


Fulton J. Sheen

Venerable Fulton John Sheen	
<i>Titular Archbishop of Newport, Wales and Bishop Emeritus of Rochester</i>	
See	Newport, South Wales (Titular Archdiocese)
Appointed	October 21, 1966
Reign ended	October 6, 1969
Predecessor	James Edward Kearney
Successor	Joseph Lloyd Hogan
Other posts	Titular Archbishop of Neoportus
Orders	
Ordination	September 20, 1919 by Edmund M. Dunne
Consecration	June 11, 1951 by Adeodato Giovanni Piazza
Personal details	
Birth name	Peter John Sheen
Born	8 May 1895 ^[1] El Paso, Illinois ^[1]
Died	9 December 1979 (aged 84) New York, New York
Buried	St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York
Nationality	American
Denomination	Roman Catholic
Previous post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auxiliary Bishop of New York (1951 - 1966) Titular Bishop of Caesariana (1951 - 1966)
Alma mater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity Catholic University of America]] Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium
Motto	Da Per Matrem Me Venire (English: <i>Grant that I may come to Thee through Mary</i>)
Coat of arms	

Fulton John Sheen (born **Peter John Sheen**, May 8, 1895 – December 9, 1979) was an American archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church known for his preaching and especially his work on television and radio. His cause for canonization for sainthood was officially opened in 2002. In June 2012, Pope Benedict XVI officially recognized a decree from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints stating that he lived a life of "heroic virtues" - a major step towards beatification - so he is now referred to as "Venerable".^{[2][3]}

Ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria in 1919,^[1] Sheen quickly became a renowned theologian, earning the Cardinal Mercier Prize for International Philosophy in 1923. He went on to teach theology and philosophy as well as acting as a parish priest before being appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York in 1951. He held this position until 1966 when he was made the Bishop of Rochester from October 21, 1966 to October 6, 1969, when

he resigned and was made the Archbishop of the Titular See of Newport, Wales.

For 20 years he hosted the night-time radio program *The Catholic Hour* (1930–1950) before moving to television and presenting *Life Is Worth Living* (1951–1957). Sheen's final presenting role was on the syndicated *The Fulton Sheen Program* (1961–1968) with a format very similar to that of the earlier *Life is Worth Living* show. For this work, Sheen twice won an Emmy Award for Most Outstanding Television Personality, the only personality appearing on the DuMont Network ever to win a major Emmy award. Starting in 2009, his shows were being re-broadcast on the EWTN and the Trinity Broadcasting Network's Church Channel cable networks.^[4] Due to his contribution to televised preaching Sheen is often referred to as one of the first televangelists.^{[5][6]}

Childhood

Sheen was born in El Paso, Illinois, the oldest of four sons of Newton and Delia. Though he was known as Fulton, his mother's maiden name, he was baptized as Peter John Sheen.^{[7][1]} As an infant, Sheen contracted tuberculosis.^[8] After the family moved to nearby Peoria, Illinois, Sheen's first role in the Church was as an altar boy at St. Mary's Cathedral.^{[1][7]}

Education

After earning high school valedictorian honors at Spalding Institute in Peoria in 1913, Sheen was educated at St. Viator College in Bourbonnais, Illinois, attended Saint Paul Seminary in Minnesota before his ordination on September 20, 1919,^[1] then followed that with further studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C..^{[7][9]} His youthful appearance was still evident on one occasion when a local priest asked Sheen to assist as altar boy during the celebration of the Mass.^[7]

Sheen earned a doctorate in philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium in 1923.^[9] While there, he became the first American ever to win the Cardinal Mercier award for the best philosophical treatise.^[7]

Priestly life

Sheen was for a year assistant to the pastor at St. Patrick's Church, Soho Square in London while teaching theology at St. Edmund's College, Ware, where he met Ronald Knox. Although Oxford and Columbia wanted him to teach philosophy, in 1926 Bishop Edmund Dunne of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peoria, Illinois asked Sheen to take over St. Patrick's Parish. After nine months, Dunne returned him to Catholic University, where he taught philosophy until 1950.^{[10][7]}

In 1929, Sheen gave a speech at the National Catholic Educational Association. He encouraged teachers to "educate for a Catholic Renaissance" in the United States. Sheen was hoping that Catholics would become more influential in their country through education, which would help attract others to the faith. He believed that Catholics should "integrate" their faith into the rest of their daily life.^[11]

