



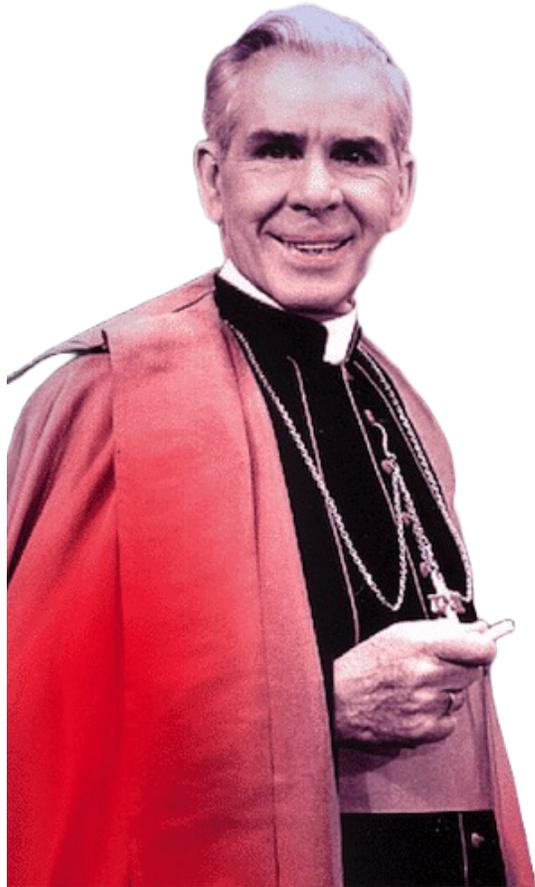
Archbishop Fulton Sheen: Life, Work and Mission

**Msgr. Roger J. Landry
National Director, The Pontifical Mission Societies USA**

**TPMS-USA Staff Day • St. Petersburg, Florida
January 21, 2026**



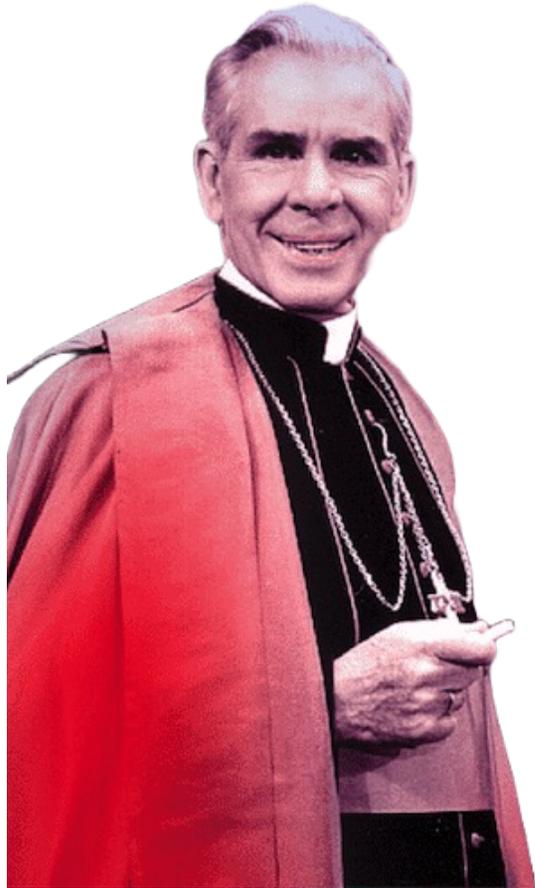
Archbishop Sheen's Beatification & TPMS-USA



- The status and expectations of Sheen's cause for canonization.
- The process of canonization: servant of God, venerable after a decree of heroic virtue, beatification after the acceptance of a miracle, canonization after the acceptance of a miracle after the announcement of the beatification.
- What it would mean for TPMS-USA to have a Blessed as former National Director. Intercessor. Example. Draw.
- Forceful reminder of our call to become holy in our work for the missions.



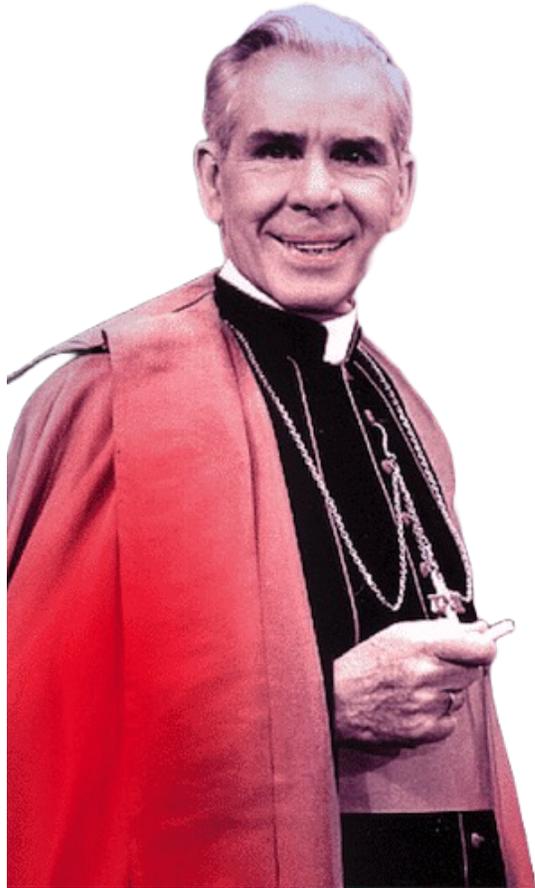
Fulton Sheen's Early Life



- Born May 8, 1895 to Newton and Delia (Fulton) Sheen in El Paso, Illinois. The Sheens ran a farm and his father owned and ran a hardware store over which the Sheens lived.
- He was the oldest of our sons: Joseph (1898-1955), Thomas (1902-1977) and Aloysius (1908-1978).
- Baptized Peter John Sheen. Everyone called him Fulton after his mother. He took John for Confirmation.
- Mother dedicated him to the Virgin Mary at his baptism. He reconsecrated himself to her at his first communion. He continued to nourish that love, celebrating a votive Mass to her every Saturday of his priesthood and choosing as his motto, *Da per matrem me venire*.



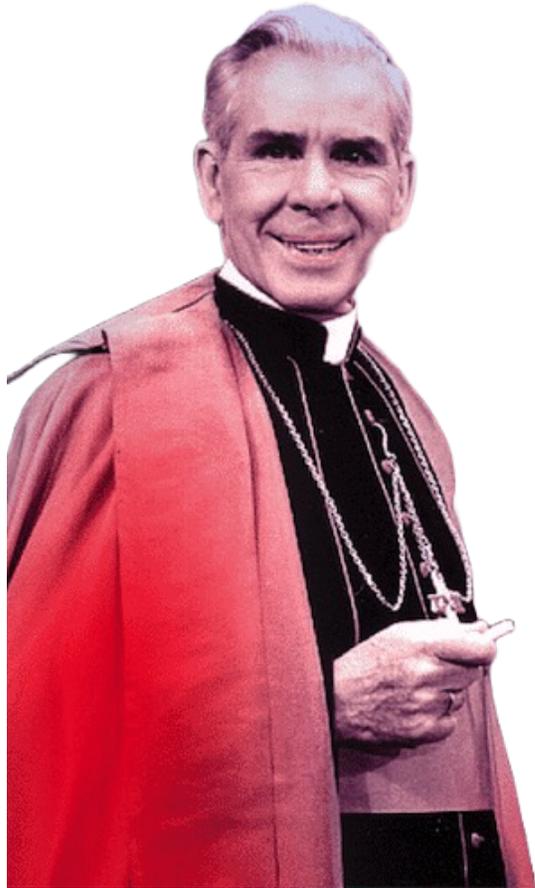
Fulton Sheen's Early Life



- His family moved 31 miles from El Paso to Peoria so that he could attend St. Mary's Cathedral School.
- He became an altar boy at St. Mary's Cathedral and often served for the first bishop of Peoria, Bishop John Spalding. The prophecy of Bishop Spalding.
- He attended Spalding Institute (named after the bishop's brother, Fr. Benedict Spalding, who built the Cathedral), run by the Brothers of Mary, for high school.
- For university, he attended St. Viator's College (1868-1938) in Bourbonnais, Illinois, on scholarship.
- He entered St. Paul's Seminary in St. Paul, MN to study for the priesthood.



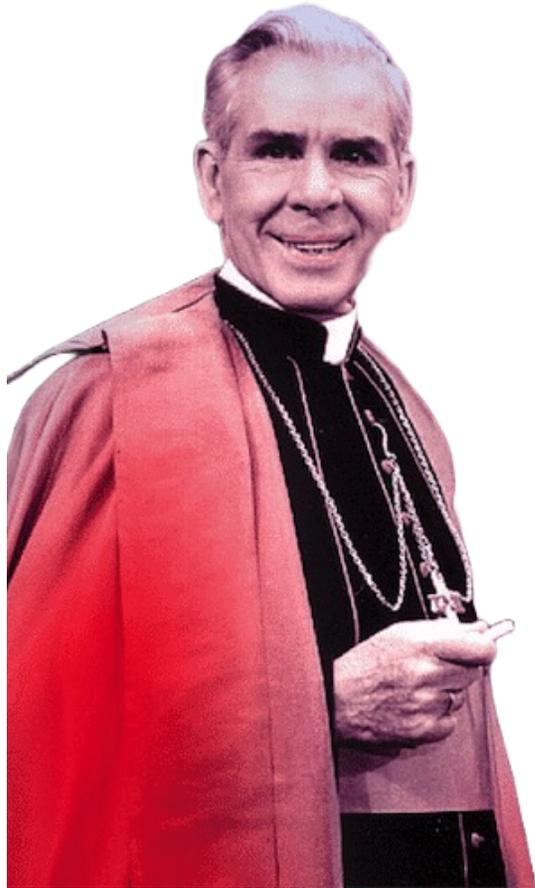
Father Fulton Sheen's Early Priestly Life



- He was ordained a priest on Sept. 20, 1919, at St. Mary's Cathedral in Peoria and celebrated his first high Mass there the following day.
- He made two promises on his ordination: to make a continuous Eucharistic holy hour every day; and to offer Mass every Saturday in honor of Our Lady. He kept both promises faithfully.
- After ordination, he was sent to the Catholic University of America for a license in Theology and then to the University of Louvain in Belgium for his doctorate. He likewise took classes at the Sorbonne in Paris and the Angelicum in Rome. He returned to Louvain to attain the agregé degree in Philosophy.



