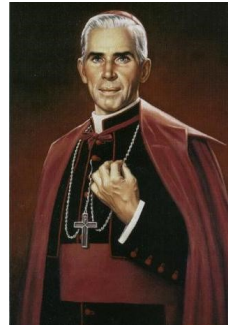




## Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes

Venerable Fulton J. Sheen  
Former National Director of  
The Propagation of the Faith



**Goal:** To provide a lesson for children about a saint or blessed person who exemplify a deep relationship with God and the ability to share it with others

**Materials Needed:** This lesson plan, accompanying story, and any necessary materials for follow up activities

### Objectives:

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a saint? What does it mean to be blessed? One who:
  - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
  - teaches others about Jesus by their example
  - lives like Jesus
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level.
4. To learn that Sheen was beatified because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
5. To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
6. To help the children develop listening skills

### Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Venerable Fulton J. Sheen's story.
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Venerable Fulton Sheen. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

### Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

Peter John Sheen was born on May 8, 1895. He was the oldest of the four sons of Delia and Newton Sheen. His "nickname" soon became his mother's maiden name—Fulton. He would be called that throughout his lifetime. Fulton was an excellent student during his long educational career. He earned two doctorate degrees—one in sacred theology and one in philosophy. The latter earned him an award from his university in Belgium that no American had ever won.

Fulton Sheen was ordained a priest in 1919 and became an assistant to a pastor in London while teaching theology (the study of God and God's relationship to the world). He was called back to his hometown of Peoria, Illinois in 1926 to serve as a parish priest. He served for just nine months before being assigned to teach at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

In 1929, Sheen gave a famous speech to the National Catholic Education Association in which he encouraged Catholic School teachers to lead a renewal of our faith through their teaching of it. He was hoping that as more Catholics lived their faith in a public way, other people would become attracted to the faith and join the Church. Sheen felt strongly that our belief in God should be visible to people in our daily lives—in the way we act and speak—and not reserved just for Sundays when we worship. He said, "If you don't behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave."

Sheen was also a prolific author. Beginning in 1925, he wrote 73 books! In 1930, he started a broadcast career with a Sunday night radio show, *The Catholic Hour* discussing matters of faith. In twenty years, the weekly audience had grown to four million people! Time magazine referred to him as “The golden-voiced Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen.”

1951 was a big year for Monsignor Sheen—he was ordained an Auxiliary Bishop of New York and began a television career with a show called *Life is Worth Living*. Fan letters poured in at a rate of about 8,500 a week! In 1953, Bishop Sheen won an Emmy Award for “Most Outstanding (TV) Personality.” At the awards ceremony, he famously thanked his writers, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” He was called the first televangelist. The show ran until 1957 with an estimated thirty million viewers every week.

In 1958, Bishop Sheen was named as the National Director of The Society for the Propagation of the Faith—the adult version of the Missionary Childhood Association, and also a Pontifical Mission Society. He visited the missions in South Africa, Kenya, and Malawi. He called the missions, “the greatest love of my life.” He left that position when he appointed Bishop of Rochester, New York in 1966.

Sheen was credited with helping many famous people to convert to Catholicism in his time—you could say he was an early “influencer”! Each conversion took at least twenty-five hours of lessons. Most of his students had private instruction.

On October 15, 1969, Sheen was made an honorary Archbishop and retired from ministry, although he continued his writing. Ten years later, when Saint John Paul II visited New York, he famously embraced a frail Archbishop Sheen on the steps of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral and told Sheen, “You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a loyal son of the Church.”

Sheen died in 1979 while making his daily Holy Hour in front of the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Recently, Pope Francis announced that Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen will be beatified at a date yet to be set.

***Pray: Dear God, you gave Archbishop Sheen the gifts of communication and dedication to a life of publicly spreading the faith. Help me to live my faith every day, to ask for forgiveness when I fall short, and to continue in service to the missions which were Fulton Sheen’s “greatest love.” Amen.***

**Follow-up Questions:** (add, omit, re-word as appropriate for your grade level)

1. Venerable Fulton Sheen said, “If you don’t behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave.” Have a classroom discussion about what that quote means to you.
2. Although famous, Fulton Sheen was known to stop and talk to anyone who asked, no matter the time or place. Compare that to famous people you admire now. Is there a difference?

**Follow-up Activities:**

***Younger students:***

1. Fulton Sheen was a good student. Thank your teachers and then make a sacrifice to Missionary Childhood (give up some candy, soda, or chips and donate the money saved) to honor them.
2. Sheen used his God-given talents to bring people closer to God. List ways in which you can do the same, then act on them!

***Older students:***

1. Fulton Sheen started the World Mission Rosary (WMR) in 1951 as a way to pray for the whole world. Organize a WMR Dress Day for your class or school. Assign a color of the WMR to each class or student to wear that day. Charge them \$1 for the missions to do it, then come together and pray the WMR. Free brochures explaining the colors and how to say the WMR, as well as a .pptx file with mission pictures for each rosary prayer, are available from the MCA office.
2. Many children in the missions go without the basics of education that Fulton Sheen cherished. Thank God for your school and teachers and make a small sacrifice for mission children into your classroom mission bank. Don’t have one? Make a mission bank from a shoe box or other container.



St. Agnes School, Arlington has a WMR Dress Day

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