

JANUARY 9, 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

This gospel reading, of course, features Jesus after he came out of the desert, teaching, and returning to his own town. In our own town, we usually are rejected—people know us and judge us with different eyes than others. Jesus comes to Nazareth, and interestingly, he reads from the scroll of Isaiah, Isaiah 61, proclaiming, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me." He is declaring, "I am sent by God to you." Following this declaration, everyone was amazed but questioned, "But he is the son of Joseph, how can this be?" This represents the mystery of God.

God calls Jesus out of a seemingly insignificant place, Nazareth, to preach to us. This calling is also true for the saints, and God continues to call people to come forward and proclaim the good news to us, even today. I am often approached by parents concerned about their youth not going to church, questioning what they might have done wrong. However, we often fail to see how God does call people.

A poignant example is Blessed Carlo Acutis, who died in 2006 at the age of 15 and is set to be canonized on April 27th, 2025. Despite being born in a nominally Catholic, wealthy family, God called this child. From a young age, Carlo was curious about faith, questioning, "Mommy, why this? Mommy, why that?" He displayed a spiritual maturity, even instructing his nanny that Jesus would not be happy if he lost his temper when other children took his toys.

Carlo's profound faith continued as he grew, stopping at his parish to pray and attend Eucharistic Adoration, demonstrating his unique devotion. We can learn much from how parents should foster a fertile ground for faith, though sometimes God goes beyond that. Carlo not only brought his mother back to faith but influenced many others. Skilled with computers, he was asked by his parish priest to create a

website for the parish and another documenting Eucharistic miracles and Marian apparitions, aiming to affirm, "This is true. Look, people! God is real."

His life is a testament to the real presence of God in our lives, challenging us to question if God is real in our hearts. Carlo died of aggressive leukemia at 15, consoling his distraught mother with profound words about life and death. This message aligns with our first reading from 1 John, emphasizing that one cannot love God if they hate their brother or sister and calling us to be people of peace. The church highlights such individuals to inspire us, showing that even at a young age, Carlo understood and embraced God's message more profoundly than many who are much older.

This story, especially during the Christmas season, reminds us to renew our faith and be signs of Christ for others, demonstrating that even the young can lead their families and communities back to faith. Amen.