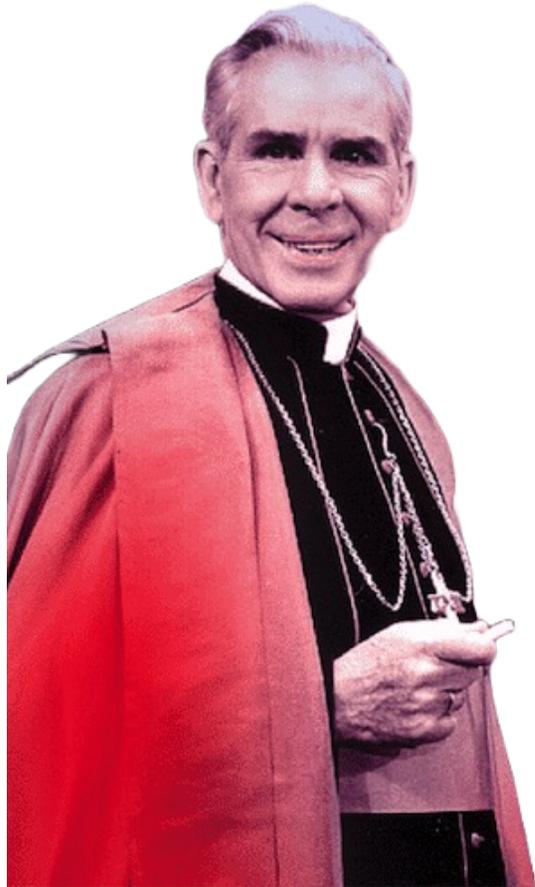
Father Fulton Sheen's Early Priestly Life



- While studying in Europe, he would spend the summer doing pastoral work at St. Patrick's in Soho, London.
- In 1925-6, having finished, Bishop Spalding assigned him for 9 months to St. Patrick's Church (1878-1976) in Peoria. He worked hard, taught, and preached, and soon had big crowds.
- After 9 months, Bishop Spalding informed him that he had already promised him to teach at CUA and released him to go to Washington, DC., where he taught until 1950 theology, philosophy and religion. He was a very popular teacher with full classes.
- He loved to teach the faith, something that characterized his whole priestly life.



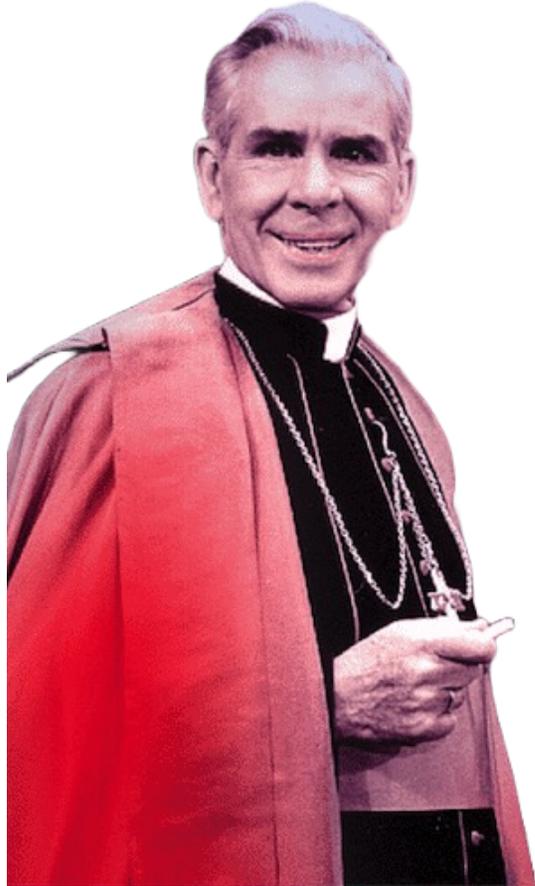
Monsignor Fulton Sheen's Media Work



- In 1930, he began his work in media, doing a weekly program called *The Catholic Hour*, which continued for 22 years. He explained Catholic teaching to an audience of four million. He would travel each week by train to New York City to broadcast it live. He would need to submit his scripts a month in advance.
- He was named a Monsignor in 1934 in recognition of his radio work. The radio work led to his becoming very well known and receiving many invitations to teach and preach.
- In 1950, he was named the National Director of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith in the USA, where he would serve until 1966.



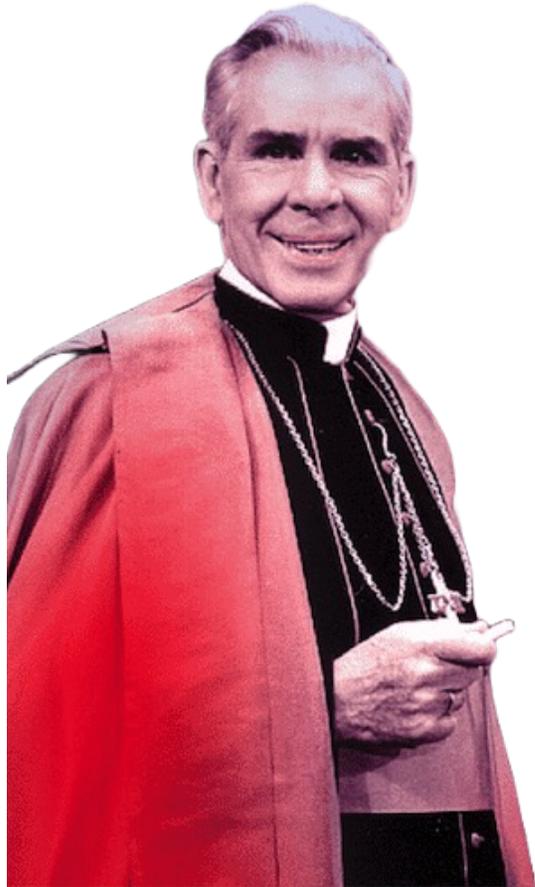
Bishop Fulton Sheen's Work Making Disciples



- Sheen is one of the most famous “convert makers” in the history of the Church in the United States. He would run big classes in Washington, DC, and New York City, for all those who wanted to attend. He would do one-on-one instruction for many, for both those who were famous or infamous, as well as ordinary salt of the earth people.
- When he himself couldn't do the instructions, he would have his secretaries play recordings of the classes to individuals and then he would take questions or allow his secretaries to answer them.
- He was responsible for tens of thousands of conversions. Sheen told Pius XII he didn't count the number, lest he think he made them rather than the Lord.



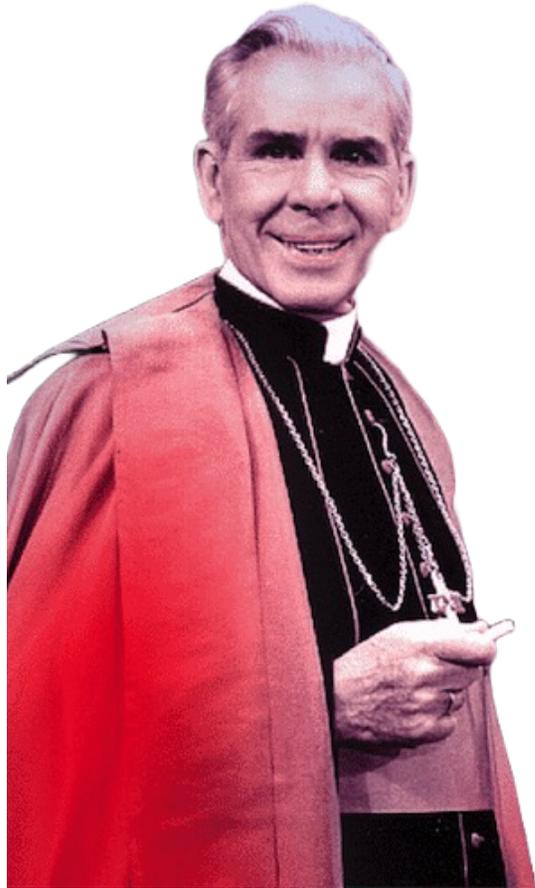
Bishop Fulton Sheen as Bishop of Rochester



- On October 21, 1966, he was appointed by St. Paul VI as Bishop of Rochester, NY, where he served for 32 months.
- He sought to implement the decrees of the Second Vatican Council and to have the Church excel in the service of the community.
- These were difficult years as he experienced considerable opposition.
- In 1969, several months short of his 75th birthday, he asked St. Paul VI to accept his resignation. The Pope did, and at the same time, as a sign of honor and gratitude, he named him Titular Archbishop of Newport (Wales).
- He said he wasn't retiring but "re-treading."



