

# NOTRE DAME PARISH

## 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

*"Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."*



We all struggle with our priorities. We should do one thing, but end up doing another. The struggle becomes most apparent when the subject of money arises. Where do we spend our hard earned cash? Where does God come into the picture when and where we spend our money?

In a single question, the opponents of Jesus asked him to choose between the ideal of a religious life separate from the dominant culture, or a life so fully immersed in that culture that religious practice and identity are lost. Jesus chose the middle.

## MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, October 17, 10AM  
Funeral Mass, Thomas Fitzgerald

Saturday, October 17, 4PM  
Stephen McDonald  
Charles & Marina Sheerin Wedding

Sunday, October 18, 9:30AM  
Tom, Florence & young Tom Gately

Monday, October 19, 8AM  
Dan Murphy

Tuesday, October 20, 8AM  
Barbara Kilberg Destry

Wednesday, October 21, 8:30AM  
John Benish, Sr.

Thursday, October 22, 8:30AM  
Szostak, Kazwara, & Martonisi

Friday, October 23, 8AM  
Molly Fetzer

Saturday, October 24, 4PM  
Marge Cullen

## Oremus – Let Us Pray

- For Charles & Marina Sheerin on their 55<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary
- For victims and the vulnerable to COVID-19; for the sick of our parish and families
- For vocations to the priesthood and the religious life
- For health care workers
- For the unemployed, underemployed; for the evicted and soon to be evicted
- For the protection of human life from conception to natural death
- For those who have no one to pray for them
- For a concerted international effort to combat climate change

## Restless

In my years living as a monk, I loved to take walks, especially at sunrise and sunset. The quiet and peace of rural living can be very nourishing to prayer. The sound of the rooster crowing, cattle bellowing, birds singing, and streams gurgling enrich the soul and inspire a dialogue with non-human creatures.

Because of the busy-ness and distractions that form the background of our lives, many people find quiet uncomfortable. And as much as I cherished solitude, there were times, too, when I longed for the noise and activity of the city. I came to appreciate the distant roar of traffic on roads and highways, the clank of steel at construction sites, and the mosaic of sirens, honking horns, and screeching

brakes. Yes, there can be beauty and meditation on hustle, bustle, and noise. Thomas Merton, the famous Trappist monk, experienced this when he left the cloister for a doctor's appointment in Louisville. He had a religious experience of love for all humanity on that visit.

A priest friend of mine recalled a retreat he gave to Mother Teresa and her sisters in Calcutta. The din and stench of the city were the background of his talks, and the sisters did not own (or want to own) a microphone. Obviously they know how to pray in the midst of noise! Prayer can occur anywhere, and I think it's born in a restless heart.

*Father Keith & Rocco*



*"Our hearts are restless until they can find rest in you, O Lord!"*

**Saint Augustine**

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## Conscience and the Sunday Obligation



*Jesus Christ loves you. He gave his life to save you.*

When the pandemic hit the United States earlier this year, bishops across the country made the necessary but unprecedented decision to dispense the faithful from their traditional obligation to attend Mass every Sunday. Six months later, we are slowly beginning to see some bishops lift that dispensation, making physical attendance at Mass an obligation once again. This comes while we are still in the midst of the pandemic, and as talk of lifting the dispensation has increased, so have concerns from faithful Catholics who do not feel safe attending Mass. Many Catholics are genuinely worried that when the Sunday obligation is imposed they will risk committing a mortal sin if they don't attend. Does the Lord really ask someone to risk their health and safety

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## Blessed Carlo Acutis: Teen, Techie, Saint-to-Be

*This article, by Marie Fazio, appeared in The New York Times, Monday, October 12, 2020*

In many ways, Carlo Acutis was a typical teenager. He loved his PlayStation and making videos of his dogs. He favored Nikes and jeans, and he had a cellphone and an email address.

But in one significant respect, Carlo — who was just 15 when he died of leukemia in 2006 — stands out from his peers: He is on his way to becoming the first millennial to be recognized as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church.

Carlo, who lived in Milan, was beatified, or declared “blessed” by the pope, on Saturday after a miracle was attributed to him earlier this year. The ceremony, in Assisi, Italy, was the second-to-last step before Carlo can be canonized as a saint. Since his death, Carlo has become known in some Catholic circles as the patron saint of the internet for his facility with computers and his early and enthusiastic embrace of the web, which he used as an expression of his Catholic faith.

When he was 9, Carlo began studying computer science textbooks and taught himself computer programming and graphic design, his mother, Antonia Acutis, said in a phone interview. In the months before his death, he created a website that cataloged miracles.

