

Fr. Perozich comments —

I watched Fulton Sheen on TV with my parents when I was a boy at home. He made sense to my young soul then just as he does to my old soul now.

With the church's ever increased outreach to the world, it seems as though the emphases become on the all important worldly charity toward others and on issues defined by the world, but with deemphasis on the spiritual which undergirds the charity and the Tradition of the church.

Retirement has given me more time for prayer and reflection in priestly life with Jesus. Daily I still have an hour of adoration, Mass at home if not needed for supply at a parish, frequent confession, spiritual reading, and continued battles with all the temptations. Absent are the distractions of the countless phone calls, convocation, diocesan assemblies, deanery meetings, etc which gather priests together for discussion but can detract and distract from ministry and priestly life.

This article reminds me of who I am as a priest in Jesus.

For you my brother priests, I pray it help renew your priesthood.

For you laity, I pray it give you insight into the beauty of the life that a man shares with Jesus in priesthood, so that you call as many of your sons, grandsons and young men to the gift of this life with and in Jesus Christ.

“CELIBACY IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF PASSION”: FULTON SHEEN ON CELIBACY AND THE PRIESTHOOD

In his many retreats for priests and bishops, Sheen often said that priestly celibacy is misunderstood as an undue burden. Rather, Sheen argued, celibacy is a gift from Christ to his priests.

[February 20, 2020 Joseph M. Hanneman The Dispatch 5](#)

Print



Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is pictured in an undated file photo. (CNS file photo)

Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen could not recall a time in his life when he did not want to be a priest. At his First Communion, he prayed that one day he would be ordained to the priesthood. That day came in September 1919, when the 24-year-old son of Newton and Delia Sheen was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois.

Sheen would become a towering figure in the Catholic Church in the 20th century, known to millions as a brilliant orator and a master teacher of the faith on television and radio, in many dozens of books, and from the pulpit. But for more than 60 years, Sheen was first, foremost, and always a priest. He wrote and spoke often about the priesthood. He gave many retreats later in life to remind his brother priests who and what they truly are. Even more than 40 years after his death, Sheen's teachings stand as a faithful sentinel against modern efforts to "reform" the priesthood by dispensing with celibacy or even ordaining women. It is easy to imagine him today before a podium and microphone, explaining in stirring tones and rich voice why Our Blessed Lord made the holy priesthood as He did. It's easy because he gave those talks and wrote passionate words about his vocation and his life

Alter Christus: Ambassadors of Christ

Sheen emphasized that priests were ambassadors of Jesus Christ and *alter Christus*, “other Christs,” who are “dispensers of the mysteries of God.” The role and essential characteristics of the priesthood come from Christ himself, Sheen said; to attempt to change or modify them would be to oppose God’s divine plan. Christ calls the priest, makes the priest, and provides the grace for him to completely offer himself as priest and victim.

This is the way he continues the priesthood of Our Blessed Lord,” Sheen said in his talk, “Holy Orders” (this talk and many others are available at **FultonSheen.com**). “Our Lord was not a priest because he was eternally begotten by the Father. Our Lord was a priest because he had a human nature, which he could offer up for our salvation. And so we too, continuing that priesthood, are something like Jacob’s Ladder—it reaches up to the heavens and yet at the same time it is placed on the earth. Therefore every priest is a kind of another Christ, having vertical relations to Christ and Heaven and horizontal relations to men on earth.”

Total gift of self

In his many retreats for priests and bishops, Sheen often said that priestly celibacy is misunderstood as an undue burden; a cruel cross that is unfairly forced upon priests. Rather, Sheen argued, celibacy is a gift from Christ to his priests.

Celibacy, Sheen said during one retreat, is a treasure the Blessed Lord keeps in “pots of earthenware.” The earthenware pots “have received a gift. A gift: celibacy. That is the way Our Lord describes it, as a gift. That is the way the Vatican Council describes it. Celibacy is a gift that is given to some men. He gave it to us. We did not offer celibacy, we received it. And as long as we remain close to Him, we will have it and keep it” (“Pots of Earthenware,” *Prayer, Suffering and the Spiritual Life: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*).

In his retreat for priests, “Restoring the Vineyard,” Sheen asked, “Why was the Lord—why was he a celibate? And why does he ask us? He asks in order that we might be able to make a totally committed love without division and without compromise. Just to be totally his” (“Restoring the Vineyard,” *What a Priest Should Be: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*).

The gift of self by priests is manifested in part through being in service at all times, day and night. “There is no such thing as saying at the end of a day, ‘Well I’ve done my duty for the day.’ Rather, Our Lord said we have to call ourselves unprofitable servants. ... Labor union rules are not

sufficient for us. We belong to a different union, where love, not hours, is the standard. When we think of all Our Lord has done for us, we really can never do enough. The word 'enough' does not exist in love's vocabulary" ("Holy Orders").

Fire or diamonds?

