

Acting with Jesus' Power in the Spirit – Sunday 29A

This weekend I celebrated Confirmation in Cheyenne with 51 students, 33 from Holy Trinity Parish and 18 from St. Joseph Parish. The homily for the Sunday Confirmation Mass is below.

To help you understand the gift of Confirmation, consider how God's Spirit is at work in creation. Think of how enormous the universe is. There are approximately 100 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy. In fact, astronomers say that there are more than 100 billion galaxies in the universe, each with 100 billion stars. That means that there are 10,000 billion billion stars out there! Some stars are 40 million times brighter than the sun. There are quasars which emit the light of a trillion suns. Almighty God who created 100 billion galaxies gives you his Holy Spirit! That should make you feel humble and awesome.

God is not only the Creator of the universe, but the Lord of history. By his Spirit he guides not only our lives but all people in the world, including the leaders of every nation. The prophet Isaiah reminds us of that truth when he declared that Cyrus, the king of Persia, was the Lord's anointed. At that time, Cyrus was king of the largest empire on earth, from the Mediterranean Sea to India. Yet he was under God's authority.

God told him, ***"I have called you by your name . . . I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me. It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other"*** (Is. 45:4-6). Almighty God who is the Lord of history gives you his Holy Spirit?

St. Paul had a clear sense of the Holy Spirit being with him and working through him. He wrote to the Thessalonians, ***"Our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit"*** (1 Thes. 1:5). Another time he said, ***"The Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you"*** (Rom. 8:11).

To be confirmed is to receive the Spirit of Almighty God. To be confirmed is to act with Jesus' power in the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives you his Spirit so that you will act like him, so that you continue his mission. This is what we see in the saints.

I want to describe how the Church's newest saint acted with Jesus' power, even though he died of cancer as a teenager. Last Saturday on October 10, Carlo Acutis was beatified in Assisi, Italy. Blessed Carlo died from leukemia in 2006. He was 15 years old. Although Carlo strove for holiness, he was a normal kid. His middle school teacher wrote: *"Carlo Acutis disturbs the class and doesn't have his homework,"* and *"Acutis clowns around."*

Yet, this normal kid acted with Jesus' power in the Holy Spirit. One of Carlo's favorite sayings was: *"The Eucharist is my highway to heaven."* He experienced how Jesus is really there when he received the Body of Christ at Mass. Yet, Blessed Carlo's Eucharistic faith was more than a private love for Jesus; it impelled him to love others.

His mother said, *"His immense generosity made him interested in everyone: the foreigners, the handicapped, children, beggars. To be close to Carlo was to be close to a fountain of fresh water."* He attended Mass daily, regularly spent time in Eucharistic Adoration, prayed the rosary and went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. His spiritual practices filled him with Jesus' power to be kind and generous to others.

His love for Christ in the Eucharist united Carlo to Jesus' who dwells in the least. This is an essential truth of the faith, that is, the Eucharist not only unites us with the Risen Lord Jesus, but also it unites us as the Body of Christ, with every baptized Christian.

Because the Eucharist unites us with Christ, it fills us with his Spirit of compassion for the least. At the beginning of his public life Jesus said, "***The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor . . . recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.***" (Lk. 4:18) That passage describes his mission. When you receive the Spirit at Confirmation, you share in Jesus' mission to bring glad tidings to the poor, sick, and oppressed. Jesus' compassion for the least is renewed in your heart every time that you receive the Eucharist.

Carlo said to his friends, "*Think of Jesus as one among you, your best friend or your brother, as well as a man who needs your help. To me being a Christian is to observe the world and bring my joy, my strength to others ... If you see a friend struggling, help him or her, don't leave them alone, don't close your eyes.*" Blessed Carlo once said, "*To be always close to Jesus, that's my life plan.*" Being a Christian means being united to Jesus and being united to other people as brothers and sisters.

I read your letters, and I know that some of you do not feel very close to God. Most of you say that you want a stronger relationship with God. Remember that Carlo was a normal kid who struggled and died from leukemia. Yet, he was joyful, and he acted with Jesus' power in the Holy Spirit. He worked his spiritual journey by going to Mass not only on Sunday but also daily. He prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, the rosary, and went to Reconciliation.

God graciously gives you his Holy Spirit, but you need to do your part. If you work on your relationship with God, then you will be as strong as Jesus. You will say like Carlo, "*To be always close to Jesus, that's my life plan,*" or "*To me being a Christian is to observe the world and bring my joy, my strength to others.*"

(P.S. A YouTube video of Blessed Carlo Acutis is posted on the diocesan website homepage.)