

In what would be his last Good Friday sermon, Sheen said: "There has been physical suffering. And other kinds ... but as I look back over the years, I have never received the punishment I deserved. God has been easy with me. He has never laid on me burdens equal to my faith."

Given his talents and reach, many expected Sheen to become a cardinal. After his retirement, when asked why he did not rise higher in the Church hierarchy, he said: "I refused to pay the price. ... I felt it would be disloyalty to my own principles, and I think to Christian practice."

From 1966 to 1969, Sheen served as bishop of Rochester, New York. It was a brief tenure, regarded by many as an exile. Sheen had been an active participant at the Second Vatican Council and as a diocesan bishop worked to implement some of its main themes, including reform of priestly formation and increase in lay participation. Attentive to the times, his priorities often were rooted in social consciousness. He ministered to the poor, worked to improve race relations, and was a vocal opponent of the Vietnam War. But despite Sheen's best efforts, his brief tenure there was met with great resistance and resulted in a good deal of self-described failure.

LEGACY

After his request for early retirement was accepted in 1969, Sheen was granted the title "archbishop" by Pope St. Paul VI. He continued preaching far and wide in his last decade, delivered retreats aimed at renewal of the priesthood throughout the country, and maintained a voice in the public square through regular media appearances.

The temptations and sufferings Sheen faced purified him and intensified his union with Christ, he main-

IT'S A MIRACLE!

The announcement to beatify Sheen comes after formal investigation and approval of a miracle attributed to his intercession, which affected newborn James Fulton Engstrom, who spent the first 61 minutes of his life breathless, without a pulse. Having turned to Sheen for support throughout her pregnancy, the boy's mother, Bonnie, prayed for the archbishop's assistance. And just as he was about to be declared dead, her son's heart rate sprang to a normal rate. Today, he's a healthy, thriving eight-year-old. The miracle was approved by Pope Francis on July 5, 2019.



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tained. Toward the end of his life, writing in his autobiography, Sheen apologized for his failures, wondering, "Was I inspiring anyone to imitate Christ in the daily carrying of his Cross?"

Two months before Sheen died, Pope St. John Paul II embraced him during a visit to St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and said: "You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus. You are a loyal son of the Church."

After nearly two years in and out of the hospital following open-heart surgery, Sheen died December 9, 1979, in New York City, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. His devotees have multiplied in number after his death, and many have turned to him for inspiration and intercession. In 2002 a cause of canonization was opened. Sheen was declared venerable a decade later.

LEARNING WITH SHEEN

If you would like to learn more from and about Archbishop Fulton Sheen, here are some of his more popular texts:

Life is Worth Living
Life of Christ
The World's First Love
Three to Get Married
Treasure in Clay
Go to Heaven

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The Life of FULTON SHEEN



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Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is remembered as one of the most influential and innovative evangelists in American history. Once dubbed “God’s microphone,” Sheen announced God’s truth in a nonconfrontational, yet no less life-giving, manner to untold millions through radio, print, and television.

Born in El Paso, Illinois, on May 8, 1895, Sheen resolved to serve the Church as a priest from an early age. Known to always have “his nose in a book,” Sheen fittingly was assigned to academic ministry following his ordination to the priesthood on September 20, 1919, for the Diocese of Peoria. A philosopher at heart, Sheen said his goals for his priesthood were “to know two things: what the world is thinking about, and how to answer errors in the light of the philosophy of St. Thomas.”

PROFESSOR

After he pursued studies in Europe, a promising future awaited him as a professor. He was called back home to Peoria, however, for service as an assistant priest at a poor, inner-city parish — a true test of his obedience. Sheen threw himself into the work, exhibiting an extraordinary zeal for souls. As part of his parish ministry, he launched a door-to-door evangelization campaign.

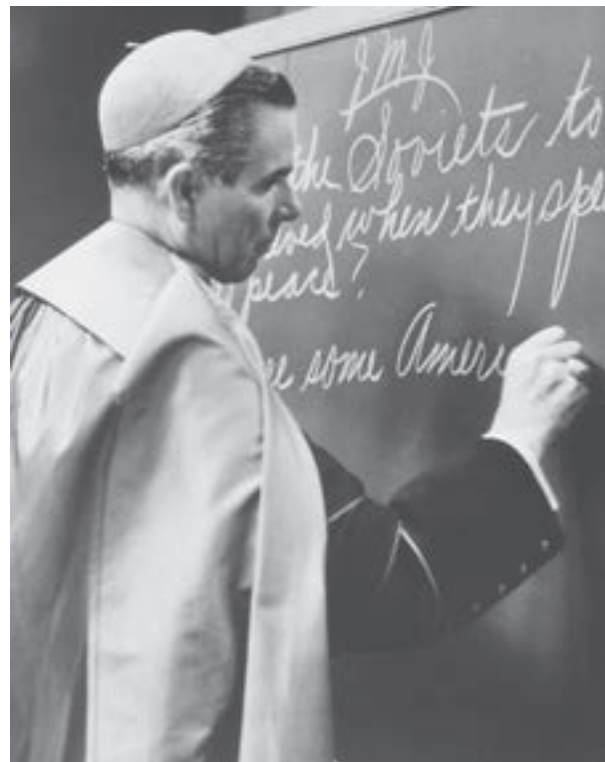
In less than a year, Sheen landed a professorship at

The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., which he held for 25 years. He quickly became one of the most popular professors on campus, known for his engaging and stimulating lectures. During that time, he authored more than half of his nearly 70 books.

