

Teen Saints of our own time

The Catholic Church recognizes about 10,000 saints, according to the Pew Research Center — including the patron saints of animals, lost causes and children — but very few child saints. It may be surprising then to read of young men and women of our own time whose lives of courage and virtue have been recognized by the Vatican as worthy of the title of venerable or Blessed or even Saint.

Venerable MATTEO FARINA (1990 – 2009) 19 years old

The sainthood cause of Matteo Farina took a step closer to success today when the Pope approved to move a step toward canonization. June 25 2020. He is to be called Blessed. Farina grew up in a strong Christian family in the southern Italian town of Brindisi.



The parish where he received the sacraments was under the care of Capuchin friars, from whom he gained a devotion to St. Francis and St. Padre Pio. His love for Mary strengthened during this time and he consecrated himself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Starting at eight years old, he would receive the sacrament of reconciliation often. He was also devoted to the Word of God. At nine years old, he read the entire Gospel of St. Matthew as a Lenten practice. Farina also prayed the rosary every day.

When he was nine years old, he had a dream in which he heard St. Padre Pio tell him that if he understood that “he who is without sin is happy,” he must help others to understand this, “so that we can all go together, happy, to the kingdom of heaven.” From that point onward, Farina felt a strong desire to evangelize, especially among his peers, which he did politely and without presumption.

In September 2003, a month before his 13th birthday, Farina began to have symptoms of what would later be diagnosed as a brain tumor. As he was undergoing medical tests, he began to keep a journal. He called the experience of the bad headaches and pain “one of those adventures that change your life and that of others. It helps you to be stronger and to grow, above all in faith.”

Over the next six years, Farina would experience several brain operations and undergo

chemotherapy and other treatments for the tumor. In between hospitalizations, he continued to live the ordinary life of a teenager: he attended school, hung out with his friends, formed a band, and fell in love with a girl.

He later called the chaste relationship he had with Serena during his last two years of life “the most beautiful gift” the Lord could give him.

Eventually, the teenager’s condition worsened and after a third surgery he became paralyzed in his left arm and leg. He would often repeat that “we must live every day as if it were the last, but not in the sadness of death, but rather in the joy of being ready to meet the Lord!”

Farina died surrounded by his friends and family on April 24, 2009.

BLESSED CHIARA BALDINO



Blessed Chiara Badano (October 29, 1971 – October 7, 1990) was a young Italian teenager who is currently in the process of being pronounced a **saint** by the **Roman Catholic Church**. At age nine she joined the **Focolare Movement** and received the nickname "Luce" by the founder Chiara Lubich.

Her parents Ruggiero and Teresa Badano had prayed for a baby for 10 years before she arrived in 1971.

She always was a very considerate child, often giving away her toys to others. She showed great pity for the poor and the lonely. She visited sick people when she was allowed.

When she was 16 she was diagnosed with **osteogenic sarcoma**, a painful bone cancer. No treatment worked and in the end, she refused any more intervention, offering her pain as penance to God.

Chiara succumbed to the cancer on October 7, 1990, after a two-year battle with the disease. She was beatified on September 25, 2010 at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love in Rome. Her feast day is celebrated on October 29. Within three years of her death, her local bishop began the process of canonization. Pope benedict XVI declared her 'Blessed Chiara' in 2010. Soon she will be raised to the full honors of the altar as 'Saint Chiara Badano'.

VENERABLE CARLO ACUTIS (1991 – 2006) 15 years old

Another Italian teenage boy is now declared 'Venerable', the rank below Blessed.

A London-born "computer genius" who died in Italy from leukemia at 15 is one step closer to becoming a saint, now that the Vatican has attributed a miracle to him.



Carlo Acutis, who died in Milan in 2006, was credited with healing a Brazilian boy who recovered from a rare illness after praying to him, asking him to communicate with God. Carlo will be beatified in Assisi, Italy, in October this year — the final step before sainthood. Beatification — recognition by the church that a person has entered heaven and has the capacity to intercede on behalf of those who pray in his or her name — is the final step before sainthood.

But the coronavirus pandemic delayed his beatification, which will take place in the fall in Assisi, Italy, where he is buried. Once a second miracle is approved by a council of scientists, he will become the patron saint of the internet. Carlo's mother, Antonia Salzano, said that, in many ways, her son was a normal teenager who liked playing video games, but one who also had “a special spiritual life and gifts on the internet.” Using the family’s small, old computer, Carlo taught himself how to program and built a website cataloging miracles around the world.