He was consecrated a bishop on June 11, 1951,^[12] and served as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New York from 1951 to 1965. The Principal Consecrator was the Discalced Carmelite Cardinal Adeodato Giovanni Piazza, the Cardinal-Bishop of Sabina e Poggio Mirteto and the Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation (what is today the Congregation for Bishops). The Principal Co-Consecrators were Archbishop Leone Giovanni Battista Nigris, Titular Archbishop of Philippi and the Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (what is today the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples); and Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor, Titular Archbishop of Laodicea in Syria and President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

Media career

Styles of Fulton J. Sheen	
	
Reference style	The Most Reverend
Spoken style	Your Excellency
Religious style	Your Excellency
Posthumous style	Venerable

Radio

A popular instructor, Sheen wrote the first of 73 books in 1925, and in 1930 began a weekly Sunday night radio broadcast, *The Catholic Hour*.^[9] Sheen called WWII not only a political struggle, but also a "theological one." He referred to Hitler as an example of the "Anti-Christ."^[13] Two decades later, the broadcast had a weekly listening audience of four million people. *Time* referred to him in 1946 as "the golden-voiced Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, U.S. Catholicism's famed proselytizer" and reported that his radio broadcast received 3,000–6,000 letters weekly from listeners.^[14] During the middle of this era, he conducted the first religious service broadcast on the new medium of television, putting in motion a new avenue for his religious pursuits.

Television

In 1951 he began a weekly television program on the DuMont Television Network titled *Life Is Worth Living*. Filmed at the Adelphi Theatre in New York City, the program consisted of the unpaid Sheen simply speaking in front of a live audience without a script or cue cards, occasionally using a chalkboard.

The show, scheduled in a graveyard slot on Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m., was not expected to challenge the ratings giants Milton Berle and Frank Sinatra, but did surprisingly well. Berle joked, "He uses old material, too", and observed that "[i]f I'm going to be eased off the top by anyone, it's better that I lose to the One for whom Bishop Sheen is speaking."^[7] Sheen responded in jest that people should start calling him "Uncle Fultie".^[15] *Life* and *Time* magazine ran feature stories on Bishop Sheen. The number of stations carrying *Life Is Worth Living* jumped from three to fifteen in less than two months. There was fan mail that flowed in at a rate of 8,500 letters per week. There were four times as many requests for tickets than could be fulfilled. Admiral, the sponsor, paid the production costs in return for a one minute commercial at the opening of the show and another minute at the close.^[16] In 1952, Sheen won an Emmy Award for his efforts,^[17] accepting the acknowledgment by saying, "I feel it is time I pay tribute to my four writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John." *Time* called him "the first 'televangelist'", and the Archdiocese of New York could not meet the demand for tickets.^[7]

One of his best-remembered presentations came in February 1953, when he forcefully denounced the Soviet regime of Joseph Stalin. Sheen gave a dramatic reading of the burial scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, substituting the names of Caesar, Cassius, Mark Antony, and Brutus with those of prominent Soviet leaders Stalin, Lavrenty Beria, Georgy Malenkov, and Andrey Vyshinsky. He concluded by saying, "Stalin must one day meet his judgment." The dictator suffered a stroke a few days later and died within a week.^[18]

The show ran until 1957, drawing as many as 30 million people on a weekly basis. In 1958, Sheen became national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, serving for eight years before being appointed Bishop of Rochester, New York, on October 26, 1966. He also hosted a nationally-syndicated series, *The Fulton Sheen Program*, from 1961 to 1968 (first in black and white and then in color). The format of this series was essentially the

same as *Life Is Worth Living*.

Evangelization

Sheen was credited with helping convert a number of notable figures to the Catholic faith, including agnostic writer Heywood Broun, politician Clare Boothe Luce, automaker Henry Ford II, Communist writer Louis F. Budenz, theatrical designer Jo Mielziner, violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler, and actress Virginia Mayo. Each conversion process took an average of 25 hours of lessons, and reportedly more than 95% of his students in private instruction were baptized.^[17]

Later years

While serving in Rochester, he created the Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, which survives to this day. He also spent some of his energy on political activities, such as his denunciation of the Vietnam War in late July 1967.^[19] On Ash Wednesday in 1967, Sheen decided to give St. Bridget's Parish building to the federal Housing and Urban Development program. Sheen wanted to let the government use it for African-Americans. There was a protest, since Sheen acted on his own accord. The pastor, understandably, disagreed, saying that "There is enough empty property around without taking down the church and the school." The deal fell through.^[20]

On October 15, 1969, one month after celebrating his 50th anniversary as a priest, Sheen resigned from his position and was then appointed Archbishop of the Titular See of Newport (Wales) by Pope Paul VI. This ceremonial position allowed Sheen to continue his extensive writing. Archbishop Sheen wrote 73 books and numerous articles and columns.^[17]

On October 2, 1979, two months before Sheen's death, Pope John Paul II visited St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and embraced Sheen, saying, "You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a loyal son of the Church."

