

ALL SAINTS - 2020

When we think of saints we usually imagine plaster statues or stained glass windows of heroic men and women who lived a long time ago.

Of course that mold was broken when Pope John Paul the Second and Mother Teresa of Calcutta were canonized several years ago.

Now consider this: A teenage computer gamer and programmer from Italy who devoted the final years of his life to the church until his death in 2006 was beatified recently, making him the first millennial to be put on the path to sainthood.

A portrait of Carlo Acutis, who died of leukemia at age 15, was unveiled at the beatification ceremony at the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in Assisi, Italy.

In it, he is wearing a red polo shirt and his curly hair is ringed by a faint halo of light.

Acutis has been called the "patron saint of the Internet."

He created a website to catalog miracles, managed sites for local Catholic organizations, and promoted adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

His mother told Vatican News: "Carlo was considered a computer genius."

"But what did he do? He didn't use [computers] to chat or have fun, rather he used the Internet in service of the Gospel, to reach as many people as possible."

She told an Italian newspaper that from age 3 her son would ask to visit churches the family passed in Milan.

"There was in him a natural predisposition for the sacred," she said.

As a teenager, Carlo was diagnosed with leukemia.

He decided to offer his sufferings for then-Pope Benedict XVI and the church, and he asked to be buried at Assisi because of his love for St. Francis.

He was named a Servant of God in 2013 and declared Venerable in 2018; with his beatification, he is now known as Blessed Carlo Acutis.

The final step, should it come, is canonization, or sainthood, which requires two miracles verified by the Church.

Carlo's first miracle was attributed to him earlier this year.

The Vatican says he interceded from heaven in 2013 to save the life of a Brazilian who was suffering from a rare pancreatic disease.

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It is rare for someone who died so young to be declared a saint.

However, Jacinta and Francisco Marta, the two Portuguese shepherd children living in the early 1900s who saw the Virgin Mary at Fatima, were canonized in 2017.

We are all called to become saints.

We were created to love God in this life so that we might live eternally with God in heaven.

We have been given our talents to continue the mission of Jesus by serving God and our neighbor.

No matter how young or old we may be, each of us has been called to this vocation to holiness.

Holiness is not "old-fashioned" or just a thing of the past.

Being poor in spirit, humble, and merciful ... thirsting for holiness, remaining pure in heart, and living as peacemakers ... as well as being willing to suffer and mourn, especially for what is right ...

... this is how we live as God's children now so that we might become like God ... that we might see God face to face.

This is how Carlo, a computer-savvy teenager from Milan lived his life.

And now he is truly called "Blessed."