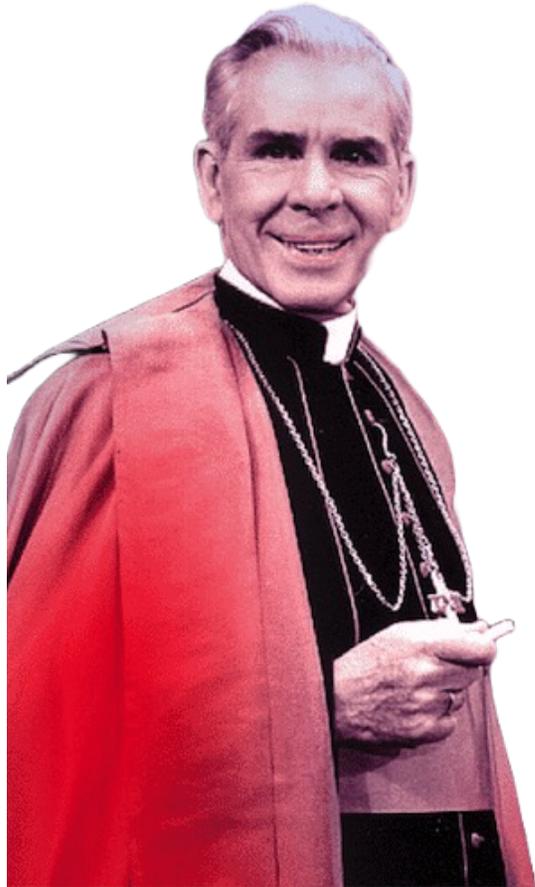
Archbishop Sheen's Last Decade



- During his last decade, Sheen dedicated himself above all to preaching, teaching, writing and speaking.
- He preached many retreats to priests and religious. These were recorded on cassettes and became extremely popular even to those who were not in attendance.
- He always judged the quality of a retreat by how many he could persuade, with God's help, to commit to making a daily Eucharistic holy hour.
- In July 1977, he had open heart surgery and he had a long recovery. He was never as strong thereafter but continued, heroically, preaching. He began working on his autobiography, *Treasure in Clay*, in his last years, writing and dictating it, finishing it a few weeks before death.



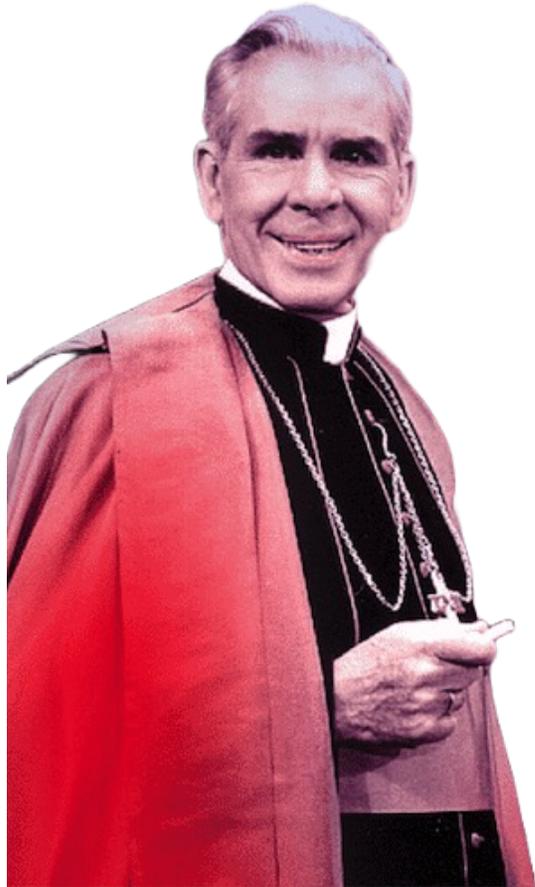
Archbishop Sheen's Last Decade



- On Oct. 2, 1979, when St. John Paul II came to St. Patrick's Cathedral, Sheen was brought in an ambulance.
- St. John Paul II asked for him when he arrived in the sanctuary and Sheen was brought to him, where St. John Paul II embraced him and said, "You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus. You are a loyal son of the Church."
- He had always prayed that he would die on a feast of Our Lady in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He was found in his chapel on the morning of Dec. 9, after the Immaculate Conception, before Our Lady of Loreto, and on the day Our Lady had appeared to St. Juan Diego in Guadalupe.



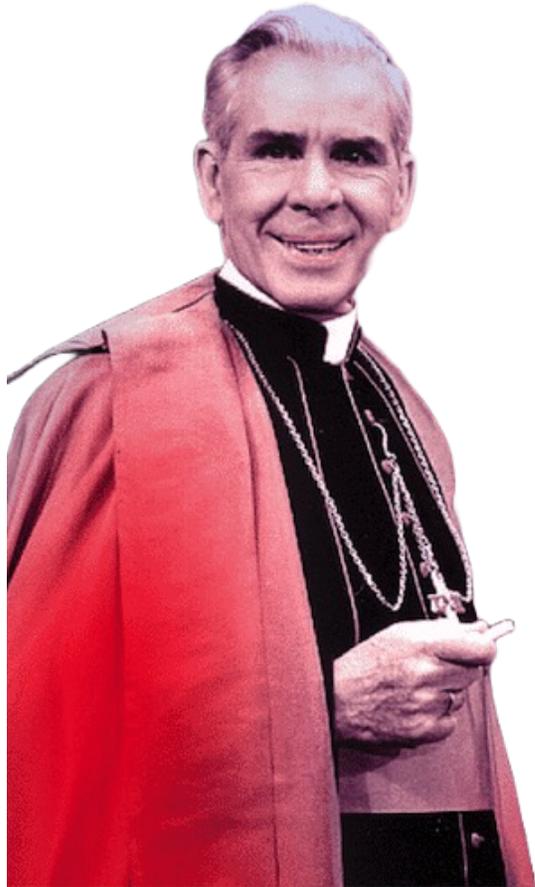
Archbishop Sheen's Major Priorities



- Love for Jesus Christ.
 - Sheen was a devout disciple of Jesus.
 - When he won the Emmy, he quipped that he wanted to thank his writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
 - Once, when he and actor Richard Burton both recited aloud Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd," Burton commented to the moved crowds that while he knew the Psalm, Sheen knew the Shepherd.
 - He showed his knowledge in his most famous book, *Life of Christ*.
 - His famous Good Friday meditations on the Seven Last Words of Jesus show how he knew the Lord from the inside.
- Teaching the Faith however he could so that people could come to live by faith.



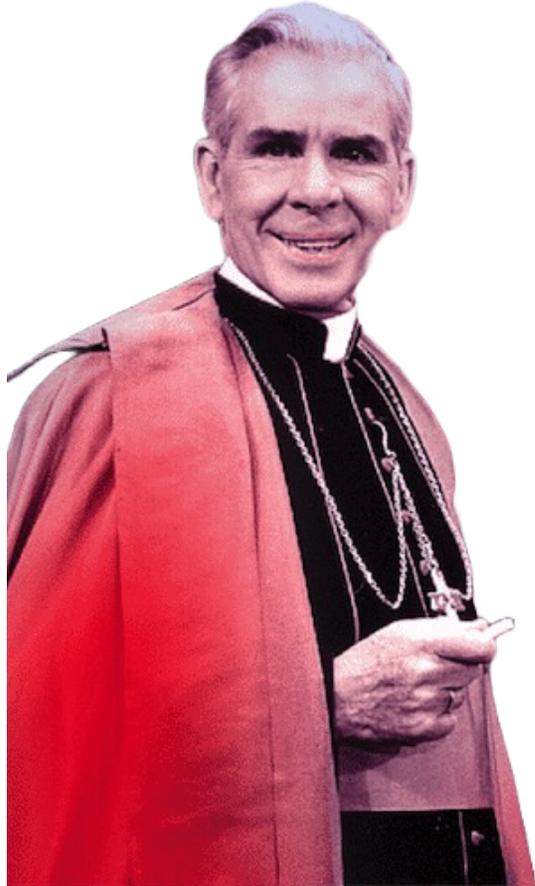
Archbishop Sheen's Major Priorities



- The Eucharistic Holy Hour
 - After Jesus, he is the greatest apostle of a Eucharistic holy hour — and greatest popularizer of the praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament — in Church history.
 - He himself made a holy hour every day of his 60 years of priesthood.
 - “The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host.”
 - He was given the grace to die in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.
 - His intimate, personal relationship with Jesus, nourished by these daily divine audiences, he said, the reason why he was able to accomplish anything and everything he did.



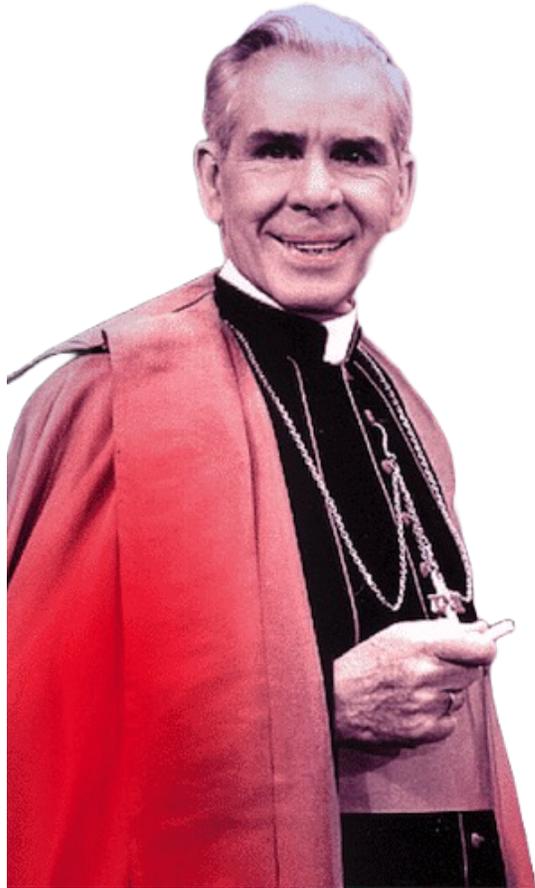
Archbishop Sheen's Major Priorities



- The Eucharistic Holy Hour
 - “When I stand up to talk, people listen to me; they will follow what I have to say. Is it any power of mine? Of course not. St. Paul says, ‘What have you that you have not received and you who have received, why do you glory as if you had not?,’” he wrote in his 1974 book *The Wisdom of the Saints*. “But the secret of my power is that I have never in fifty-five years missed spending an hour in the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. That’s where the power comes from. That’s where sermons are born. That’s where every good thought is conceived.”
- The Missions!