Carlo also supported classmates who were bullied and helped the homeless. “When he contracted leukemia at age 15, his faith helped him to see his suffering differently,” Brenden Thompson, the CEO of Catholic Voices, said.

At Carlo's funeral, the church was “so flooded that many people had to remain outside,” his mother said. Catholics from around the world then petitioned the Vatican, calling for the teen to be named a saint.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901 -1925) 24 years old

- Pier Giorgio Michelangelo Frassati was born in Turin, Italy on April 6, 1901. His mother, Adelaide Ametis, was a painter. His father Alfredo, was the founder and director of the newspaper, “La Stampa,” and was influential in Italian politics, holding positions as an Italian Senator and Ambassador to Germany.

At an early age, Pier Giorgio joined the Marian Sodality and the Apostleship of Prayer, and obtained permission to receive daily Communion (which was rare at that time).



At the age of 17, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society and dedicated much of his spare time to serving the sick and the needy, caring for orphans, and assisting the demobilized servicemen returning from World War I.

He decided to become a mining engineer, studying at the Royal Polytechnic University of Turin, so he could “serve Christ better among the miners,” as he told a friend.

Mountain climbing was one of his favorite sports. Outings in the mountains, which he organized with his friends, also served as opportunities for his apostolic work. He never lost the chance to lead his friends to Mass, to the reading of Scripture, and to praying the rosary.

Fondness for the epistles of St. Paul sparked his zeal for fraternal charity, and the fiery sermons of the Renaissance preacher and reformer Girolamo Savonarola and the writings of St. Catherine impelled him in 1922 to join the Lay Dominicans (Third Order of St. Dominic). He chose the name Girolamo after his

Although he considered his studies his first duty, they did not keep him from social and political activism. In 1919, he joined the Catholic Student Foundation and the organization known as Catholic Action. He became a very active member of the People’s Party, which promoted the Catholic Church’s social teaching based on the principles of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum*.

Pier Giorgio gave everything he owned to help the poor, even using his bus fare for charity and then running home to be on time for meals. His charity did not simply involve giving something to others, but giving completely of himself. This was fed by daily communion with Christ in the Holy Eucharist and by frequent nocturnal adoration, by meditation on St. Paul’s “Hymn of Charity” (I Corinthians 13), and by the writings of St. Catherine of Siena. He often sacrificed vacations at the Frassati summer home in Pollone (outside of Turin) because, as he said, “If everybody leaves Turin, who will take care of the poor?”

He often went to the theater, to the opera, and to museums. He loved art and music, and could quote whole passages of the poet Dante.

personal hero, Savonarola. “I am a fervent admirer of this friar, who died as a saint at the stake,” he wrote to a friend.

Like his father, he was strongly anti-Fascist and did nothing to hide his political views. He physically defended the faith at times involved in fights, first with anticlerical Communists and later with Fascists. Participating in a Church-organized demonstration in Rome on one occasion, he stood up to police violence and rallied the other young people by grabbing the group’s banner, which the royal guards had knocked out of another student’s hands. Pier

Giorgio held it even higher, while using the banner's pole to fend off the blows of the guards.

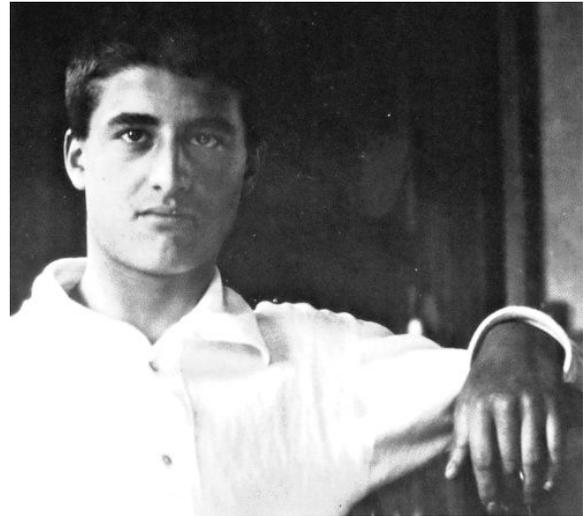
Just before receiving his university degree, Pier Giorgio contracted poliomyelitis. After six days of terrible suffering Pier Giorgio died at the age of 24 on **July 4, 1925**. His last preoccupation was for the poor. On the eve of his death, with a paralyzed hand he scribbled a message to a friend, asking him to take the medicine needed for injections to be given to Converso, a poor sick man he had been visiting.

