

## **23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Discipleship, Grace and Reconciliation**

Who is the true disciple? What is the cost of discipleship? (two young saints canonized this weekend in Rome: **Carlo Acutis** and **Pier Giorgio Frazzati**) (*Originally scheduled to be canonized in April, date -postponed after the death of Pope Francis*)

September is a month of transition. Summer slowly fades, giving way to sharpened pencils, packed lunchboxes, and new beginnings. For students, it's a time marked by anticipation, anxiety, and hope. It's a time of year when teens and young adults could use a little extra help — *spiritual companions who understand the weight of exams, identity struggles, social pressure, and the need for authentic purpose.*

**Carlo Acutis** (15) 5-3-1991 to 10-12-2006) “Online display of Eucharistic miracles, world tour” = This teenager’s motto: **“Eucharist is my Highway to heaven”**

**Pier Giorgio Frazzati** (24) 4-6-1901 to 7-4-1925) Pier Giorgio- An Italian young catholic activist, was known for his joy and jokes, his athleticism, his care for the poor, his political activism, his selflessness, and for challenging his friends to virtue. His motto was **“to the heights”**, to the *mountain tops* as well as *to heaven.*

Two young men, generations apart, who lived radically ordinary lives, transformed by extraordinary love for Christ. Carlo, a teenager from modern-day Italy who harnessed the power of the internet to evangelize, with his great love for the Eucharist and Pier Giorgio, the young man-a lover of the mountains and the poor, who radiated joy even as he walked his short path of suffering. Both were deeply in the world of youth and never went beyond this stage of life. Both knew what it meant to live amidst peers, technology, expectations- and to rise above it with joy, humility, and faith. What a gift it is, to canonize these saints just

as school doors swing open is, in a way, to send them forth as spiritual prefects for a new academic year.

### **The Transformative Power of Grace and Forgiveness:**

How should a good disciple-Christian apply God's transformative love to all relationships? By recognizing our spiritual equality in Christ regardless of social status, and the call to advocate for others.

The Book of Philemon teaches the profound power of grace and forgiveness, transforming social hierarchies into *unity in Christ*, and the importance of reconciliation by treating former slaves as "brothers" rather than property.

This one chapter-smallest bk- letter is a practical demonstration of grace, where Paul asks Philemon to show grace to Onesimus, his runaway slave. This act moves beyond the strict letter of the law, highlighting the higher principle of God's mercy and forgiveness in Christian relationships. Onesimus fled from Philemon, his master. Roman law prescribed harsh punishments for runaway slaves. Paul appeals to Philemon's heart and their shared faith, and Paul encourages their reconciliation, which bridges the gap between master and slave through their shared faith. This illustrates how faith can mend broken relationships and create unity where division once existed.

Paul, who baptized the slave Onesimus, from prison urges Philemon to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (Phil 1:16). This emphasizes that in Christ, social constructs like slavery become secondary to shared spiritual identity and brotherhood. This is true discipleship, costly but best lived in the lives of Carlo and Pier Giorgio. Let us pray for their intercession today, to live our discipleship faithfully. Amen