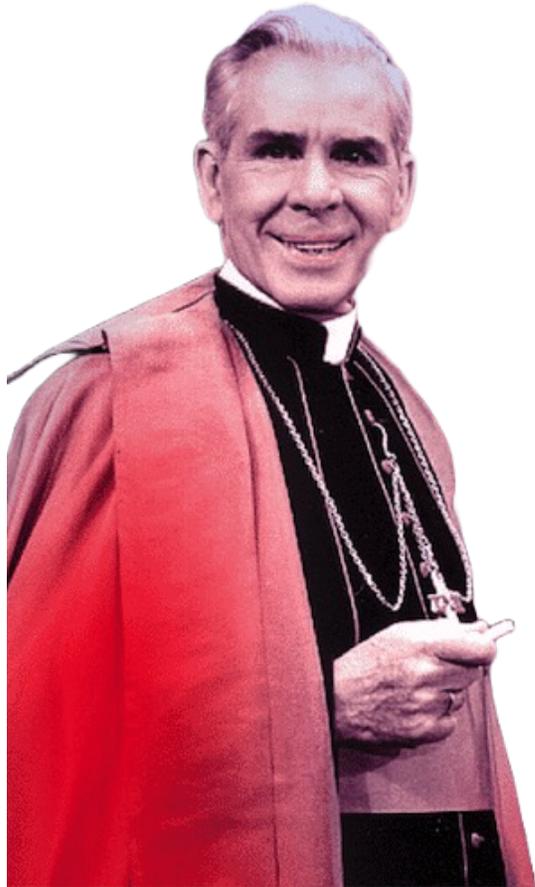
Archbishop Sheen's Writings



- In addition to the radio and television work, he regularly wrote three syndicated columns and published 66 books. The books themselves give a sense of his priorities:
- **Theology**
 - God and Intelligence. London: Longmans-Green, 1925.
 - Religion Without God. London: Longmans-Green, 1928.
 - Old Errors and New Labels. New York: The Century Co., 1931.
 - The Mystical Body of Christ. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935.
 - The Cross and the Crisis. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1938.
 - God and War. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1942.
 - The Divine Verdict. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1943.
 - Preface to Religion. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1946.
 - Missions and the World Crisis. Milwaukee: Bruce Press, 1963



Archbishop Sheen's Writings

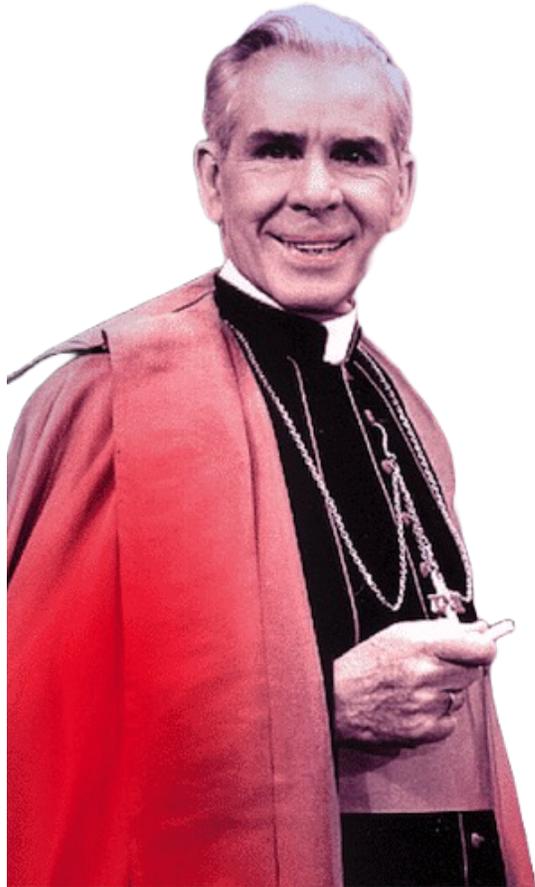


- **Philosophy**

- Moods and Truths. New York: The Century Co., 1932.
- The Philosophy of Science. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1934.
- Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. New York: Macmillan, 1938.
- Freedom under God. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1940.
- Whence Come Wars. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940.
- A Declaration of Dependence. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1941.
- For God and Country. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1941.
- Philosophies at War. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Seven Pillars of Peace. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.
- Communism and the Conscience of the West. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948.
- Philosophy of Religion: The Impact of Modern Knowledge on Religion. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948.
- The Church, Communism, and Democracy. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954.
- Science, Psychiatry and Religion. New York: Dell, 1957.



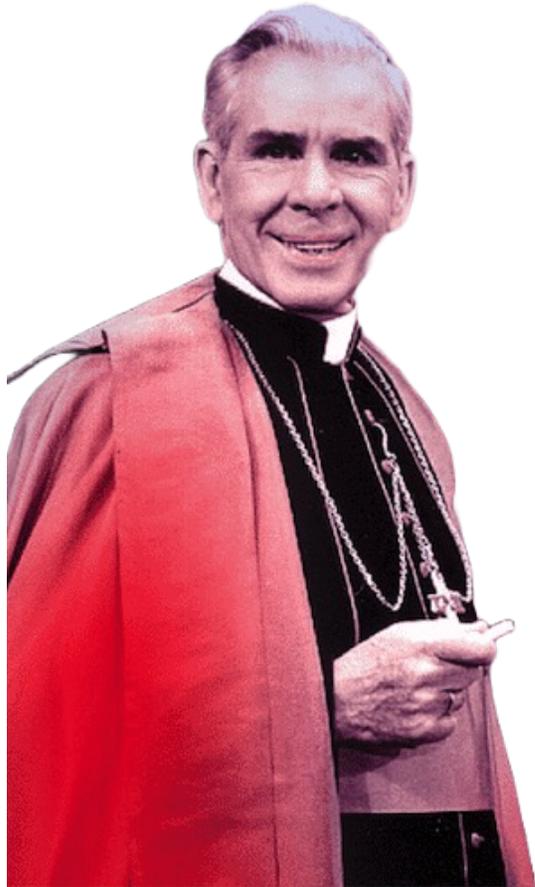
Archbishop Sheen's Writings



- **Books on Christ**
 - The Way of the Cross. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1933.
 - The Eternal Galilean. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1934.
 - The Cross and the Beatitudes. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1937.
 - Seven Words to the Cross. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1944.
 - Seven Words of Jesus and Mary. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1945.
 - Characters of the Passion. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1947.
 - The Life of Christ, New York, Maco Magazine Corp., 1954
 - Life of Christ. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958.
- **Priesthood**
 - The Priest Is Not His Own. New York: McGraw Hill, 1963.
 - Those Mysterious Priests. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974
- **Autobiography**
 - Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J Sheen. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980



Archbishop Sheen's Writings

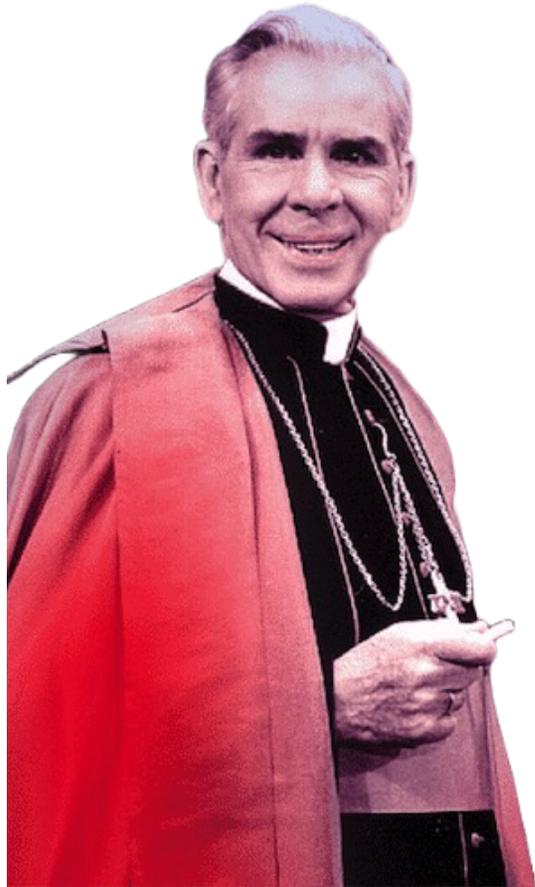


- **Growth in the Spiritual Life**

- The Life of All Living: The Philosophy of Life. New York: The Century Co., 1929.
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- The Divine Romance. New York: The Century Co., 1930.
- Calvary and the Mass: A Missal Companion. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1936.
- The Moral Universe: A Preface to Christian Living. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1936.
- Victory over Vice. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1939
- The Seven Virtues. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1940.
- The Armor of God: Reflections and Prayers for Wartime. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1943.
- Love One Another. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1944.
- Peace of Soul. New York: Whittlesey House, 1949.
- Lift up Your Heart. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950.
- Three to Get Married. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951.
- The World's First Love. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952.
- Life Is Worth Living, First Series. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953.



