

HOLINESS

Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks always has the door opened to him.

My parent's faith was very strong and they were very devout. They were also devoted to one another. My mother was an incredibly strong character, she gave birth to eight children of which I was number five. She was widowed at the age of forty-four with five of us under the age of seventeen and still to be cared for and be prepared to be sent out into the world. I think she did that very well for I am proud of all my siblings, those who are still living and those who have gone before. My mother was not one to quote chapter and verse but she guided us gently along the right path. Her faith was a simple one. She believed in an almighty and loving God who would always provide and his only son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived here on Earth and died to redeem us. She had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Lady, his mother.

On Sundays, she would be up early and walk two miles to our parish church, Saint Annes to celebrate mass and then walk the two miles back to make sure we were all ready to go to the later mass while she prepared the Sunday roast. She also attended Mass most days of the week. She helped out at the school, minding the children during their lunchtime break. She loved having little ones around her especially her grandchildren. She believed it kept her young. Each evening, she would gather us together in the living room to pray the rosary. In those days cars were few and far between so if my mother wanted to go somewhere she would have to walk or use the bus service. It must have been quite a struggle for her after dad died and I wish I could have been more comfort to her but I realise now that I myself was also grieving. She believed that God would always provide and she put all her trust in him.

In his pastoral letter recently, Bishop Mark brought our attention to the witness of holiness shown by a young teenager, Blessed Carlo Acutis, a remarkable young man who, although he has not yet been canonised, is truly a saint of our time. The bishop quotes Carlo as saying, *"You, too, can be a saint. But you need to want it with all your heart, and if you do not yet desire it, ask the Lord for insistence."* Bishop Mark encouraged us all to strive to be holy. When I was young, life seemed less complicated than it is today. We knew what was right and what was sinful. Nowadays, there are so many issues that I do not fully understand and am unsure how I should react but I try to keep an open mind and recall the old saying, *"hate the sin but love the sinner."*

My prayer now is,

O Lord, let me see only what you want me to see,
Hear only what you want me to hear,
Understand what you want me to understand,
Say only what you want me to say,
And do whatever you want me to do.
O Lord, may I be what you want me to be.

When my father and mother died, I have always believed that they had attained a level of holiness. I know that I have not yet reached that level but I will take Bishop Mark's advice and keep striving.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us.