

# VENERABLE ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

Previous National Director of the  
Society for the Propagation of the Faith (1950-1966) and  
Missionary to the World

## TEACHER INTRODUCTION



**Today, we are inspired by:**  
Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

### Feast Day

While Archbishop Sheen does not yet have an official feast day before his September 24, 2026 beatification, his future feast day will likely be celebrated on December 9, 1979; his “birthday into heaven.”

Loving God,

You gave us Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen as an example of joyful faith and missionary love. He trusted You and shared the message of Jesus with people around the world.

Help us, like Archbishop Sheen, to be missionaries in our daily lives, showing kindness, praying for others, and sharing Your love wherever we go. May we remember that even small acts of love can make a big difference.  
Amen.

### Goal of This Activity

To inspire in children a love for the saints and help them understand that we are all called to a life of holiness, inspired by those who came before us, and in whom we can trust to intercede on our behalf when we are struggling.

### Materials Needed

This lesson plan and saint biography, we encourage you print a picture of this saint to add to your classrooms “mission corner”.

Depending on each month and the age of the students, other materials, such as coloring pencils, might be necessary.

### Remind the Students

A saint is someone who loved God very much and tried to live like Jesus. During their lifetimes, saints showed kindness, helped others, and shared God's love in special ways. They are now in Heaven with God, and we can look up to them as examples of how to live a holy and loving life.

We venerate saints, which means we show them special honor and respect, not because they are God, but because they followed God so closely. When we venerate saints, we thank God for their lives and ask them to pray for us. The official recognition of sainthood also allows us to venerate them.

### In the Classroom

1. Prepare the children to read or listen to the biography of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.
2. Read the attached story of his life. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary due to time constraints or the age level of learners.
3. Present optional extension activities below. Any follow-up activity can be substituted.
4. Close the lesson by connecting the life of Fulton Sheen to the work of the Missionary Childhood Association.





# ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

*"Charity is to be measured not by what one has given away, but by what one has left."*

— Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (attributed)

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen was born Peter John Sheen on May 8, 1895, in El Paso, Illinois, to a farming family. From an early age, he showed a deep interest in the Catholic faith and a strong desire to serve God.

As a young altar server, he once assisted Bishop John L. Spalding of Peoria during Mass. At one point, Sheen accidentally dropped a wine cruet, which shattered. After Mass, the bishop spoke to the anxious boy in a calm and encouraging way. According to accounts of the moment, Bishop Spalding told him two striking things: first, that he would one day study at the University of Louvain in Belgium, and second, "someday you will be just as I am." This encounter left a lasting impression on the young Sheen.

Sheen went on to study at Spalding Institute in Peoria, then at St. Viator College in Illinois, and later at St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota. He was ordained a priest on September 20, 1919.

After ordination, he continued his academic formation, first at The Catholic University of America and then at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, where he completed advanced studies in philosophy. He returned to The Catholic University of America as a professor, where he would spend more than two decades forming seminarians and students in theology and philosophy.

During his years as a professor, Father Sheen became known as an exceptional lecturer and orator. His courses, covering topics such as the philosophy of religion, God and society, and modern philosophical thought, drew large audiences of students and visitors.



## FUN FACT!

He was one of the first Catholic priests to become a major television personality in the United States. In the 1950s, his show *Life Is Worth Living* reached millions of viewers each week. He famously won an Emmy Award in 1952, beating out popular entertainers of the time.



[www.pontificalmissions.org](http://www.pontificalmissions.org)



His ability to communicate complex theological ideas with clarity and conviction quickly set him apart.

His reputation as a preacher grew beyond the classroom. In 1926, he was invited to record Lenten sermons for radio, marking his first experience with broadcasting. By 1930, he became a regular speaker on The Catholic Hour, where his talks reached a national audience. His reflections addressed both spiritual themes, such as devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and pressing social concerns of the time.

