

Homily based on the readings from September 7, 2025 (Wisdom 9.13-18b; Philemon 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14.25-33)

As you may have heard, there is a great deal of excitement in Rome right now. [Tomorrow morning, Pope Leo will be canonizing / Earlier this morning, Pope Leo canonized] his first pair of saints: Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis. Both of these individuals had been scheduled to be canonized earlier in the year, but the ceremonies were delayed because of the election and installation of the new pope. The original plan was for the canonizations to occur on separate dates, but with the revised timeframe they wound up taking place on the same day.

Whether it was intentional or not, there is a striking connection between these two new saints: how incredibly *young* they both were when they passed away. Frassati died just over a hundred years ago, at the age of 24. Acutis, who is popularly known as the first millennial saint, died in 2006 at the age of 15. When we reflect upon their biographies – what both of them were able to accomplish in such short lifetimes – it is

tempting to be disappointed. Imagine what these men would have done – what one of them would *still* be doing – if they had lived longer. In a certain sense, this sentiment is completely justified. From a human perspective, we need to celebrate the value of every life – from conception until natural death. On the other hand, we must acknowledge God’s ultimate sovereignty – that he has a plan for each and every one of us, which *far* surpasses the scope of our limited comprehension. In the end, our job is not to *understand* God’s will, but to *accept* it.

In this respect, our two newest saints provide us with an incomparable role model. Both of them were well aware they were dying. Both of them serenely accepted their fate. Both of them took the time to comfort their grieving parents. Shortly before he fell into a coma, Acutis told his mother:

Mom, don’t be afraid. Since Jesus became a man, death has become the passage towards life, and we don’t need to flee it. Let

us prepare ourselves to experience something extraordinary in the eternal life.

Frassati's last words, as he was being cradled in *his* mother's arms, were simply "May I breathe forth my soul in peace with you" – part of a longer prayer uniting his suffering with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

When we encounter a situation like this – whether witnessing it from a distance or experiencing it directly – it is perfectly legitimate to be sorrowful. We can *mourn* for the sickness, the pain, the missed opportunities, the heartbreak. What we must *never* do, however, is look at such a life and call it a *waste*. While we can acknowledge the sadness of what was lost, we must *unequivocally* affirm the goodness of what was gained. In the case of *these* young men, we know – without a shadow of a doubt – that they are basking in the eternal radiance of Jesus Christ.

We heard in today's Gospel that a faithful disciple must "[hate] his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life." That does *not* mean treating our family members with disdain or contempt, nor does it mean viewing *ourselves* as wicked or worthless. If this point is not already obvious, we just need to consider our two newest saints. They cared *deeply* for their families and their friends – *delighting* with them in the joys of daily life – yet the *fullness* of their love was reserved for their Risen Lord and Savior.

What today's Gospel actually means – what Jesus is actually *telling* us – is that we need to *order* our priorities correctly. All of us must accept God's plan for our lives – regardless of what it is we *think* we want. God may surround us with a kind and loving family, or he may ask us to walk the journey of life on our own. God may grant us health and vitality, or we may suffer from any number of physical or mental afflictions. Whatever challenges God sets in front of us – whatever crosses he asks us to bear – we must carry them with patience, humility, and obedience. In the end, the blessings of this life – family, health,

wealth, strength, intellect – are only beneficial inasmuch as they assist us in attaining the ultimate prize – a place in God’s heavenly kingdom, seated among his angels and his saints.

In many situations, we are not asked to choose between good and evil, but between a greater good and a lesser good. No matter how much we value our careers, how much we enjoy our service to the community, how much we love our families – God is *always* the greatest good. In the final analysis, the cost of discipleship is simply recognizing this fact and acting upon it. The one true love of our lives must be – can only be – Jesus Christ. That is the purpose for which we were created, the sole reason we continue to exist. *That* is the path to sainthood for all of us – and our one true hope of glory.