



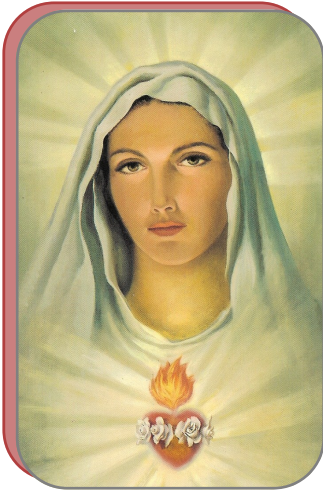
LOURDES LEAFLET

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church
2700 East Mechanic, Harrisonville, Mo 64701
(816) 380-5744
www.ourladyoflourdesharrisonville.org

May 3, 2015
Issue 90

“THE WOMAN HE LOVED”: FULTON SHEEN AND THE BLESSED MOTHER

by Fr. Andrew Apostoli, C.F.R



Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was an ever-present grace in the life of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Like the sun that sends its rays of light upon the earth from its rising to its setting, so the love of Our Lady shone like a bright light over the life of the future Archbishop, from its very beginning right through to its conclusion. It left an indelible impression on his life.

This devotion began with his Baptism, at the very time his life in Christ began. He describes what happened in his autobiography:

When I was baptized as an infant,

my mother laid me on the altar of the Blessed Mother in St. Mary's Church, El Paso, Illinois, and consecrated me to her. As an infant may be very unconscious of a birthmark, so I was unconscious of the dedication but the mark was always there. Like a piece of iron to the magnet, I was drawn to her before I knew her, but never drawn to her without Christ. (Treasure in Clay, p. 316)

We can judge how much this consecration to Our Lady meant to young Fulton from the fact that he spontaneously renewed it at the age of twelve when he received his First Holy Communion. His First Communion book contained a copy of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which he began to recite every night as a boy and kept the practice up to his death. Later on, when he was ordained a priest, he made a resolution to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Saturday when the Liturgy permitted in honor of Our Lady. He saw it as a way to renew his love for her and to seek her powerful intercession. As he looked toward the end of his earthly life, he felt that his love and devotion to Our Lady would be an important part of his encounter with Christ at his final judgment. He felt Our Lord would say to him: "I know all about you; my Mother told me all about you!" Archbishop Sheen's filial love and trust in Our Lady is expressed very clearly in the motto he chose for his coat of arms as a bishop: "Da per Matrem me venire," "Grant that I may come to You through your Mother. "This devotion expressed itself in his visits to some of the greatest shrines of Our Lady, especially Lourdes and Fatima. He visited Lourdes over thirty times.

He experienced many special signs of Our Lady's love and care for him there. On one such occasion, when he was without money, he stayed some ten days in a rather nice hotel. He asked Our Lady to send him someone to pay his hotel bill. On the tenth and final day, a man came up to him and asked if he would accompany him and his family on a tour of Paris. When the then Fr. Sheen agreed, the man added another question, "Have you paid your hotel bill yet?" The Archbishop made about ten visits to Our Lady's shrine in Fatima. Unlike

Lourdes, where the place of the apparitions of Our Lady was the focus, at Fatima the message of Our Lady was stressed. She had come with a message of hope for world peace, as well as a plan from Heaven on how to obtain it.

He saw four things in Fatima. First, he came to realize on the authority of Our Lady that Communism was an evil that was trying to conquer the world as it sought to destroy the Catholic Church. This conviction led him to be an unrelenting opponent of Communism in the West. His voice was often the only one to be heard opposing Communism because so many in the West did not see its dangers. He would often say, "We do not need a voice that's right when everybody else is right, but we need a voice that's right when everybody else is wrong. "Fatima impelled him to be that voice!

Secondly, the Archbishop saw in Our Lady of Fatima a hope of converting the Muslim people. He held that Our Lady did not appear in the only place in Portugal with a Muslim name (Fatima was named after a Muslim princess who converted to the Catholic faith), simply to convert Russia. She came also for the conversion of the Moslem people because, as he believed, unless a great number of Muslims were converted, there would never be peace in the world. He said: I believe that the Blessed Virgin chose to be known as "Our Lady of Fatima" as a pledge and a sign of hope to the Muslim people, and as an assurance that they, who show her so much respect, will one day accept her Divine Son too!"

Continued on back

Teen Creed

Don't let your parents down,
They brought you up.

Be humble enough to obey,
You may give orders someday.

Choose companions with care,
You become what they are.

Guard your thoughts,
What you think, you are.

Choose only a date
Who would make a good mate.

Be master of your habits,
Or they will master you.

Don't be a show off when you drive,
Drive with safety and arrive.

