



The Road To Sainthood

The Journey of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

Teacher's Guide

The Canonization Process

Understanding the Five Stages of Sainthood

The Catholic Church carefully studies the lives of holy men and women before officially declaring them saints. This process is called canonization. It helps the Church recognize people who lived lives of heroic faith and can serve as examples for Catholics around the world. The process often takes many years and includes prayer, investigation, and the study of miracles.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is currently in this process and is scheduled to be beatified on September 24, 2026.

1. Servant of God

This is the first official step in the canonization process. A bishop begins an investigation into the person's life, writings, and reputation for holiness. Witnesses may be interviewed, and the Church gathers information about how the person lived their faith.

Teacher Notes

- This stage asks, "Did this person live a faithful Christian life?"
- The person receives the title "Servant of God."
- The investigation usually begins years after the person's death.

Fulton Sheen Example

The Fulton Sheen Biography Worksheet and Reflection Activity are available for more on the life of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Ask the Office of Missions for digital copies.

His cause for canonization was formally opened in 2002 by the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, where he grew up and first served as a priest. Once the cause officially began, he received the title "Servant of God." Church investigators gathered thousands of pages of documents, letters, homilies, and recordings. They also studied how he lived virtues such as faith, charity, humility, courage, and obedience.



One major focus of the investigation was his lifelong commitment to making a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. Many people testified that he never missed his daily hour of prayer from the day of his ordination until the day he died.

After years of investigation, the information was sent to the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. This eventually led to Pope Benedict XVI declaring him "Venerable" in 2012, meaning the Church officially recognized that he lived a life of heroic virtue.

2. Venerable

After studying the person's life, the Pope may declare that the person lived a life of heroic virtue. This means they consistently showed great faith, hope, charity, courage, and holiness.

Teacher Notes

- The title "Venerable" means the Church recognizes the person as a model of Christian virtue.
- At this time, no public feast day is assigned yet.
- At this stage, the Church recognizes holiness, but not sainthood.

Fulton Sheen Example

Pope Benedict XVI declared Fulton Sheen "Venerable" in 2012.

3. Miracle Investigated

For beatification, the Church usually requires a miracle through the person's intercession after death. Medical experts, theologians, and Church officials carefully investigate to determine whether the event has a natural explanation.

Teacher Notes

- Miracles are signs that the person is with God in heaven.
- Catholics pray asking for the person's intercession.
- The Church uses both scientific and theological review during investigations.

Fulton Sheen Example

A reported healing connected to Fulton Sheen's intercession was investigated and approved.



More on Fulton Sheen's Miracle

See Article: [Vatican medical experts OK reported miracle attributed to archbishop./ National Catholic Reporter](#)

The primary miracle officially attributed to Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is the healing of a baby named James Fulton Engstrom. This is the miracle that led to his upcoming beatification.

In 2010, James was reportedly born stillborn after his umbilical cord tightened and cut off oxygen during birth. He had no detectable heartbeat for 61 minutes, and doctors expected that he would either die or suffer severe brain damage. During this time, his parents prayed specifically for Fulton Sheen's intercession, repeating his name and asking for prayers. Unexpectedly, James recovered and later developed without complications without medical explanation. Vatican medical experts and theologians investigated the case and approved it as miraculous.

4. Beatification

- Beatification is an important step toward sainthood.
- A feast day is usually chosen at this stage.
- The Church officially recognizes the person as being in heaven.

Fulton Sheen Example

The beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is scheduled for September 24, 2026, in St Louis, Missouri, at The Dome at America's Center. The Mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, who will represent Pope Leo XIV at the ceremony.

5. Canonization

Canonization is the final step in the process. After another approved miracle, the Pope officially declares the person a saint of the universal Church.

Teacher Notes

- Saints are recognized as models of holiness for all Catholics.
- Canonized saints may be celebrated throughout the entire Church.
- Canonization does not "make" someone a saint; rather, it officially recognizes what God has already done.



Classroom Discussion

Remind students that sainthood is not only for famous people. The Church teaches that all people are called to holiness through prayer, love, sacrifice, and faithful living.

Key Vocabulary

- Canonization – The process of officially recognizing a saint
- Heroic Virtue – Living faith in an extraordinary way
- Intercession – Asking someone in heaven to pray for us
- Beatification – The step when someone receives the title
- “Blessed” Miracle – An extraordinary event attributed to God through prayer and intercession

The Flip Book Activity

The Road To Sainthood

The Journey of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Flip Book Activity

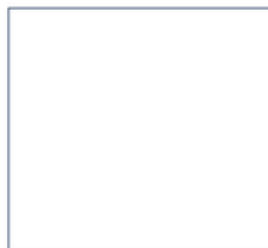
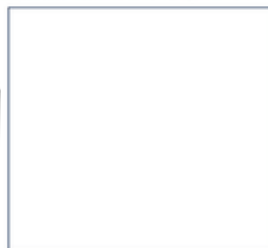


The Road To Sainthood Flipbook

3. Miracle Investigated

The Church studies a possible miracle through the person's intercession.

Draw: Praying hands, healing symbol, or rays of light



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The Road To Sainthood Flipbook

4. Beatification

The person receives the title "Blessed"

Draw: A church celebration, altar, or joyful crowd



5. Canonization

The Pope officially declares the person a saint for the whole Church.

Draw: A saint in heaven, people praying, or rays of light



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