Archbishop Sheen's Writings

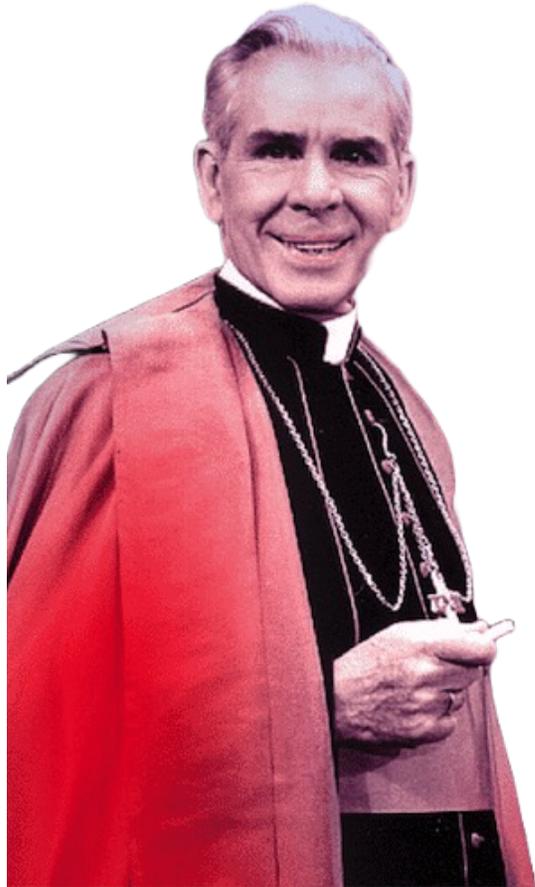


- **Growth in the Spiritual Life**

- The Rainbow of Sorrow. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1953.
- Way to Happiness. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1954.
- Life Is Worth Living, Second Series. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954.
- Life Is Worth Living, Fourth Series. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954.
- God Love You. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1955.
- Thinking Life Through. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955.
- Way to Inner Peace. Garden City, NY, Garden City Books, 1955.
- Thoughts for Daily Living. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1956.
- Life Is Worth Living, Fifth Series. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957.
- Go to Heaven. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.
- These Are the Sacraments. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962.
- The Power of Love. New York: Maco Magazine Corp., 1964.
- Walk with God. New York: Maco Magazine Corp., 1965.
- Christmas Inspirations. New York: Maco, 1966.
- Way to Happy Living. Bel Air, CA: Fawcett Publications Inc., 1966.
- Footprints in a Darkened Forest: Vital Words for Today's Changing World. New York: Meredith Press, 1967.



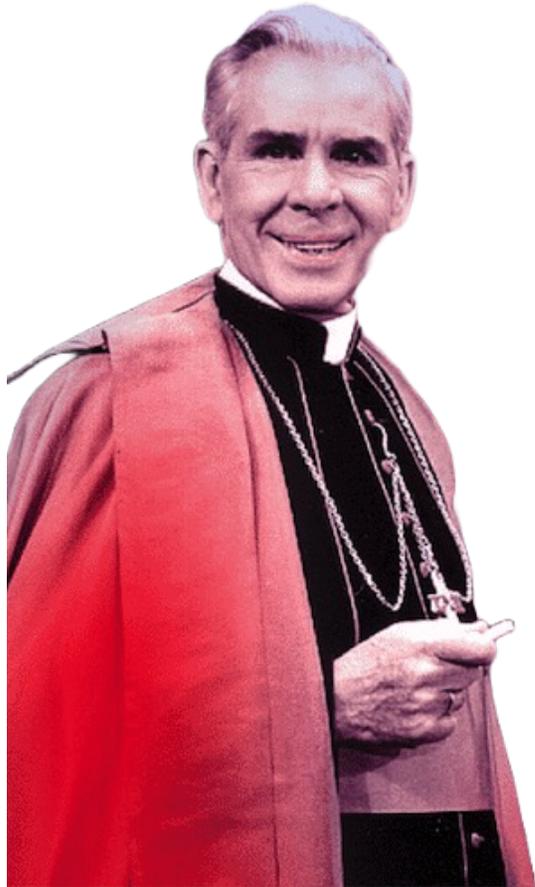
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- **Growth in the Spiritual Life**
 - Guide to Contentment. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.
 - Lenten and Easter Inspirations. New York: Maco Publishing Co., 1967.
 - That Tremendous Love: An Anthology of Inspirational Quotations, Poems, Prayers and Philosophical Comments. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
 - Children and Parents. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.



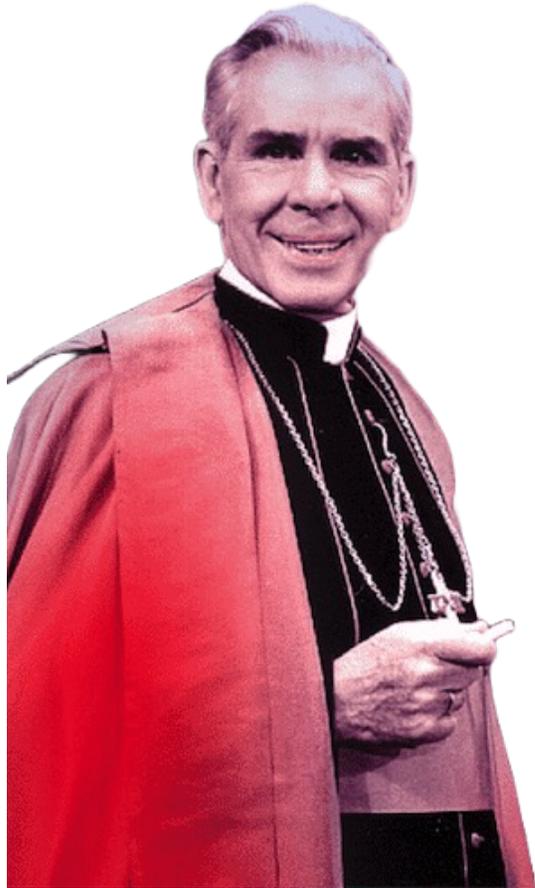
Some of Archbishop Sheen's Controversies



- In life, he had a difficult relationship with Cardinal Spellman of New York, over the allocation of funds from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith.
- In life, he struggled with vanity as well as comfort seeking, as he admitted in his autobiography. His last years of suffering were a big and holy purification for him.
- The 2014 and 2019 delays of his beatification.
 - The saga of his body and the fight between the Diocese of Peoria and the Archdiocese of New York.
 - The pause to investigate the erroneous notation from a 2002 memo about 1969.



Archbishop Sheen and the Call to Holiness



- He didn't think he was a saint, but he wanted to be and never gave up trying. He wrote in his autobiography, "God will judge me ... by how much I reflected Him, not only in work but in word and life."
- "The only argument that is left to convince others," he said in the 1970s, "is holiness. The world has heard every other argument, and it is ready to reject them, all except one: holiness."
- Holiness — his reflection in work, word and life of the Lord Jesus — is the most eloquent word the mellifluous Sheen ever preached. And it is the word that, happily, after his much hoped-for beatification, will echo in the liturgy and memory of the Church until the end of time.



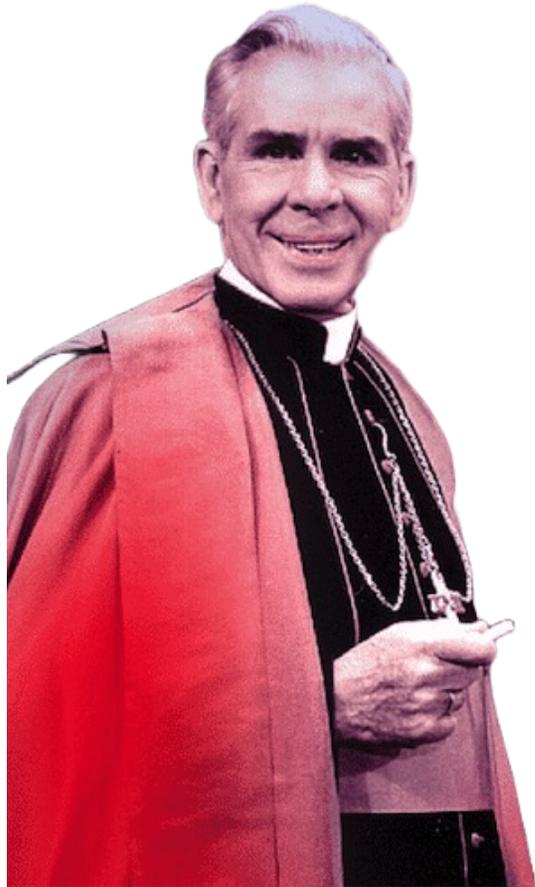
Archbishop Fulton Sheen: Life, Work and Mission Part II

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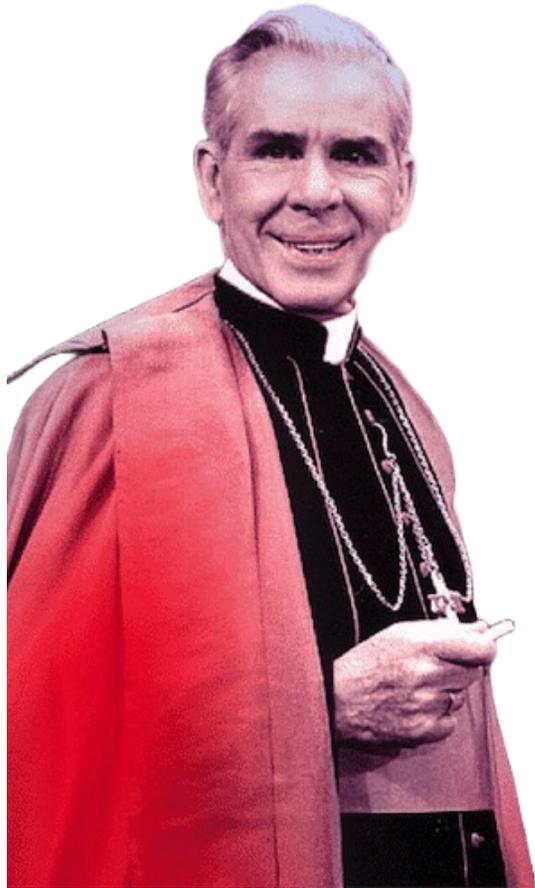
Bishop Sheen and the Missions



- He served as National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies from 1950-1966.
- He moved the offices to New York City from Washington.
- At first, they were in his brownstone residence at 123 E. 38th Street.
- When the staff got too big, he moved the offices to 366 Fifth Avenue, occupying the 11th and 12th floor.
- Through his media work, he brought great attention to the work of the missions.
- To spread word of the missions, he founded *Mission* magazine in 1951, *Worldmission* magazine the following year, and wrote three columns a week, including two on the missions.