Death and legacy

Sheen died of heart disease on December 9, 1979, having previously had open-heart surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital.^[17] He is buried in the crypt of St. Patrick's Cathedral, near the deceased Archbishops of New York. The official repository of Sheen's papers, television programs, and other materials is at St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry in Rochester, New York.^[21]

Joseph Campanella introduces the re-runs of Sheen's various programs that are aired on EWTN. Reruns are also aired on Trinity Broadcasting Network. In addition to his television appearances, Archbishop Sheen can also be heard on Relevant Radio.

Cause of canonization

The Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation was formed in 1998 by Gregory J. Ladd and Lawrence F. Hickey to make known the life of the archbishop. The foundation approached Cardinal John O'Connor of the Archdiocese of New York for permission to commence the process of for cause, which was under the authority of the Diocese of Peoria.^[4]

In 2002, Sheen's Cause for Canonization as a saint was officially opened, and from then on he was referred to as a "Servant of God".

On February 2, 2008, the archives of Sheen were sealed at a ceremony during a special Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, Illinois, where the diocese was sponsoring his canonization.^[17]

In November 2010, it was announced that it was expected that the Archdiocese of New York would likely take over his cause for canonization upon an unsettled debate concerning the return of Sheen's remains to the Diocese of

Peoria.^[22]

In 2009, the diocesan phase of the investigation came to an end, and the records were sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican in Rome.

On June 28, 2012, the Vatican announced^[23] officially that it had recognized Sheen's life as one of "heroic virtue". This is a major step towards an eventual beatification. From this moment on, Sheen is styled "Venerable Servant of God".

According to Catholic News Service and The Catholic Post (the official newspaper of the Peoria Diocese), the case of a boy who as an infant had no discernible pulse for 61 minutes (who was about to be declared dead at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, Illinois, as a stillborn infant) and yet allegedly still lived to be healthy – without physical or mental impairment – is in the preliminary stages of being investigated as the possible miracle needed for Archbishop Sheen's potential beatification. If the miracle is approved at the diocesan level, and then by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican (being both medically unexplainable and directly attributable theologically to Sheen's intercession according to expert panels in both subject areas), then beatification may proceed. Another such miracle would be required for him to be considered for canonization as a saint. On Wednesday, September 7, 2011, a tribunal of inquiry was sworn in to investigate the alleged healing. During a special Mass at 10:30 am on Sunday, December 11, 2011, at St. Mary's Cathedral in Peoria, the documentation gathered by the tribunal over nearly three months will be boxed and sealed. It will then be shipped to the Vatican for consideration by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, concluding the diocesan tribunal's work- which makes up much of the diocese's work on the project.^[24]

On Sunday, September 9, 2012, a Mass of Thanksgiving and banquet was held at St. Mary's Cathedral and the Spalding Pastoral Center in celebration of the advancement of Archbishop Sheen's cause, with Bishop Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C., and his predecessor as Bishop of Peoria, Newark Archbishop John J. Myers (celebrating his 25th anniversary of episcopal ordination), in attendance, along with many of the clergy and religious of the Diocese and from around the country. Copies of the "Positio", or the book detailing the documentation behind his cause, were presented to Archbishop Myers, to representatives of the Church in other states, and to a delegate from the Archdiocese of Chicago, and to other patrons and supporters of his cause. According to statements made during the service by clergy connected to the Cause, the medical and theological study of the potential miracles needed for his beatification and canonization is currently well underway and at least one is seriously being considered. Due to new rules under Pope Benedict XVI stating that a beatification should occur locally, ideally in the candidate's home Diocese (which is usually but not always the Diocese that sponsors the Cause), it would likely take place in Peoria, the first there. Should he be beatified and canonized, he would be among a select few natives of the U.S. to hold that distinction.^{[25][26][27]}