Don't let the crowd pressure you,
Stand for something-
Or you'll fall for anything.

...Author Unknown

THE WOMAN HE LOVED (Continued from front)

Thirdly, Archbishop Sheen saw in Fatima a call to greater conversion of one's own life as well as a call to make reparation and intercession for the conversion of sinners. These themes conversion, reparation, intercession were central to the Archbishop's writings on the spiritual life. He called for constant conversion from the world to Christ. His famous comparisons of the Western world with the Communist world show this. For him, the West had Christ, but without the Cross no discipline, no self-denial, no mortification. He called this Western conception "a soft, effeminate Christ Who cannot save us!"

In contrast, the Communist world had the Cross but without Christ's oppression, persecution, suffering. The Archbishop posed the question: "Will the West find the Cross before the East finds Christ?" Reparation and intercession were likewise important for every Christian because they are part of our baptismal co-redemptive mission with Christ so that, like St. Paul, we will fill up with the sufferings in our own bodies what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His Body, the Church (cf. Col.1:24). He especially stressed reparation and intercession by priests. In his wonderful writings and talks on the priesthood, Archbishop Sheen would remind them constantly that they were called to be both "priests" and "victims" with Christ. This was part of their essential mission of saving souls. Fourth, Archbishop Sheen drew from the Fatima message the importance of the Rosary. Our Lady asked in each of her appearances: "Pray the Rosary every day!" She pointed out its power: "The Rosary can end wars! The Rosary can bring peace! The Rosary can convert sinners!" Archbishop Sheen loved the Rosary and prayed it daily from his childhood when his family would pray it together in the evenings. As National Director for the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, he would gather around all the workers (and any visitors who happened to be there) in his New York office at 3:00 p.m., and recite the Rosary.

Most significant of all was his design of the World Mission Rosary. The Archbishop introduced this unique Rosary during his radio broadcast on "The Catholic Hour" on February 11, 1951, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Each of the five decades is of a different color to represent each of the five continents of the world from the viewpoint of the Missions. He said: "Our Rosary has this triple advantage. Each color reminds you of the part of the world for whom you offer the decade. Secondly, it fulfills Our Lady's petition at Fatima to pray for world peace through the Rosary. Thirdly, it will aid the Holy Father and (the work of) his Society for the Propagation of the Faith..." He concluded his broadcast: Thus in five decades, one covers two worlds: the spiritual world of either the Joyful, Sorrowful or Glorious Mysteries of Our Lord and the physical world of the five continents. May the Blessed Mother, who stood beneath the Cross on whose banner was written the three languages of the then known great civilizations of the world, now extend her help and mediation to the enlarged worlds of the five continents.

The Archbishop was to sum up his reflections on our Blessed Mother in one of his greatest books, "The World's First Love." He divides the book into two parts. Part I is entitled: "The Woman the World Loves." Here he examines the life of Our Lady from her Immaculate Conception to her Assumption into Heaven. Part II is entitled: "The World the Woman Loves." Here the Archbishop shows how we need the Mother of God to

help us deal with the problems and confused beliefs that confront mankind today. This book is truly a treasury of love, reverence and devotion to Our Blessed Mother. These words of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen serve as a last pearl of great price from his pen: On dark nights we are grateful for the moon: when we see it shining we know there must be a sun. So, in this dark night of the world, when men turned their backs on Him Who is the Light of the World, we look to Mary to guide our feet while we await the sunrise.

Fr. Andrew Apostoli is a member of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, a frequent guest on the EWTN television network, and the postulator for the cause of the Servant of God, Fulton J. Sheen.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intentions for the month of June 2015

Universal: That immigrants and refugees may find welcome and respect in the countries to which they come.

Evangelization: That the personal encounter with Jesus may arouse in many young people the desire to offer their own lives in priesthood or consecrated life.

Summer Prayer for Children

We are grateful for the summer months ahead,
And grateful for the summer joys and the laughter
of the children in our families, our schools and our
parishes.

Bless our children during these next months;
may they grow in grace through play and picnics,
camps and friendships, family visits and vacations.

We pray too for children in our global community,
Especially for children being scarred by the violence
of conflict, the horror of war, of life on the run,
and the violence of child labor. For them, the
summer holds no promise nor relief.

Bless our children during the months ahead,
all our children: in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the
Middle East, in Darfur, and in every place where the
sounds of guns and bombs continue to be heard and
continue to silence the sounds of children's laughter
and childhood dreams.

Bless our children in every country where children
labor through long days and never know the peace of
economic security or freedom.

God of Grace, May these children know comfort and
healing, through Your compassion and through our
efforts to bring peace and justice to the global
village we all call home. Amen.

--by Jane Deren