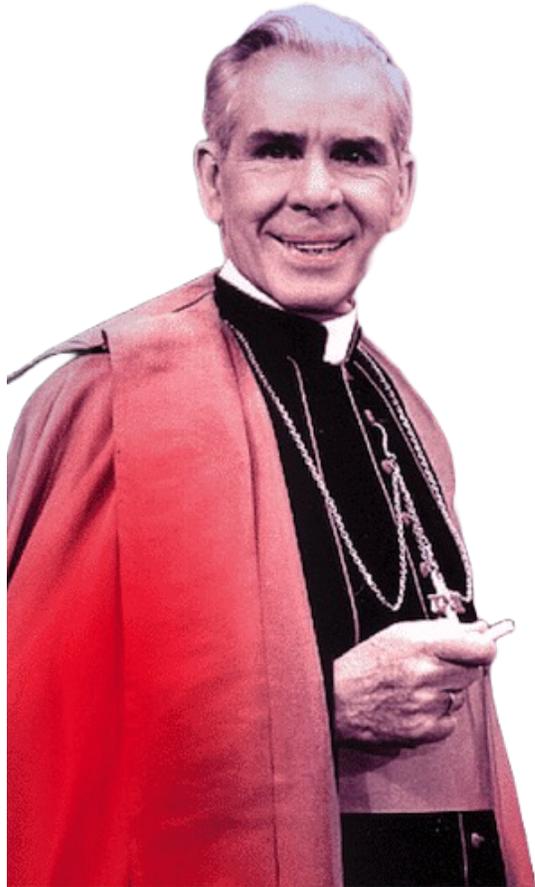
Bishop Sheen and the Missions



- To foster praying for the missions through the intercession of the Queen of Apostles, he created the World Mission Rosary in 1951.
- He traveled extensively to bring attention to the missions and help inform American Catholics about them.
- He is said to have given about \$10 million of his media earnings to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. Under his 16 years, the Society raised about \$200 million.
- He left the copyrights to his books and audio recordings to the Society as well as 40 percent of all his effects.
- He got special permission from Pope St. John XXIII to help out evangelizing efforts in South America.



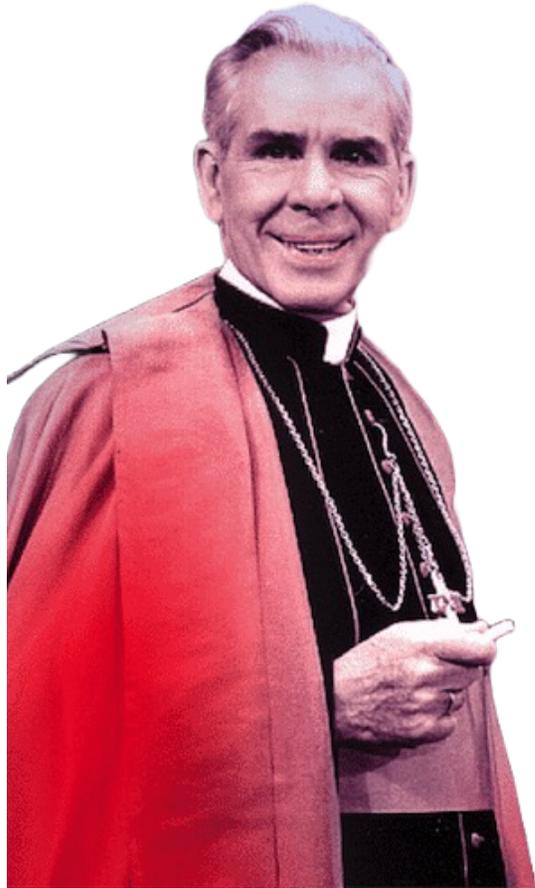
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- About the Great Commission, he wrote in his *Life of Christ*:
 - “If this commission were given solely for the time span of the Apostles, it is evident that they could not possibly go to all nations. The dynamism or current that was passed into the Apostles under the headship of Peter was to continue until Christ’s Second Coming. No doubt was left concerning the authority and the work of the Church when the Master would leave the earth. **That day the Propagation of the Faith came into being.**”
 - “Nor were they merely to teach; for He Who gave the commission was not just a teacher. They were to make disciples in every nation.”



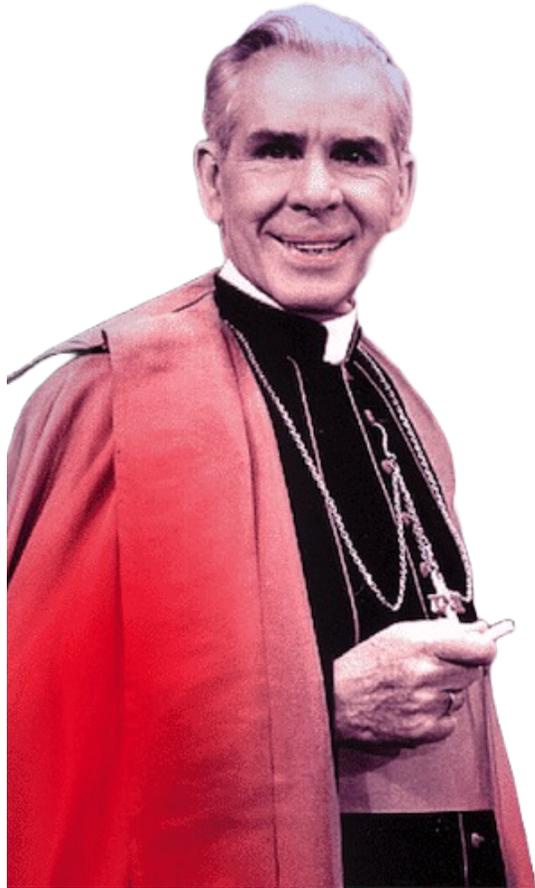
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- About the importance of the Missions during the Second Vatican Council (Nov 9, 1964):
- “In place of the theological question ‘What are missions?’ I would suggest that we turn to the practical question: ‘Where are the missions?’
- “Are the missions exclusively in those territories where there are non-Christians? Or are the missions also in those regions, where there are few priests, few churches and great poverty?
- “The simple answer to this question is: The missions are both....



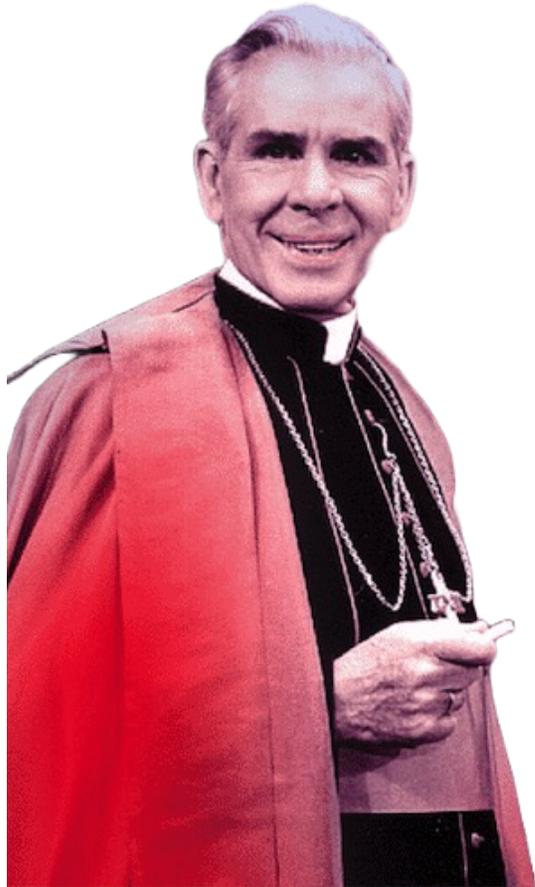
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “I am a servant of the missions under the Propaganda. But during three sessions of this council, many bishops who are living in great poverty, come to my seat in the council hall. They come from territories which are not under the Propaganda, but from areas where there are only seven to ten priests to care for 50,000 square miles.
- “I ask: Is it Christian? Is it Catholic? Is it worthy of the charity of Christ to say to them: ‘You do not belong to mission territory?’
- “Is it not true that the doctrine of the collegiality of bishops imposes on us a missionary responsibility, not only for territories which were defined as missionary 300 years ago, but also ‘for the salvation of the whole world’?



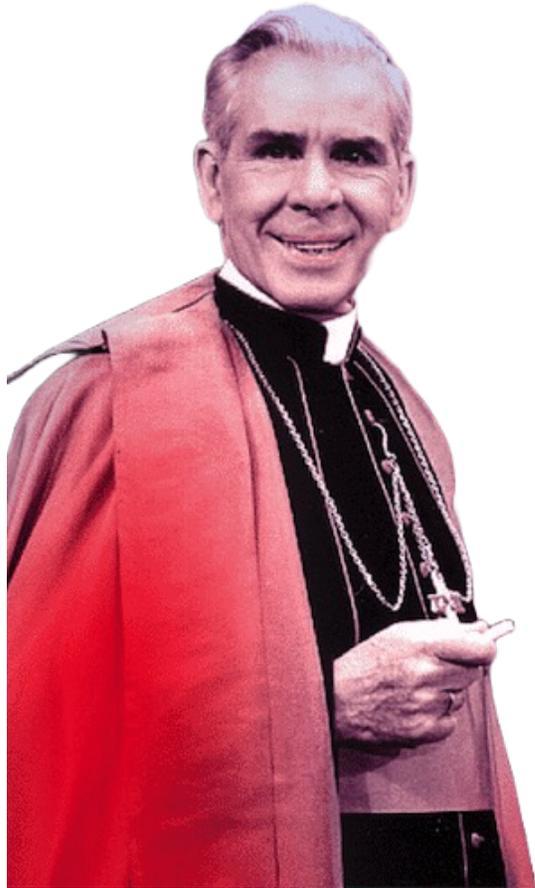
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “We bishops in this Council must not enter into a dispute about what is a missionary territory and what is not, or who belongs to this congregation or to that congregation, saying: ‘I am one of Paul’s men,’ ‘I am one of Apollo’s,’ or ‘I am one of Cephas’; while someone else says ‘I owe my faith to Christ alone.’ What are you saying? Is there more than one Christ? (1 Cor. 1:12).
- “Let us not be like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who passed by the wounded man saying: ‘He does not belong to our congregation.’
- “In the Body of Christ there are no ‘new churches,’ there are no ‘old churches,’ for we are all living cells in that Body dependent on one another.