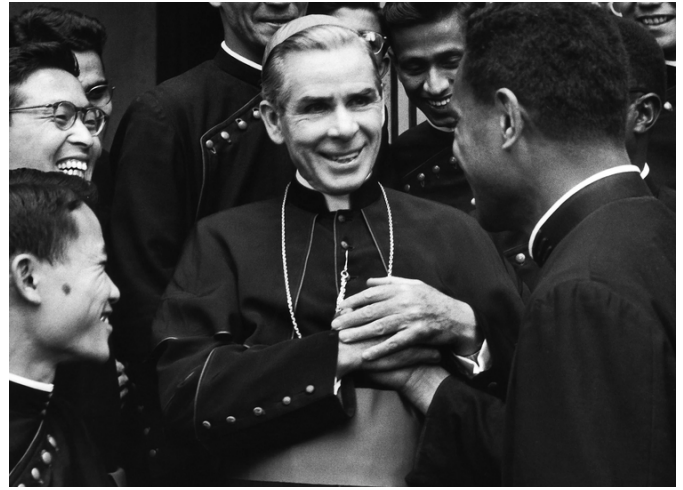
As his influence expanded, so did the volume of correspondence he received. He once wrote that he was receiving between 75 and 100 letters every day requiring personal attention, in addition to his teaching duties. Despite the demands, he considered the work a form of apostolate and continued faithfully.

Sheen was also a prolific writer, publishing dozens of books and pamphlets during his lifetime. His writings and broadcasts made Catholic teaching accessible to a broad audience across the United States and beyond.

In 1940, he participated in one of the earliest Catholic television broadcasts, speaking on the spiritual meaning of the new medium.

A decade later, after being consecrated a bishop in 1951, he launched his most famous television program, Life Is Worth Living. The program reached millions of viewers weekly and made him one of the most recognizable religious figures in America. He received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Television Personality.

Throughout his life, Sheen remained deeply committed to missionary work, especially through his leadership of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, where he helped raise millions of dollars for global missions.



He also played a significant role in guiding people into the Catholic Church, including intellectuals, public figures, and cultural leaders.

He attended all sessions of the Second Vatican Council and remained active in preaching and writing well into his later years. A consistent theme of his spiritual life was daily Eucharistic adoration, which he called essential to his priesthood.



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen died on December 9, 1979, while praying before the Blessed Sacrament in his private chapel. His life of prayer, teaching, and evangelization led to the opening of his cause for canonization. He is now recognized as “Venerable Fulton J. Sheen,” and is remembered as one of the most influential Catholic voices of the 20th century. His beatification is scheduled to take place on September 24, 2026.



# Extension Activities

## Kindergarten - Third Grade

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen had the courage to speak about Jesus to huge audiences on the radio and television when it was still very new. He didn't keep his faith private, he shared it clearly and boldly with the world.

Challenge: This week, choose one moment to speak about your faith or do what is right even if it feels uncomfortable—just like Fulton Sheen used his voice to share Jesus with the world.

## Fourth Grade - Eighth Grade



Have students choose one topic Fulton Sheen often preached about (faith, suffering, media, truth, prayer, or mission). Then ask them to create a short modern message using a format that is popular today, like a 1-2-minute TikTok, meme, or social media post.



They must include:



- A clear message about faith or truth
- A real-life modern example
- One sentence that sounds like something Sheen would say (bold, reflective, or thought-provoking)



Goal: Help students see how Sheen used media to evangelize and challenge them to do the same responsibly today.

## Wrap Up: Fulton Sheen's Influence on MCA Members today

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen continues to inspire Missionary Childhood members today through his example of bold faith, joyful evangelization, and deep love for Jesus in the Eucharist. He reminds children that mission is not limited to faraway places, but begins in everyday life—through prayer, kindness, and sharing God's love with others. His use of radio and television shows that even young people can use modern tools and their own voices to bring Jesus to the world. For Missionary Childhood members, Sheen's life is a call to be brave in faith, generous in love, and confident that even small acts of prayer and sacrifice can help change the world for Christ.

