

Counselor's Corner

October 26, 2020

Digital Responsibility

Carlo Acutis was an Italian 15-year-old tech whiz who died of leukemia in 2006. He was an average teen with exceptional technical talent. In his short life, Carlo created an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world. He was beatified in Assisi, Italy by Cardinal Agostino Vallini on October 10th which puts him on the path to becoming the first millennial saint.

Cardinal Vallini said that Carlo was a “normal, simple, spontaneous, friendly” teenager who used modern forms of communication to transmit the “values and beauty of the Gospel.” For him, “the internet was not just a means of escape, but a space for dialogue, knowledge, sharing and mutual respect that was to be used responsibly, without becoming slaves to it and rejecting digital bullying,” the cardinal said.

Let's contrast this with the following facts:

- About 21% of teens have been cyberbullied and about 13% admitted to cyberbullying others at some point in their lifetimes. About one out of every four teens has experienced cyberbullying, and about one out of every six teens has done it to others.
- Adolescent girls are just as likely, if not more likely than boys, to experience cyberbullying (as a victim and offender).
- Cyberbullying is related to low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, anger, frustration, and a variety of other emotional and psychological problems.
- Cyberbullying is related to other issues in the ‘real world’ including school problems, anti-social behavior, substance use, and delinquency.
- Traditional bullying and cyberbullying are closely related: those who are bullied at school are bullied online, and those who bully at school bully online.

With the world relying more and more on digital communication through the pandemic, it is more important than ever to monitor our children's use of phones, tablets and computers. Kids tend to say and do things behind a screen that they may never think to do in person. They often do not realize the impact of their digital imprints. It is imperative to guide children of all ages to use their devices responsibly and benevolently, and to limit their usage according to their age and ability to make informed decisions.

Sources: <https://carloacutis-en.org/>
Florida Catholic Digital Edition, October 16, 2020
Cyberbullying Research Center www.cyberbullying.org