized." When he was dying, the last week of his life, I had a dream of St. Francis of Assisi — who is our family's patron saint — he said to me, "Your son, Carlo, will die very soon — but he will be considered very high in the Church." I then saw Carlo in a very big church, high up, close to the ceiling, and I didn't understand then. Of course, now I do. His death, his illness, his very short life — all was by the design of God. God had chosen Carlo as an example for the young people of this period in history.

*Did you raise Carlo to say the daily Rosary, be interested in his faith — or did this come about on his own?*

Carlo was given special graces. I wasn't particularly devout, but Carlo — from the time he was a young child — always wanted to go into the churches. He always wanted to go inside and visit Jesus, to say "hello" to Jesus. He was very good, very polite, so

generous a young boy. I rarely had to say to Carlo, "Don't do this or that." He was very obedient. He was very special.

*Carlo was so young when he died — 15 years old. What first drew Carlo to want to deepen his faith? Did he receive special graces from God?*

Yes, I believe he did receive special graces. He didn't speak much about this, but he did tell me that when he was in front of the Holy Eucharist, he felt his soul "elevated," in a way. He said the sensation he had, very often, was like being in front of a Source that took his soul into great heights. He said that it was like being transported. Christ in the Eucharist captured him. Yes, I believe Carlo did have visions of Jesus and Mary, but he didn't give much importance to these. He was very grounded. There was a time, however, that he told us he had a vision of my father — his grandfather, who he had been very close to, but had died. He said his grandfather came to him and asked him to pray for him because he was in purgatory. So, from there, Carlo began praying for the souls in purgatory — always, always, always he prayed for these souls and sought indulgences for them. He would always say we must pray for the poor souls in purgatory, that we shouldn't forget them, and that they will help us very much.

*Many stories about the lives of the saints are often hard to relate to. Tell me about Carlo — what were some of his "imperfections" that young men and women may be able to relate to?*

You don't have to look to Carlo as someone who was perfect. He was a very grounded boy. He was a son of his time. He played with his PlayStation, etc. He also understood, however, that these things — such as the computer or PlayStation — could claim a sort of "tyranny" over the soul. You could become addicted, a slave of these things. So much time could be wasted, and Carlo always had a sense that he couldn't waste time. So he imposed on himself that he could only play on his PlayStation an hour per week, maximum. This gives you a little insight into Carlo. He was one who would write in his journal about how to improve himself: "How am I with my parents? How well do I obey my teachers and get along with my classmates?" He was a little of a perfectionist, but not obsessive. He always tried to improve. So a few imperfections he had. He loved to eat, and at one point, he found he was overindulging. He, then, imposed on himself more temperance — to eat and enjoy food, but in the proper times and proper way. He struggled, but he achieved it. Another thing, he had the habit of

talking a lot. He would do it, and he did it well — even when he was in school, he found this difficult. His teachers would correct him, and he found this was a difficult thing to overcome. He was also a bit of a class clown, very funny. He would write little cartoons, 3-D cartoons on the computer, to amuse his friends, but he also had to temper that, so to do it at the proper time. He was a normal boy in many ways. So he was not perfect, but he had a very strong will — and with this will, he improved himself in many ways. He would say, “What does it matter if you can win a thousand battles if you cannot win against your own corrupt passions? It doesn’t matter. The real battle is with ourselves.”

*The Catholic Church has always used technological advances to spread the Gospel. How did Carlo become interested in technology — and if he were alive, today, do you think he’d be using social media?*

Oh, no. I don’t actually believe he would have been too much on Facebook or Twitter. Carlo was very aware of the need to use time well, and even back then — they had instant messaging — he thought this was a very bad use of time. He would say that instant messenger was annoying! He was a programmer. I think he would have used the internet to create websites, but he always saw learning how to do this as a tool for evangelization. He also would say that people, with this technology, were losing their freedom. Even then he saw that the internet was leading people toward a false sense of self. Now, we hear of young people committing suicide. He saw the internet as a way to reach people, but he also would say how terrible that the internet would be used by the devil, especially, even then, with pornography.

*What were some of Carlo’s extraordinary virtues?*

Carlo was aware, deeply aware, of others’ struggles. It was as if he could see what sins people carried with them, and he always tried to help people — his friends, with their struggles with purity and experimenting with drugs. He always tried to help them. There were many of his friends, people who knew him, that witnessed how he would help them. He was a leader when he spoke, because when he spoke, he was filled with God. He would always say he tried to live in the presence of God. He had a special way of approaching people, I think, because of this. For Carlo, he also knew when to evangelize. He was asked to help in catechism [class], and he did — but he never forced this on others. Many people knew Carlo, and many were of other beliefs.