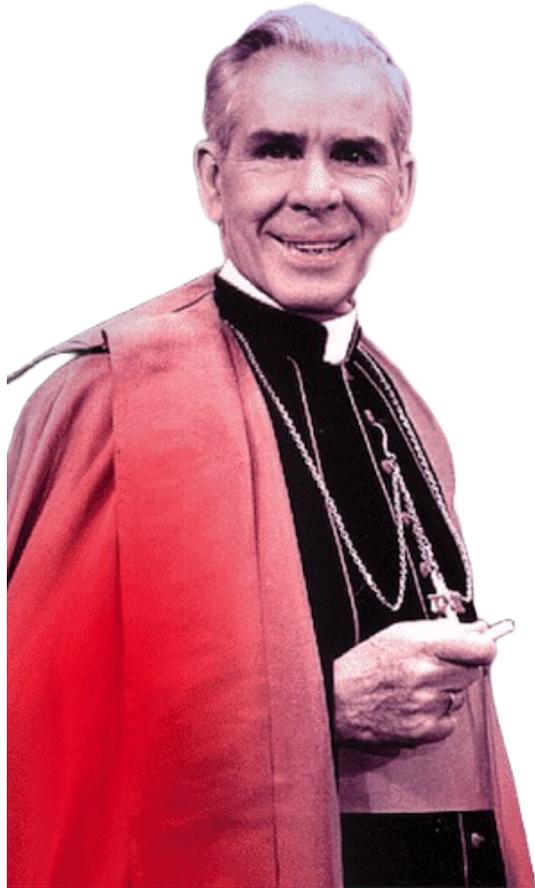
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “It is souls, not territories, which make the missions. The missions must not be the one aspect of the life of the Church which admits of no aggiornamento.
- What God has joined together — the Church and the missions — let no schema separate....
- The true Catholic solution to this problem of the diversity of missions is to be found in Number Four of the schema, where there is proposed a “Central Council for Spreading the Gospel.” This council transcends all juridical distinctions about congregations and gives flexibility to missionary effort, according to diverse circumstances.



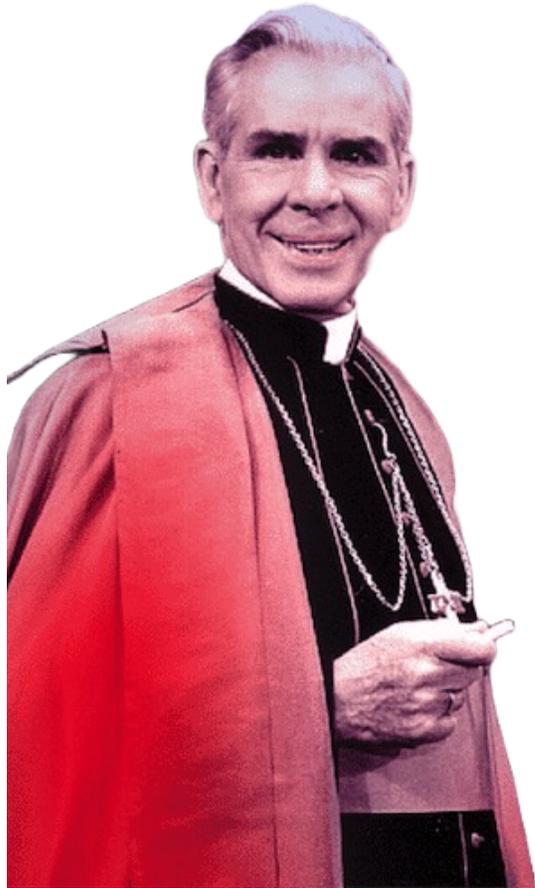
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “Let no one fear that he will receive less aid if some help is given to a needy brother. In the early Church, just as soon as there was ‘one heart and one soul,’ then they began to ‘consider all property in common’ (Acts 3:32).
- “Furthermore, if we share, then as we read in the Epistle to the Corinthians: ‘He that gathered much had nothing over. He that gathered little had no lack’ (2 Cor. 8:15)..
- “One of the conciliar Fathers has asked that all reference to poverty be taken out of this schema. I beg you most earnestly, Venerable Fathers, that the notion of poverty be strongly affirmed in this Council....



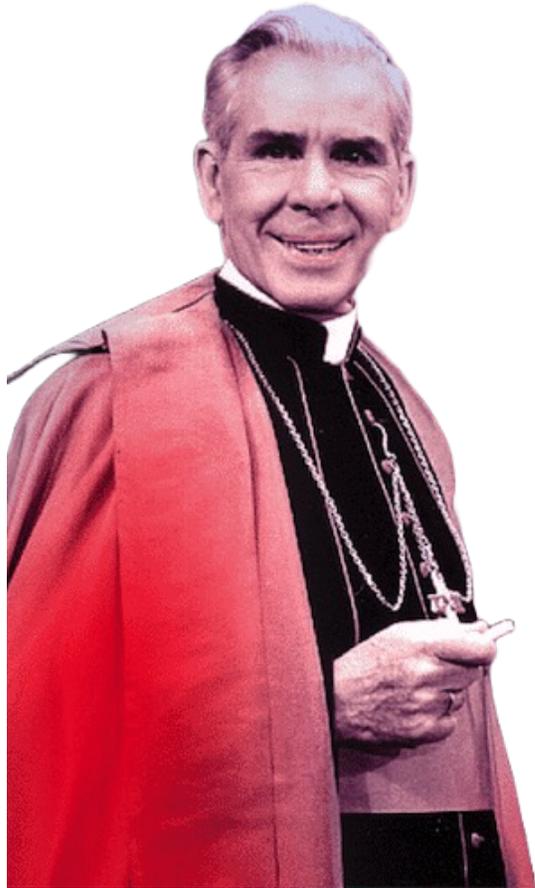
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “The greater number of bishops in this council is living in want or in persecution, and they come from all peoples and all nations. ...
- “If we have an ecumenical spirit to brothers that are outside the Church, then let us have an ecumenical spirit to brothers who are inside the Church. Let us be charitable about the missions, remembering that the Lord who said: ‘Go teach all nations’ is the same Lord who bewailed: “I have mercy on the multitudes.””



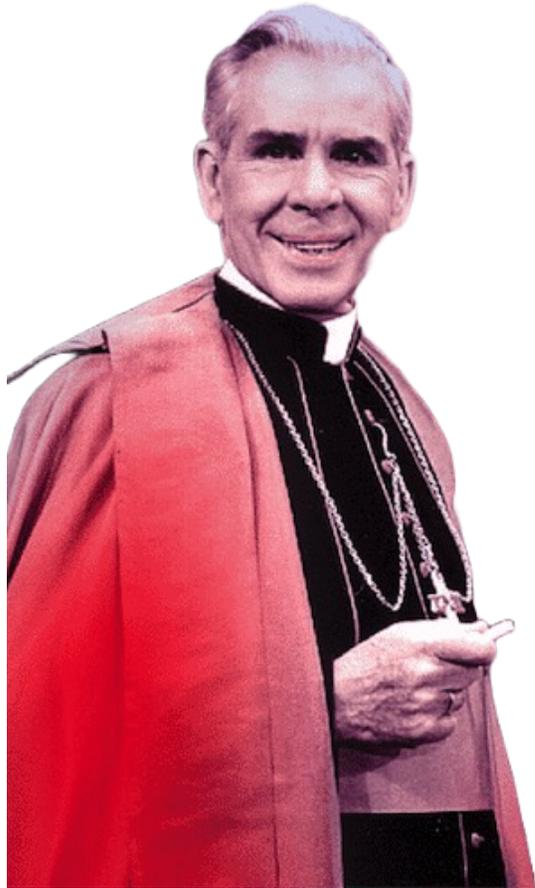
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- In Missions and the World Crisis: Unless Souls Are Saved, Nothing Is Saved, Sheen published a series of his columns on the missions, from Worldmission and other sources. I would like to quote from a couple of sections.
- The first is from a chapter “America was once a foreign mission.”
- “America was once a missionary country or a ‘foreign mission.’ The United States was under the Propaganda and, therefore, was regarded by the Holy See as a ‘foreign mission’ until 1908....”