“Carlo was the light answer to the dark side of

the web,” his mother said, adding that some admirers have called him an “influencer for God.”

Her son’s life, she said, “can be used to show how the internet can be used for good, to spread good things.” After his death, the Diocese of Assisi, where his family had a second home, petitioned the Vatican to recognize Carlo as a saint. The diocese dug into his emails and computer search history, and interviewed witnesses. Then they waited for miracles.

Ms. Acutis said that people from all over the world had told her about medical miracles, including cures for infertility and cancer, that happened after they prayed to her son. In February, Pope Francis attributed the unexplainable healing of a boy with a malformed pancreas to Carlo after the child came in contact with one of his shirts.

Now that he has been beatified, Carlo could become a saint if a second verified miracle is attributed to him and is recognized by the pope. A formal canonization ceremony would follow.

If that happens, Carlo would be joining an elite group. Among the more than 10,000 saints recognized by the Roman Catholic Church,

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**Continued, Blessed Carlo**

just 120 died as children or teenagers.

Hundreds of masked devotees, including Carlo's parents and siblings, gathered in Assisi on Saturday for his beatification ceremony, which was postponed from March because of the coronavirus. Many watched on screens that were spread throughout the town's piazzas as a church official read a letter from Pope Francis that declared Carlo "blessed."

"Already Carlo, he's only just been beatified, but already he's a worldwide phenomenon," said Father Will Conquer, a Catholic priest and missionary in Cambodia who has written about Carlo's path to sainthood. "What makes it so extraordinary is that he was ordinary. We're telling people the guy you should be following is a guy very similar to you.

"Carl's body, which was exhumed for veneration this month, was displayed in a nearby church with his preferred wardrobe of Nikes, jeans and a sweater.

Those signs of modernity resonated with many young people who see themselves in him, said Paul Jarzembowski, who leads the U.S. Council for Catholic Bishops' youth and young adult ministries. Carlo was not a theological writer or world leader, he said, but rather an ordinary young person with compassion, a drive to integrate faith into his daily life and "a dedication to make the world a better place."

"He is truly a patron for our self-isolating, digitally reliant times, and for other young people who are now accompanying all of us as we enter more fully into this new normal," Mr. Jarzembowski said.

Born in London to Italian parents, Carlo moved to Milan with his family as a child, his mother said. He enjoyed soccer and video games, including Pokémon and Mario Kart, limiting himself to one hour a week with those games, his mother said.

He was inquisitive about Catholicism from a young age, inspiring his mother, who was not a practicing Catholic at the time, to return to the faith. He attended daily Mass from the time he was 7, never missing a day, she said.

Carlo sought ways of helping poor, older and disabled people, and refugees. On the way to school, he would stop to chat with people about their problems, she said. He took meals and sleeping bags to homeless people and knew many by name.

At Carlo's funeral, the church overflowed with people whose lives he had touched, she said.

"People are gravitating to the idea of a young person becoming a saint at a time when young people are leaving the church, becoming disenchanted with the church," Professor Cummings said. And, as people worry about the corrosive effects of social media on young people, it is notable, she said, that the Church is recognizing a person who used the internet to promote the faith.

Francis has embraced the internet and called it a "gift from God." Writing to young people last

year, he commended Carlo as an example for his use of the internet and quoted him as saying, "Everyone is born as an original, but many people end up dying as photocopies." The pope added, "Don't let that happen to you!"

On Monday, the pope wrote on Twitter that Carlo's example showed that "true happiness is by putting God in first place and serving Him in our brothers and sisters, especially the least.

"Francis, who has been known to embrace the internet – notably with Twitter and Instagram accounts – has been outspoken about the harmful effects of social media and the depravity of internet culture.

Carlo's beatification comes at a time when technology has been integrated into religion as never before, as online streaming allows the faithful to participate in services under coronavirus restrictions.

Carlo's life has inspired hundreds of social media pages as well as books and documentaries. YouTube videos show him as a young boy, sticking his tongue out at the camera and goofing around, playing air guitar and singing.

