

Feast of St. Anne
17th Sunday OT - A

Fr. Jim Heyd
July 25, 2026

1 Kgs 3: 5, 7-12

Ps 19: 57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

Rom 8: 28-30

Mt 13: 44-52

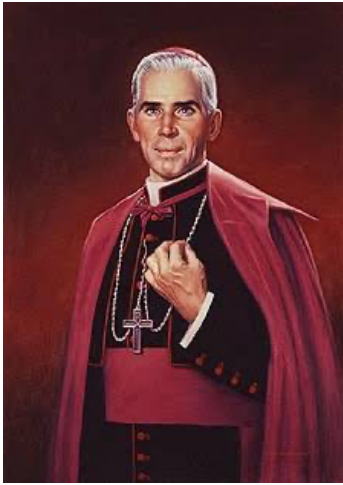
As I mentioned, my friends, this has been a very special summer, with all these activities and celebrations in our land, from sea to sea, and ocean to ocean, in all fifty states, there is a lot for which to be thankful and grateful. Not only has our nation celebrated our 250th Anniversary, but also, a celebration in September, in this land of Illini, where Fr. Jacques Marquette came to spread the word in 1673. He came all the way from France. They all trained in Paris, moved to Quebec and came down here.



In addition, we also celebrate the upcoming beatification of Blessed Fulton Sheen (1895-1979).



Now, I am asking Nate to hold up this beautiful icon here. (I am going to donate this icon to Fr. Pete, and he is a super guy). So, we will leave it here at the at the shrine.

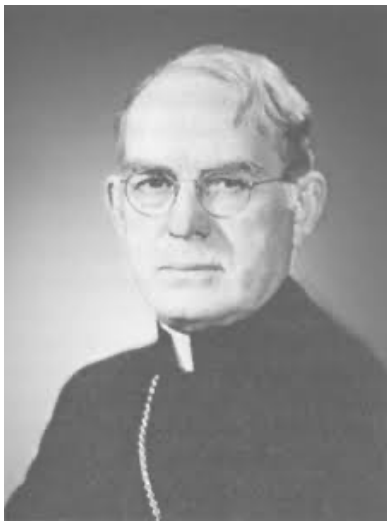


Fulton Sheen was born in El Paso, Illinois in 1895. He was an amazing rural figure, first in the nation at the time, on TV and radio. He really broke ground in promoting the faith, and he did extraordinary things.

Trained by the Clerics of St. Viator, (God bless the Viatorians for their work here over the years), and at St. Paul's Seminary in St. Paul, MN, Blessed Fulton Sheen was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria in 1919. It was during his time at St. Paul Seminary that he began the practice of a daily Holy Hour of Eucharistic adoration, a devotion he maintained for more than sixty years and often credited for the fruitfulness of his ministry.

Later in his priesthood, Fulton Sheen made it in the big leagues, so to speak. He became head of the "Society for the Propagation of the Faith (1950-1966) "to spread the gospel through the whole world" ... and he

did! During his sixteen-year tenure, Blessed Fulton Sheen revolutionized global mission support, popularized the World Mission Rosary, and helped make the U.S. the largest contributor to worldwide Catholic missions. (Source: <https://www.hbgdiocese.org>). We should be so proud of him here in the land of the Illini... and we are! This will be one big celebration.



In 1935, in the early days, people were not necessarily hanging around Chicago. They were making a beeline to Peoria and Mississippi. A lot was happening in Peoria at the time. First, there was the establishment of Western civilization there. The bishop at the time,

Archbishop Joseph H. Schlarman (pictured, 1879-1951), wrote Fulton Sheen, telling him that he would serve as professor of philosophy and theology at the Catholic University of America (1926-1950).

Archbishop Schlarman was an extraordinary figure in his own right. He was an historian, a builder, and he had a vision, this bishop. We do not oftentimes hear of Bishop Schlarman, but he is someone to which we

should pay attention. He fixed up the cathedral in Peoria, and on the windows of the cathedral, when you go on a pilgrimage there, you will see all the missionaries of the United States. You will see the image of Fr. Jacques “Père” Marquette, SJ (1637-1675). You will see the image of Fr. Louis Hennepin (1626-1704), who wrote about the history of Louisiana (*Description de la Louisiane* (Paris, 1683), which included all this area. As Pope Francis used to always tell us, we are mission disciples, get out there, and spread the gospel... just like they did.

