

The Long Road to Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's Beatification

Few Catholics have the opportunity to witness a Beatification in person. Fewer still have the opportunity to witness the Beatification of one of America's most influential Catholic evangelists.

On September 24, 2026, that opportunity will become a reality when Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is beatified during a solemn Mass at The Dome at America's Center in St. Louis. For Catholics who have followed his cause for many years, the celebration represents the culmination of decades of prayer, perseverance, and hope.

Archbishop Sheen was one of the most recognizable Catholic voices of the twentieth century. Long before podcasts, livestreams, or social media, his Emmy Award-winning television program *Life Is Worth Living*, radio broadcasts, books, and retreats brought the Catholic faith into millions of homes. His ability to communicate profound theological truths with clarity, warmth, and humor made him one of the Church's greatest evangelists, and his writings continue to inspire Catholics around the world.

The road to his Beatification, however, was anything but straightforward.

In 2019, Pope Francis approved the miracle attributed to Archbishop Sheen's intercession that opened the way for his Beatification. The miracle involved James Fulton Engstrom, an infant born without detectable signs of life after complications during birth. While family members and others prayed for Archbishop Sheen's intercession, the child recovered in a way the Vatican ultimately recognized as scientifically inexplicable.

The Beatification was scheduled for December 21, 2019, in Peoria, Illinois.

Then, only weeks before the ceremony, it was postponed.

The delay was not because the miracle had been questioned. Instead, several issues—including an earlier legal dispute concerning the transfer of Archbishop Sheen's remains to Peoria and a request for additional review concerning administrative decisions made during his tenure as Bishop of Rochester—led the Holy See to postpone the ceremony. Archbishop Sheen himself was never accused of personally abusing anyone, and after the Vatican completed its review, the cause resumed. In early 2026, the Diocese of Peoria announced that the Holy See had authorized the Beatification to proceed. The miracle approved in 2019 remained fully recognized, and no additional miracle was required.

For many Catholics, the announcement marked far more than the scheduling of a ceremony. It represented the fulfillment of years of patient prayer and anticipation.

For Monument resident Terence F. O'Hare, however, Archbishop Sheen's influence reaches back much further.

Growing up during the 1970s, O'Hare watched Archbishop Sheen's television broadcasts with his family, never imagining that decades later he would organize a pilgrimage centered on Sheen's life, legacy, and Beatification.

His understanding of evangelization deepened through formal studies in missiology, including the study of world religions and the New Evangelization inspired by Saint John Paul II. In the summer of 2002, he traveled from Ottawa to Toronto for World Youth Day, where he lived with the Salesians of Don Bosco, assisted with their youth ministry and the Salesian Sabio Club, served as a multilingual interpreter in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian for the Catholic and international press during both the Diocesan Days and World Youth Day events, and worked in the logistics operation at Toronto Pearson International Airport, helping coordinate the movement of tens of thousands of arriving and departing pilgrims between flights and buses. The experience provided him with a firsthand appreciation for both the spiritual and practical dimensions of organizing large-scale Catholic pilgrimages.

Returning to Colorado, O'Hare entered another period of formation and ministry. While helping develop the Lourdes Marian Center and its volunteer program at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Denver, he immersed himself in the teachings of Saint John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* through Christopher West's complete audio cassette series while simultaneously studying the original radio broadcasts, television programs, retreats, and recorded conferences of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Over many months, he devoted five to ten hours each week in the library at Saint John Vianney Theological Seminary listening to Sheen's original recordings on audio cassette, alternating those studies with Christopher West's presentation of *Theology of the Body*. Together, these two influential Catholic communicators—one a twentieth-century evangelist and the other an interpreter of Saint John Paul II's vision for the New Evangelization—profoundly shaped O'Hare's understanding of evangelization, pilgrimage, and the universal call to holiness.