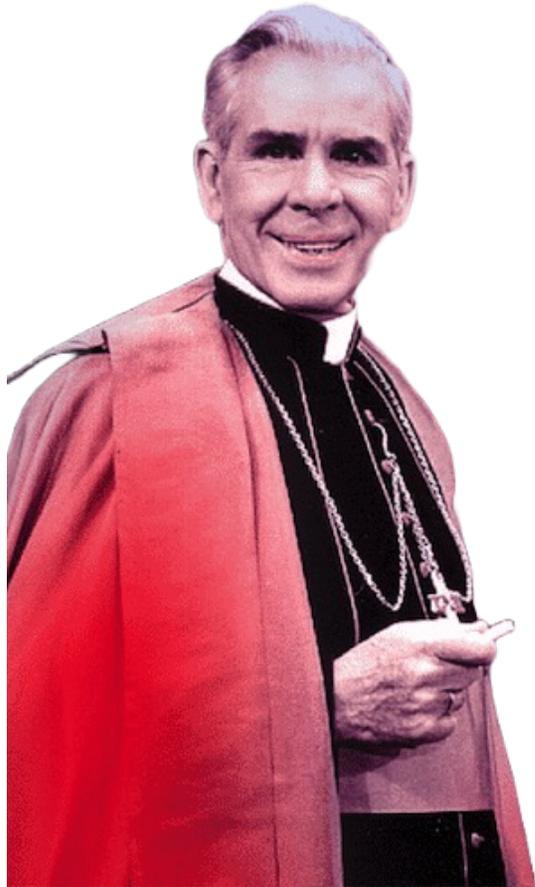
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “While the United States was a ‘foreign mission,’ the bishops of America begged, pleaded, implored, and pressed The Society for the Propagation of the Faith to come to their relief to build churches, seminaries, convents in exactly the same way the bishops of the “foreign missions” of Vietnam, Japan, India, Africa, Marshall Islands, Burma, Pakistan, etc., implore the bishops of the United States today, through The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, to come to their aid.
- They “promised during those days that if aid were forthcoming then, someday, thanks to the blessings of Providence, they would aid other ‘foreign missions’ even more bounteously than they themselves were aided....”



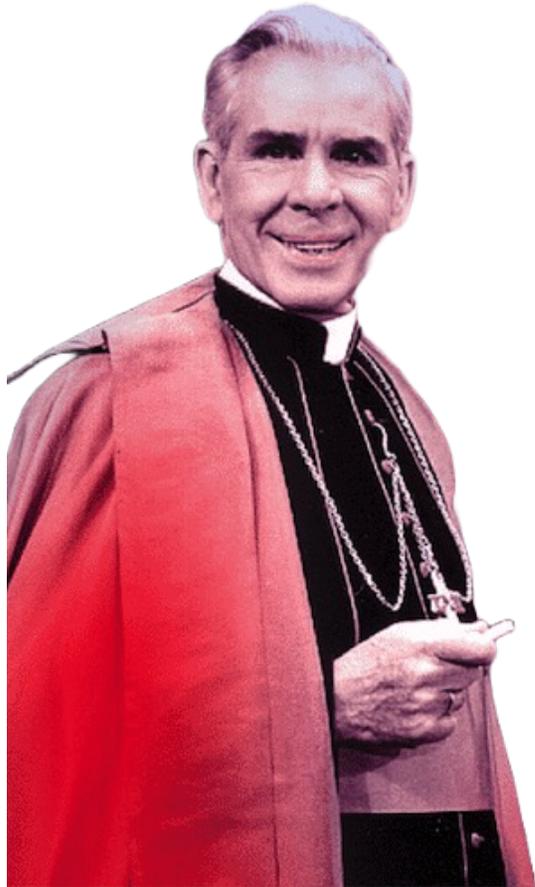
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “The bishops of the United States have kept their promise. Like the faith of the Romans, their generosity is now spoken of throughout the world. ...
- “One hundred years ago, France contributed 60 percent of the total amount received by The Society for the Propagation of the Faith for the foreign missions of the world. Today, the United States contributes over 60 percent of the total received by The Society for the Propagation of the Faith for the foreign missions of the world. ...
- “The generosity of the American Church is due to the fact that we are conscious of our Christian responsibilities.”



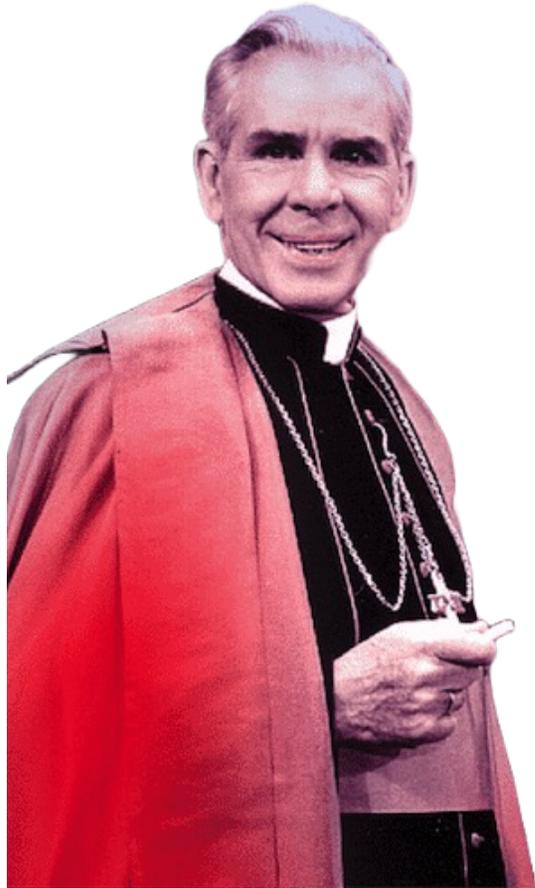
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- The second theme is about missionary animation, from a chapter on the “Apologetics of Holiness.”
- “Too long have the missionaries of the world looked to the United States as the *Ecclesia pagans*, which is a bad Latin way of saying "the paying Church" or "the Church that foots the bills." Whenever money is needed, or a new hospital, or a new jeep, it is always to the Church of the United States that the missionaries look. There is something right and meet and just about this, for the Lord has blessed the United States as no other country in the world has been blessed. The superfluities of the United States are the necessities of the poor. ...



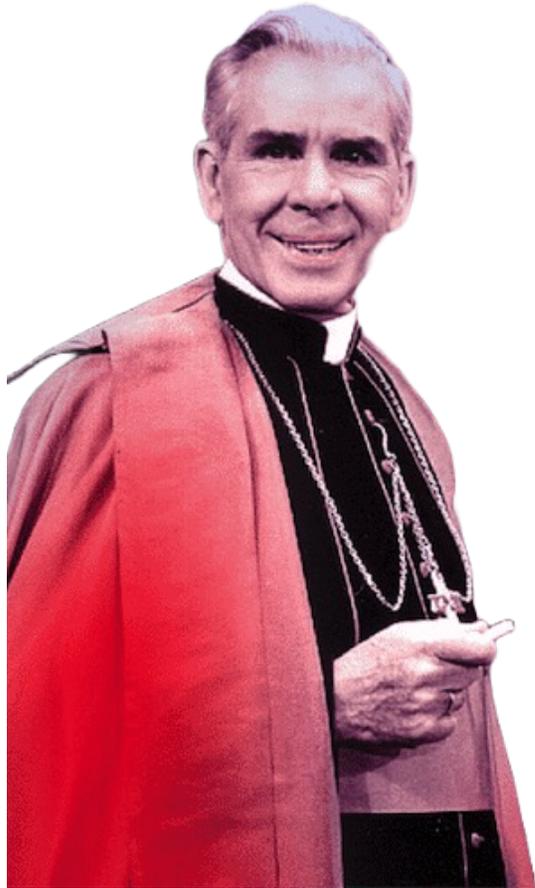
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- ... outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. The Church in the United States must be thought of as having something else besides money, namely, zeal and ideas. With the prophet Osee this is our ideal: "Those who are no people of mine, I will call my people; she who was unpitied and unloved will be loved and pitied. In places where they used to be told, you are no people of mine, they will be called now, sons of the Living God."



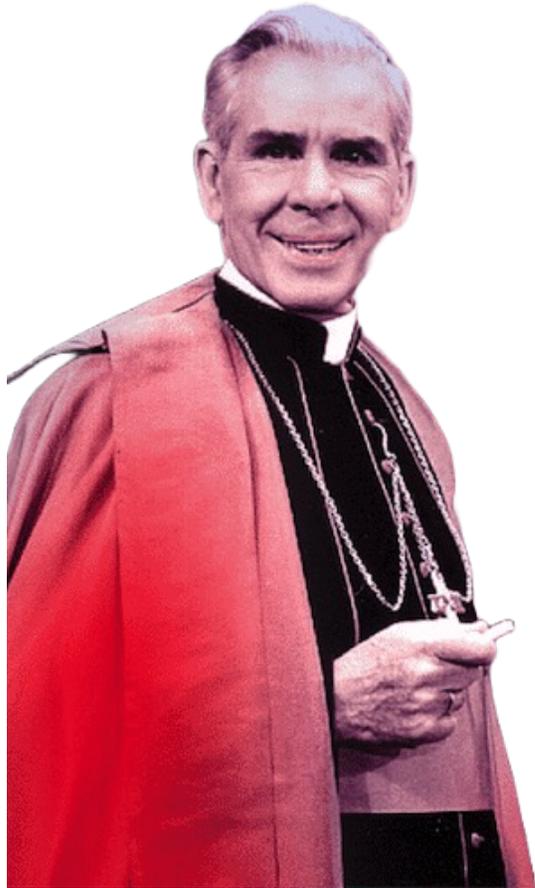
Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- Finally, some autobiographical reflections from *Treasure in Clay*.
- “It was very consoling to have a universal mission and to consider the world as my parish. I can very well imagine how Our Blessed Lord must have felt restrained when His Heavenly Father restricted Him to Israel. He had come to be a “ransom of sin” for all men in the world, but He left that universality of evangelization to His Apostles. ... But when He hung naked on the Cross, He became the Man of the world....



Some Missionary Themes for Our Reflection



- “Another factor which should be mentioned as most important in the growth of the spirit of sacrifice was the practice of daily prayer in the National Office. Every day at two forty-five our whole office staff would recite the Rosary together. Later on we used the fifteen minutes to give a spiritual commentary on certain passages from the Bible, and during my fifteen years there we went through practically the whole of Scripture in our office meditations.”



Thank **you!**