Selected books authored

- *God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy* (1925, Longmans, Green and Co.)
- *The Seven Last Words* (1933, The Century Co.)
- *Philosophy of Science* (1934, Bruce Publishing Co.)
- *The Eternal Galilean* (1934, Appleton-Century-Crofts)
- *Calvary and the Mass* (1936, P. J. Kenedy & Sons)
- *The Cross and the Beatitudes* (1937, P. J. Kenedy & Sons)
- *Seven Words of Jesus and Mary* (1945, P. J. Kenedy & Sons)
- *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (1948, Bobbs-Merrill)
- *Peace of Soul* (1949, McGraw-Hill)^[28]
- *Three to Get Married* (1951, Appleton-Century-Crofts)
- *The World's First Love* (1952, McGraw-Hill)
- *Life Is Worth Living Series 1–5* (1953–1957, McGraw-Hill)

- *Way to Happiness* (1953, Maco Magazine)
- *Way to Inner Peace* (1955, Garden City Books)
- *Life of Christ* (1958, McGraw–Hill)
- *Missions and the World Crisis* (1963, Bruce Publishing Co.)
- *The Power of Love* (1965, Simon & Schuster)
- *Footprints in a Darkened Forest* (1967, Meredith Press)
- *Lenten and Easter Inspirations* (1967, Maco Ecumenical Books)
- *Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen* (1980, Doubleday & Co.)

Further reading

- Timothy H. Sherwood (2010), *The Preaching of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen: The Gospel Meets the Cold War*. Lexington Books. 137 p.
- Reeves, Thomas C. (2001), *America's Bishop. The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen*. Encounter Books, San Francisco.
- Irvin D. S. Winsboro, Michael Epple, "Religion, Culture, and the Cold War: Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and America's Anti-Communist Crusade of the 1950s," *Historian*, 71,2 (2009), 209–233.

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- [4] "The Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation" (<http://www.archbishopsheencause.org/links.html>). . Retrieved 2009-09-14.
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- [6] "Fulton J. Sheen" (<http://www.nndb.com/people/448/000166947/>). Nndb.com. . Retrieved 2012-07-07.
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- [12] Cheney, David M.. "Archbishop Fulton John Sheen" (<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bsheen.html>). Catholic-hierarchy.org. . Retrieved 2012-07-16.
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- [14] "Radio Religion" (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,934406,00.html>). *Time*. January 21, 1946. . Retrieved 2009-03-30.
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- [25] <http://fultonsheen.blogspot.com/>
- [26] <http://www.celebratesheen.com/>
- [27] <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1203795.htm>
- [28] This book was Sheen's response to Rabbi Joshua L. Liebman's 1946 best-seller *Peace of Mind*.

External links

- Fulton J. Sheen official website (<http://www.bishopsheen.com>)
- The Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Foundation (<http://www.archbishopsheencause.org/>)
- Fulton J. Sheen profile and books on Goodreads (http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/2412.Fulton_J_Sheen)
- Books by Fulton J. Sheen (<http://www.oldstarbooks.com/Authors/Sheen/SheenBook.htm>)
- Fulton J. Sheen (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=947>) at *Find a Grave*
- Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen—Author, Orator and Missionary (<http://www.intermirifica.org/sheen.htm>), by John A. Hardon, S.J.
- FBI file on Bishop Sheen ([http://vault.fbi.gov/Bishop Fulton Sheen](http://vault.fbi.gov/Bishop+Fulton+Sheen))
- Archbishop Fulton Sheen (<http://www.keepthefaith.org/default.aspx>): 200 talks given by Archbishop Fulton Sheen available in MP3 format, along with streaming video of his Family Retreat in color.
- Bishop Fulton Sheen: The First "Televangelist" (April 14, 1952) – *TIME* Magazine (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,857161,00.html>) (article)
- TIME* cover, Fulton J. Sheen, Apr. 14, 1952 (<http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19520414,00.html>)
- Fulton J. Sheen Spiritual Centre – El Paso, IL (<http://www.archbishopfultonsheencentre.com>)
- Sheen Mass – Cause for Canonization (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtzxwOPD250>)

Stages of canonization in the Catholic Church	
Servant of God → Venerable → Blessed → Saint	

Episcopal lineage	
Consecrated by:	Adeodato Giovanni Piazza, O.C.D.
Consecrator of	
Bishop	Date of consecration
Joseph B. Houlihan, S.P.S.	20 November 1960

Titular Diocese Erected

Titular Diocese Erected

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