Rather than simply reading quotations or biographies, O'Hare encountered Archbishop Sheen through his own voice—his humor, his conviction, and his remarkable ability to explain the Catholic faith with both intellectual depth and pastoral warmth.

"Listening to Archbishop Sheen speak in his own words changed the way I understood evangelization," O'Hare said. "He showed that the Gospel is proclaimed most effectively through truth spoken with charity, joy, and genuine love for every person."

Those experiences would quietly shape the next two decades of his life.

As O'Hare continued serving the Church through Catholic ministry and later as an ITMI Certified Tour Director and founder of Beyond the Destination Tours, the themes that had characterized Archbishop Sheen's ministry—faith, formation, pilgrimage, and evangelization—continued to influence his own work.

When news broke in late November 2025 that Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's Beatification would finally take place, O'Hare's first thought was not to organize a pilgrimage. Like many Catholics

who had followed Archbishop Sheen's cause for years, he simply hoped to make a pilgrimage himself and witness the historic celebration. As additional details emerged in January 2026, he began exploring the possibility of traveling to St. Louis as an individual pilgrim.

It was not until several months later that the idea took an unexpected turn. During a conversation with a fellow parishioner who had organized pilgrimages herself, she encouraged O'Hare to consider leading one instead. At first, the suggestion seemed unrealistic. Major pilgrimages are typically planned by dedicated teams over eight to sixteen months. The Beatification was only about three months away.

Yet the more he reflected on the suggestion, the more he began to see how decades of formation, ministry, travel, and professional experience had quietly prepared him for exactly this moment. The decision was daunting. Pilgrimages of this scope are normally planned by experienced teams over the course of eight to sixteen months. O'Hare is attempting to organize the inaugural Catholic Heartland Pilgrimage in only a few months while simultaneously researching the route, securing transportation and lodging, developing educational resources, building the pilgrimage website and HeartLando virtual pilgrimage assistant, recruiting pilgrims, and committing to supplier deposits and other expenses long before the pilgrimage departs. It is an ambitious undertaking that continues to demand faith, perseverance, and trust in God's providence.

Undeterred, he began contacting dioceses, retreat centers, transportation companies, Catholic media, and pilgrimage partners across Colorado, Illinois and Missouri. Long days were spent researching sacred sites, negotiating with suppliers, developing the pilgrimage website, creating educational resources, and building HeartLando, an AI-powered virtual pilgrimage assistant designed to answer questions from prospective pilgrims. Every step represented another effort to transform what initially seemed impossible into a pilgrimage that could serve Catholics throughout Colorado.

The twelve-day pilgrimage through Illinois and Missouri has been intentionally designed as a journey of prayer, fellowship, Catholic formation, and spiritual renewal rather than a traditional sightseeing tour. Pilgrims will visit churches, shrines, monasteries, and other sacred places connected with Archbishop Sheen and the Catholic heritage of the American Midwest before joining thousands of faithful from around the world for the Beatification celebration in St. Louis.

The group is intentionally limited to approximately twenty-five pilgrims, allowing for a more personal experience of prayer, reflection, and Christian fellowship.

For O'Hare, the pilgrimage represents more than an itinerary. It is an opportunity to share with others the faith, history, and evangelizing spirit that Archbishop Sheen helped awaken in him over a lifetime.

Whether Catholics witness the Beatification in person or follow it from home, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's life continues to remind the Church that every Christian is called to proclaim Christ with courage, joy, humility, and love.

Readers who would like to learn more about the pilgrimage—or who feel called to support its mission during this inaugural year—may find additional information at:

<https://chp.beyondthedestination.com>

As preparations continue, O'Hare hopes not only to welcome pilgrims to this inaugural journey but also to connect with individuals, Catholic organizations, and benefactors who believe in the long-term mission of making authentic Catholic pilgrimages accessible to future generations. Like many new apostolates, the Catholic Heartland Pilgrimage depends not only on the faith and prayers of those who travel, but also on the encouragement and support of those who believe the journey is worth building.