

In the early hours of the morning on September 16, 2010 in Peoria, Illinois, Travis and Bonnie Engstrom experienced a nightmare – their child came into this world without breath in his lungs. He was stillborn. Travis baptized the child, naming him James Fulton, as the two medical professionals present performed CPR. He was rushed to the hospital, and 61 minutes after he was born, the doctors had stopped lifesaving measures and were preparing to make the horrible, official announcement, when little James Fulton started breathing. The doctors informed the family that James would have significant handicaps as a result of this lack of oxygen, but in the months to come the tests all started to come back normal. It was....miraculous. As a teenager now, James gives the praise to Christ – but he also feels the closeness of his patron, Venerable Fulton Sheen. And with a medically documented miracle now attributed to his intercession, Fulton Sheen will this Thursday be beatified.

Fr. Fulton Sheen was ordained in 1919 for the Diocese of Peoria. He went to Europe to continue his studies in Philosophy, and taught there before returning to work at a poor inner-city parish. He began a door-to-door evangelization campaign, the beginnings of what was to come. A year later, he started teaching at the Catholic University of America in 1927, and began writing – eventually 66 books in all. In 1930, he began hosting a Sunday night radio show that would last for two decades, drawing four million listeners each week, more than any of the modern late night tv hosts. A year after taking over the national missionary efforts for the US Bishops, he was appointed an assistant bishop in New York in 1951. A year later, he took his radio show to national television, drawing audiences of 30 million over the 15 channels, helping people for the next twelve years find meaning in the midst of their lives, and opening doors to seeing God's presence. Famous for never relying on notes, he would practice in Italian and French to help with his mastery of different subjects. He even won an Emmy, thanking his writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

He was named the Bishop of Rochester, and though with great zeal he approached the office, opposition and difficulties led him to ask for retirement just three years later. St. Paul VI granted his request in 1969, while also very unusually giving him the title of archbishop as a personal sign of affection, which allowed him to continue his preaching at his own discretion. He would die a decade later.

My favorite story from his life regarded a man in the hospital whose sister wrote begging him to visit. She noted that her brother was an evil man, and was dying and suffering horribly from cancer – and was unrepentant. A score of priests had been thrown out – would the bishop try. You can hear the story of his forty nights of visits to this man as he slowly won him over to Christ, and you can hear them in soon to be Blessed Archbishop Fulton Sheen's own words! <https://archive.org/details/FultonSheenInPrayer>