That exhibition that he made — that still goes all over the world, the exhibition on the Most Holy Eucharist — this was his gift. He used the gifts he had to evangelize this period of time. When we would go on trips to photograph the different Eucharistic miracles — you see, for him to create the website, and later, the exhibitions, he knew people (especially young people) would want to see them. We would go on these trips, and the first thing he would do when we arrived, was to go find a church that was open, so he could say “hello” to Jesus.

Jesus was his first priority. Carlo also liked to make things around him more beautiful. When he was young, when we would go to the sea, he’d bring his mask with him and make it a game to “go hunting” for litter on the seabed. He would often take the dogs for walking in the park and pick up rubbish that was there. Just little things to make his corner of the world better.

*Did Carlo have to struggle very hard for these virtues, or do you think many were gifts of grace from God?*

Carlo knew very well the struggles and worked hard on himself. He used to say, “Every minute that passes is a minute less for us to qualify ourselves for God.” He didn’t want to waste time and always tried to bring people toward what was essential — the Essential, who is God. Many people will witness, he was really pure of heart. He had a way of composing himself, a way to act and speak that was inspired. He never disturbed his classmates — many people today, who are within the Church, they have a way of really disturbing others; overbearing, often not knowing when it is a good moment to evangelize, or how to speak. With Carlo, he was really balanced — he was so close to God. He understood how to attract people. That was a gift of God.

*What would you say to other parents who may be struggling with raising sons, or who are currently watching their children suffer from cancer or disease, some advice?*

You know, to live close to someone like Carlo means to not remain neutral in your own faith. For me, Carlo brought me closer to God. He would ask questions that I would not know the answer to, especially in my own lack of catechism. So I turned to learning more about my faith, and this was because of Carlo. Many other people would witness to this, as well: people who converted because of his example, or his conversations. He really lived what he preached, a witness. This is how he approached

his suffering, too. Carlo would say, "Death is the start of new life." God allows, unfortunately, the cross and suffering because of original sin. He believed that the sacraments were the mercy of God, to enable our ability to carry our sufferings. Before he died, he said to me, "Mama, I would like to leave this hospital, but I know I will not do so alive. I will give you signs, though, that I am with God." Carlo was aware that his life was lived fully. He said, "I die happy, because I did not spend my life wasting my time on things not pleasing to God." He was always trying to smile, trying to not complain. When his doctor would ask him if he was suffering, he would say, "I know there are others who are suffering more." Toward the end of his life, he was unable to move himself, he was so weak. He would worry for the nurses who would have to lift him, that he was too heavy for them. It is interesting, he recorded a video — the Vatican has this, now — but in it, two months before his death, he said, "When I weigh 70 kilos [154 pounds], this is when I will die." I remember that, also, when he was young, he would say that he knew how he would die — that he would die when a "vein would break in his brain"; and, in fact, the cause of his death was a hemorrhaging within the brain, an effect of the leukemia. He used to say, when he was young, that he would "be always young," and when people would ask him what he desired to be when he grew up, and he would say, "Who knows?"

For me, as a mother watching her son die, I recall what Carlo would say: "Golgotha is for everyone. No one escapes the cross." He convinced me of this — if I am a good Catholic, how can I be afraid of this? I had friends of mine, when Carlo died, who were very angry at Jesus. They would say, "I have a grandfather who is 90 years old. Why would Jesus take Carlo before him?" Carlo was ready, though. To have a long life doesn't mean that this is a good thing — one can live a very long time and live badly. Of course, in the cases of suicide, or where people are reckless with their lives with drugs or alcohol, these are tragedies. God, however, writes straight with our crooked lines. He will make good from our sufferings, but we must accept them. This is the way we become holy. Our lives have many opportunities to accept [sufferings]; we don't have to look for them. If I only looked at the death of my son in an earthly way, I would have been unable to be consoled. Carlo taught me how to look at it through the eyes of faith. He died without ever having to experience such major temptations in life, or face obstacles alone. He was loved, and he loved really genuinely. It was the way he accepted the will of God — with a smile, never complaining. He would say, "Not me, but God!" He was really centered on God, and I think this was his secret: not looking internally, becoming sad at his own state, but looking at God. The measure of our

acceptance is the reflection of our sanctification. The way Carlo died, it was the death of a saint.

*Register correspondent [Bree Dail](#) writes from the East Coast.*