Pier Giorgio's funeral was a triumph. The streets of the city were lined with a multitude of mourners who were unknown to his family -- the poor and the needy whom he had served so unselfishly for seven years. Many of these people, in turn, were surprised to learn that the saintly young man they knew had actually been the heir of the influential Frassati family.

Pope John Paul II, after visiting his original tomb in the family plot in Pollone, said in 1989: "I wanted to pay homage to a young man who was able to witness to Christ with singular effectiveness in this century of ours. When I was a young man, I, too, felt the beneficial influence of his example and, as a student, I was impressed by the force of his testimony." On May 20, 1990, the Pope beatified Pier Giorgio

Frassati, calling him the "Man of the Eight Beatitudes."

His incorrupt body was found in perfect condition upon exhumation on March 31, 1981. He was transferred from the family tomb in Pollone to the cathedral in Turin. Many pilgrims, especially students and the young, come to the tomb of Blessed Frassati to seek favors and the courage to follow his example.





Guido Schaffer will likely be the first ever surfing saint. The Vatican will beatify the Brazilian surfer who drowned in 2009.

The 34-year-old wave rider, nicknamed "Surfing Angel," lost his life while enjoying his time at Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, just weeks before he was due to be ordained a Catholic priest.

The Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro sent the Vatican numerous documents on the life of Schaffer to show that he "lived in accord with the teachings of the Church."

"He was very sensitive toward others, and was a man of great faith and was passionate for the word of God," explained Father Roberto Lopes, episcopal vicar for the causes of saints at the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro.

Guido's father is a doctor and his mother is a member of the Good Shepherd Community (Catholic Charismatic Renewal). He grew up in

Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, where he learned to enjoy the beach and surfing.

He studied Medicine at the Faculty Technical Educational Souza Marques (1993-1998). Made residence and later joined the medical staff of the 4th and 20th Wards of the Holy House of Mercy of Rio. He decided to become a general practitioner, specialty that allowed him to assess the patient as a whole. During his academic education he was also dedicated to care for HIV patients, at the Evandro Chagas Hospital (Oswaldo Cruz Foundation).

Remembered for his knowledge of the Word of God and for the importance he gave to the sacraments and the use of the charisms of the Holy Spirit, Guido founded several prayer groups and held many lectures. In 1999, during a retreat at the Canção Nova (New Song)

Community, Guido heard a priest preaching the following passage: " Never turn your face from the poor and God will never turn his from you" (Tob 4,7). At that moment he reflected how many times he had looked away from the poor. He asked God for forgiveness and said, "Jesus, help me take care of the poor." A week later he met the sisters of the order founded by Mother Teresa (Missionaries of Charity), whose mission is the care for the poor. He realized that God had heard his request and was giving him the direction he wanted for his medicine. He offered his work to the sisters of charity and started to meet the homeless on the streets. He organized the volunteers inviting other doctors from the Holy House of Mercy and the youth of the prayer group.

When reading the book "The brother of Assisi", by Ignatius Larrañaga, he felt called to the priesthood. Guido fulfilled the first years of preparation at the Institute of Philosophy and Theology of the Monastery of Saint Benedict of Rio de Janeiro. As an external student he conciliated the preparatory studies for the priesthood with his volunteer medical work and the preaching of God's Word. In 2008, he joined the Saint Joseph Seminary (Rio de Janeiro).

On May 1, 2009, at thirty-four years old, Guido died, victim of an injury to the neck that caused unconsciousness and drowning while surfing at the Recreio dos Bandeirantes beach, Rio de Janeiro.

The funeral mass with the body present, held the next day (May 2), chaired by the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro - now Cardinal -. Dom Orani João Tempesta, O. Cist, in the parish of Our Lady of Copacabana, called the attention of all that attended it. The church, which was packed with about 1700 people from all locations and social classes, was attended by approximately seventy priests and three bishops. Before the coffin closed at the end of the Mass, Archbishop Orani said: "This church so full shows me how this young man was a good shepherd, and as I know of his desire to become a priest, I will put the stole in his hands. " The bishop then came down the presbytery and placed the stole in Guido's hands, and he was buried with it.

After his death, soon reports of cures started to appear, attributed to the intercession of the young doctor, seminarian and surfer. On January 17, 2015, with permission from the Vatican, the process of beatification and canonization was initiated, by the Cardinal Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro - Dom Orani João Tempesta. At this stage, Guido Schäffer received the title "Servant of God".

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints oversees the process that leads to the canonization of saints, passing through the steps of a declaration of "heroic virtues" and beatification.