We can learn from these people in the past. Bishop Schlarman quotes from the poet Abraham Ryan (1838-1886), who wrote, “The land without ruins is a land without memory, a land without memories is a land without history. Give me the land where ruins are spread, and the living tread light on the hearts of the dead, giving the land that has legends and legs, that tell memories of long vanished things.” Abraham Ryan’s work, as quoted by Bishop Schlerman, promoted Fulton Sheen to go forth, to spread the gospel through all the nations... and this is right!

We must write our own history in time, my friends. We go off the legends and the sacrifices of our ancestors, our grandparents, our great

grandparents, those who came to this land, and we build off of that for the future. Generation after generation, we say, an archdiocese in



Chicago. From Quebec to the Caribbean, from Quebec to Haiti, from Quebec to Guadalupe, to Martinique.

There is, a dear

friend of mine named Fr. Leo Okonkow (pictured, far left), a priest from Nigeria. He is a buddy of mine who came to visit St. Anne's last week to pray with us. We learn that this history in his country has been both very good and bad. Fr. Leo represents the Church of Nigeria that also has dealt with her own struggles on the other side of the ocean. There has always been two transatlantic stories of American Catholicism. Shannon D. Williams, history professor at the University of Dayton, says that there is the one story of Catholicism that begins with Europeans – we all know that story well. The *other* story of Catholicism begins in Africa and the African descendant people, free and enslaved, living in

Europe and Africa in the 16th Century, which also has made its way to this country.

We are a global world today; our stories are all bouncing off each other, my dear friends. How beautiful this story today is happening in St. Anne, IL and even before, all the different cultures gathered here. As in our past, we encountered the French, the African and Korean slaves who learned that catechism. They all came together... and it is happening before our very eyes!

Pope Leo also represents that spirit, if you will. This pope, and us as well, transcend race and ethnicity to look what God has in store for His people. God is love and God wants us to love one another without condition, without favor, without prejudice, without fear. Without fear, my dear friends.

Too much fear is in our land today. This fear is ripping our country apart and it is making us not who we can be to the world. We have to step up this faith of ours that our ancestors brought here and break that fear that holds us back from God. This faith is a great treasure, and it has been implanted in the soil. Francis Cardinal George (my old boss) once

said that our faith is planted in the land and it grows. It grew here at St. Anne's, and it will continue to grow in the future; around it will grow with all of you.

Where I work in the city, we have those same problems of fear and discrimination. These problems affect all of us, in one way or another. To destroy that fear, we need a place where we can go and pray like these pilgrim sites.

I came from Detroit and St. Joseph's Harbor yesterday; I was up with the French. In Detroit, they were celebrating another celebration, the 325th Anniversary of the founding of the city Detroit; that city is of French heritage. I made my pilgrimage from Detroit to down here to wonderful St. Anne's because you, too, are part of the French corridor. We have the French historical heritage society that is really bringing out the history, more than ever, of the French backgrounds.

The French came to mid-America, got on their canoes, and voyageurs, where we can bring our young people again. too. I cannot do it alone. Fr. Pete cannot do all of this alone. It has to be the people of God that make the effort and take the time, like our ancestors, to invest

in this faith together, to grab us by the ear and train us how to be men and women of faith. We have got to make the effort!

I have got to make the effort as well. In my family, I have seven sisters. They said to me, “You will be a priest!” I have travelled to St. Anne for years; St. Anne is such a beautiful devotion. Today, I pray with you, my dear friends, to support and encourage you, to give witness, to see what is happening before us. As I see it, in a limited way, something is happening in our heartland that gives us hope and courage and move forward.

We also honor our pope in a particular way. He, who has a big heart of gold, who really is a pilgrim of peace. His mentor and good friend is a bishop named Dan Turley. In this moment, they are asking us to open our hearts and trust them on this journey.

So, as we conclude our Novena and Feast Day journey, pilgrims of peace, today, in our hearts, whatever you are striving to do on this pilgrimage and through the intercession of our dear spiritual grandmother, the grandmother of Jesus Christ, Mary, and others, may you find comfort and peace. May you find healing, whether it be

physical, spiritual or emotional. May you find in our society a desire, the Church being that beacon, that people will come to us, and they are joining us! Pilgrimages have joined us in all the places of the world.

There is a real renewal going on that we all can see!

Lastly, may we offer that peace and joy to the world, as we always have. May we give a witness of peace and ask others that to come join us to bring that peace to the corners of the world... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.