"There's really nothing extraordinary about his life," Father Conquer said of Carlo. "Everything that he did you can do, honestly. And that's what gives us all a lot of hope." +

### Continued, Sunday Obligation

Pope Francis says catechesis must begin with the proclamation of the kerygma, the fundamental truth that, “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 164). This primary truth illuminates both the importance of going to Mass as well as the solution for the faithful who feel incredibly burdened by this obligation during a pandemic. The greatest expression of God’s love for us, as Pope Francis expressed, is Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection. And it is precisely through the liturgy and sacraments that God allows us to participate in Christ’s saving action. These are the ordinary means that we are able to worship the Father with the Son and in doing so allow the Holy Spirit to transform us. The Catechism says that through sacramental grace, “the Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior” (CCC 1129). In a recent letter to bishops around the world, Cardinal Sarah, prefect of the Vatican’s dicastery for liturgy, said:

*“We cannot live as Christians without participating in the Sacrifice of the Cross in which the Lord Jesus gives himself unreservedly to save, by his death, humanity which had died because of sin; the Redeemer associates humanity with himself and leads it back to the Father; in the embrace of the Crucified One all human suffering finds light and comfort.”*

This is why the Church teaches that the sacraments are essential for our salvation and that our regular participation in Mass is essential for us to follow Christ. We truly cannot live without the Lord’s Day. Now, to be clear, the sacraments are the *ordinary* means for our salvation and growth in holiness, but God can certainly work outside the sacraments. He gave us the sacraments as physical signs of his love for us, but he is not bound by those signs (CCC 1257). And the Church teaches that if a Catholic who is separated from the Eucharist makes

a spiritual communion they “receive the fruits of the sacrament.”

So where does this leave those Catholics who do not feel safe gathering in large crowds for Mass in the midst of a pandemic? It is precisely the kerygma, God’s revelation of his love for us, that shapes the Church’s understanding of sin, culpability, and conscience.

The Church teaches that participating in Mass every Sunday is an obligation and “those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (CCC 2181). However, the Catechism also teaches that a grave (i.e. mortal) sin requires three things: grave matter, full knowledge, and complete consent (CCC 1857-1859). Deliberately missing Mass on Sunday is a violation of the third commandment and thus grave matter, but that in itself does not make it a mortal sin.

Here is an analogy I used two years ago. Let’s say that you have a basic recipe for cookies that uses flour, butter, and sugar. Without any one of those ingredients, it’s not a cookie. When someone commits an act of grave evil, they have not necessarily separated themselves from God. Grave matter is only one of the three necessary components of a mortal sin. Further, the things that can limit a person’s knowledge and freedom can be very ordinary. The Catechism teaches that “Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors” (CCC 1735).

Further, it is our conscience — “man’s most secret core and his sanctuary” where “he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (CCC 1776) — that can help us determine our level of freedom and culpability in a given situation and show us the way forward. Pope Francis teaches that our conscience “can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel” but “can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which

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can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one's limits" (*Amoris Laetitia* 303).

The Church's teaching about culpability isn't a moral loophole. It's the logical conclusion of the revelation that God is a loving Father who knows our hearts. He desires for all of his children to be saved, he is not a legalistic judge solely concerned with our external actions.

A neighboring diocese of mine, the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan, will be lifting the dispensation from the Sunday Obligation in the coming weeks. Their bishop, Bishop Robert Gruss, articulating the Church's teaching about culpability and conscience, said:

*"The Catholic Church has always taught, given the examples for missing Mass cited above, an individual has never been obliged to attend Mass. That is not because the obligation has been suspended by someone, but rather because the obligation was not binding upon them given their particular circumstances. In the same way, in our present circumstances, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is real and applied, but for those people who feel they are at risk, etc., the obligation is not binding."*

Fear of getting sick or spreading it to others, in and of itself, could certainly mitigate culpability. And if missing Mass in this context is done out of genuine charity towards ourselves or others, then not only would it

mitigate culpability entirely but may even be a moral duty. If we are excused from the Sunday obligation because we believe icy roads would make attending unsafe, then we are certainly exempt if we perceive that COVID-19 makes attending unsafe. And this is true regardless of whether or not there's a general dispensation in your diocese. Understand how personal these circumstances and decisions are, even among people in the same community. You and your loved ones may have different risk factors for the virus that would make attending Mass more unsafe than it would be for your neighbor. If anxiety about the virus causes you an inordinate amount of fear, that is a factor in your discernment, even if your neighbor isn't afraid at all. A bishop or pastor can't decide for you whether attending Mass is objectively safe, and they certainly can't know everyone's individual circumstances. These are truly matters of personal discernment.

We must rest our consciences on the kerygma, on who God has revealed himself to be. He knows our hearts and our circumstances. The revelation of God's relentless love for us is what can drive out anxiety, scrupulosity, or fear we may have about returning to Mass. Regardless of whether we ultimately decide to attend Mass or if we decide that we should stay home, we should listen to the voice of our Loving

Father and obey our consciences. When we do this, we can trust that God isn't abandoning us, and neither are we abandoning Him. +

*Paul Fahey is a husband, father of four, parish director of religious education, and co-founder of Where Peter Is. He can be found at his website, [Rejoice and be Glad: Catholicism in the Pope Francis Generation](#).*