Homily for the Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time-Fr Paul Farren

'Invite everyone you can to the Wedding Feast' (Mt 22:1-14)

I did something remarkable on Tuesday. I spoke to the mother of a saint. Antonia Acutis' son Carlo was beatified in Assisi in Italy today. Carlo was in incredible young person. He was born in London in 1991. His parents are Italian. They moved to Milan when he was a baby. He died there in 2006 suffering from Leukaemia. His fifteen years in this world were fifteen holy and powerful years.

Carlo was a normal young boy very interested in computers and computer games. But his primary interest was Jesus and Jesus in the Eucharist. He used his computer skills to create a website that documented all the Eucharistic miracles that happened through history. He loved the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He went to Mass every day and spent time each day in Eucharistic adoration. His mother said that even when they went on holiday he always looked for a Church so that he could go to Mass. He said that we were so blessed to have Jesus in every Church and at every Mass. When Jesus was walking the earth two thousand years ago it was more difficult for the people to be with him than now. Carlo could never understand why there was big queues for concerts and to see famous people and yet there was rarely a queue for the tabernacle. Carlo loved Mary and he loved the Rosary.

Carlo lived his faith in how he cared for others always helping the homeless and those who lived in poverty in Milan and at school he was always caring for fellow pupils who were suffering, particularly if there were difficulties in their home or if they were being bullied. What is remarkable about Carlo is that he could be any young person. His body is in Assisi in a glass tomb at the moment and he is dressed in a sweatshirt, jeans and runners.

In today's world we don't expect somebody like Carlo to be so holy and to be a saint. When we think about Church today we tend to think about older people. We tend to think that young people aren't here. It's a bit like Jesus' story in the Gospel of the Wedding Feast, *(Mt 22:1-14)*. The king had invited the predictable people to the wedding – the guests that were expected to be invited. But they didn't come. They didn't make time. They took the king for granted. They ignored his invitation. They did not want him to upset their lives. Then he went out to the highways and the byways and he brought all the unexpected to the wedding. They came and all, but one honoured the occasion by preparing.

In some ways this is Carlo's story. His mother admits that she was not practicing her faith when Carlo was a baby. It was he who brought his mother to faith. In light of the Gospel of the Wedding Feast, Carlo's mother was invited to the wedding feast, but she didn't go. It was when the king went out and invited the small boy, Carlo, who went, that his mother followed.

Jesus calls the unexpected to wonderful things. When he is rejected he doesn't stop calling. We should never take for granted our seat at Jesus' table because our seat will not be left empty. Jesus will keep calling until he has filled his banquet. He will never give up nor will he ever reserve a seat for us. If we are not sitting on it, it is not our seat.

Carlo knew the value of the seat at the table of Jesus. He said – the more Eucharist we receive, the more we become like Jesus, so that on earth we have a foretaste of heaven. He also said – all people are born originals but many die photocopies. We get up from the table of Jesus or indeed we don't go to the banquet when we surrender our originality and choose to be photocopies.

There is a seat at the table – Jesus wants us to share in his life, but he expects us to come and to come ready to live the life he wants us to live. Carlo Acutis did that – he said – not me but God. Sadness he said was looking at ourselves whilst happiness is looking towards God. At the age of fifteen he died happy because he looked towards God while he lived. He is a very unexpected teacher, but he has a lesson for us all.

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