Sheen’s oratory prowess was successful, in part, because of his commitment to using no notes. His command of material came after hours of preparation and memorization.

MEDIA EVANGELIST

During the 1930s and ’40s, Sheen became a household name as host of *The Catholic Hour*, broadcast nationally from NBC Radio in New York. He emerged as a national voice — a prophetic truth-teller who spoke out on a host of issues, particularly the threats posed by Communism.



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DID YOU KNOW?

Sheen’s writing and preaching left a major mark on many in the Church in his day, even saints. Pope St. John Paul II, for instance, practiced English listening to Sheen’s recordings. And St. Teresa of Calcutta is said to have always traveled with Sheen’s popular book *Life of Christ*.

For that, he even came under investigation by the FBI.

After his appointment as director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1950, Sheen had to give up his work as a professor and move to New York City. The next year, he was appointed an auxiliary bishop of New York, ordained in Rome on June 11, 1951. Sheen began his work on behalf of the global missions with great energy, and his innovative efforts enabled him to evangelize at the same time.

On Tuesday evenings from 1952 to 1957, Sheen propagated eternal truths to an estimated audience of thirty million via his *Life Is Worth Living* television program. With apparent ease and captivating eloquence, he helped viewers find the meaning of life and drew them toward the divine — always equipped with his famous cape and chalkboard.

In addition, Sheen made millions of dollars in advertising — all of which (along with the profits from his books) directly supported the missions. He spent an hour in preparation for each of his thirty minutes on the air. As in the classroom, he refused to use notes; instead, he delivered scripts in Italian and French in preparation for his televised lessons. After his first year on the air, Sheen won an Emmy for best television personality. Upon acceptance, he famously thanked his writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

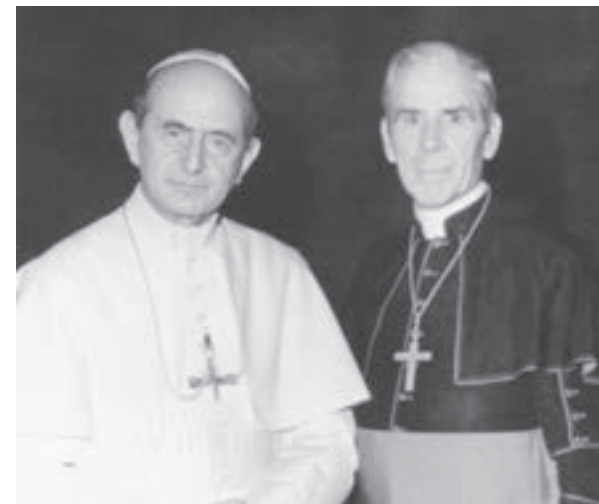
SUCCESSOR OF THE APOSTLES

Sheen’s writings and preaching were inspired by a lively and heroic faith. When he traveled the globe visiting the missions, he drew massive crowds. He was a much sought-after preacher — particularly legendary were his Good Friday sermons at a packed St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City.

As a pastor of souls, Sheen’s selfless ministry was marked by great faith, hope, and charity. He was an attentive pastor to greatest and least alike. A rare

SHEEN SHRINE

On June 27, 2019, Sheen’s earthly remains were transferred to St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria, Illinois, from the crypt at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. Sheen served Mass at the Peoria cathedral as a boy and had been ordained a priest there a century ago. Plans are under way for development of a shrine in the cathedral’s side chapel, in addition to an outdoor garden and other facilities.



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combination of intelligence, wit, and humor made him an effective evangelist. And with clear teaching and common sense, Sheen helped people make sense of life’s problems. His media efforts helped erase widespread anti-Catholicism in America.

In all that he said and did, Sheen remembered his work was the Lord’s. Once asked by Pope Pius XII how many converts he assisted, Sheen replied, “I am always afraid if I did count them, I might think I made them, instead of the Lord.”

Like St. Paul, Sheen could not pass on what he did not already first receive in Christ. Throughout his priesthood, Sheen sought to conform himself more closely to Christ by observing a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, what he called “the hour that makes my day.” The practice brought him into a variety of circumstances, some even comical, such as when he was forced into jumping out of a window after the pastor of a Chicago church accidentally locked him in. He also was intensely devoted to the Mother of God.

HIDDEN SUFFERING

Sheen battled various temptations and difficulties throughout his life, many of which came as the result of his fame. This included the hidden suffering from a decade of hostility from Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. But in the face of his troubles, Sheen persevered in virtue. He understood his sufferings in light of God’s providence: “Christianity begins not with sunshine, but with defeat. During those days when my life was backed up against the Cross, I began to know and to love it more.”