Sheen said the key is for priests to be so closely conformed to Christ as to take on his nature and imitate him. **"Celibacy is hardest when we fall out of love with Christ,"** Sheen wrote. "Then it becomes a great burden. **Once we priests put celibacy in the context of the Church and discuss its history, its sociology and the like, there is a groaning under the burden.** Once we see it in relation to Christ, then it is less a problem and more a matter of love. Celibacy as an ecclesiastical law is hard. Celibacy as a question of discipleship is hard too, but bearable and joyful" (*Treasure in Clay: the Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen*, [New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 1980], page 214).

Sheen always implored priests to make a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, a practice he carried out every day of his priesthood (nearly 22,000 Holy Hours). Any priest who does this, he said, would not be lost. "I could draw a curve of my own life...my attitude toward celibacy would be seen always in direct relationship to my personal love of Christ," he wrote in *Treasure in Clay*. "Once our passions cease to burn for him, they begin to burn toward creatures. Celibacy is not the absence of passion; it is rather the intensity of a passion."

If a man gives up freedom for a woman he loves, then it is also possible for a man to give up a woman for Christ," Sheen wrote. "Love in the service of celibacy rises and falls with the love of Him. **Once Christ becomes less regnant in human hearts, something has to take over to fill the vacuum."**

Christ on the Cross and in the Eucharist are the touchstones on the question of celibacy, he said, underscoring the need for the daily Holy Hour. "The more we fall away from response to that gift, the less we want to look at a crucifix, the less we want to visit the Lord in His Sacrament. We become like the man who crosses the street when he sees a bill collector on the other side. The Cross, therefore, is where Heaven and hell meet. It is a hell when we see the part we have played in His Crucifixion by our infidelity. It is Heaven when we remain faithful, or when we fly again to His feet for pardon."

The sex drive can be transformed, Sheen said, with a focus on Christ's presence dwelling in his priests. "Carbon may either

become fire or it may become a diamond. The libido may be spent or it may be harbored. It may seek unity with another person without, but it may also seek unity with another person within, namely God. ... So celibacy is not just the renouncing of the person outside but a concentration on the person inside. God is not out there. He is in us: 'I will abide in you and you will abide in Me.' Celibacy is a transformer which multiplies an energy within to concentrate entirely on Christ Who lives in the soul."

Priestly celibacy and marriage are both honorable vocations, but should not be compared like some competing ideals, Sheen said. "It is like arguing about the relative perfection of the right leg over the left. Both want God, and the degree of possession does not depend upon the state of life, but on the degree of response to the grace that God gives. The celibate is working for the Kingdom of God by 'begetting children in Christ' in baptism; the married by having children through the profound unity of two in one flesh. God has two kinds of lovers—those who go directly to the ultimate, such as the celibate, and those who go mediately through marriage."

The begetting of children in Christ, Sheen wrote, is a higher form of generation that uses the energy that would otherwise serve the flesh and transforms it into chaste generation of the Spirit. "What a blessed life is ours. What a beautiful role celibacy plays when it facilitates a higher kind of generation, when it inspires the priest to imitate the Father in begetting The Word, to imitate the Christ who begot us in the Spirit as *alter Christus*."

After 60 years and nearly three months of priesthood, Sheen died while making his Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, just one day after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in December 1979.

"We cannot live without love," Sheen once said, "and if we're in love with Him—oh, he provides the means. We have all the joys of another kind of love, that love that leaves all other love a pain; the unpossessed that makes possession vain."

Fr. Perozich comments —

Laity, join me in prayer and sacrifice for the priesthood. Michael illustrates what can happen to all human beings, even to God's priests. May your prayers and sacrifices draw back priests and bishops who are at the precipice.

SIFT THEM LIKE WHEAT

Mortal danger.

Michael Voris February 21, 2020



TRANSCRIPT

Earlier this month, sirens went off all around the Catholic world when none other than Cdl. Robert Sarah made the clear and bold declaration, "The Christian priesthood is in mortal danger! It's going through a major crisis."

For years, Church Militant has been saying there has been a loss of supernatural faith among the ordained. They don't believe the Faith. We have provided an ocean of stories to support that claim. In fact, it was the non-stop flood of these sorts of stories that forced us to come to this extremely sad realization. It's impossible, in fact, to reach any other conclusion. It's so impossible, in fact, that to remain stubbornly opposed to this conclusion bespeaks an arrogance or unwillingness to face the truth — that such a person actually becomes complicit in the crisis.

Facts are facts, period. It doesn't matter how you feel about them. What matters is that you accept a fact and organize your life around the truth of that fact. There is no other plausible explanation other than a loss of supernatural faith.

When a cardinal says the priesthood is in mortal danger, what else on earth do you imagine he's speaking of? The only mortal danger to the priesthood there could be is a loss of supernatural faith.

We must also hurt, in the body, in the temporal realm, and bear in our own flesh some pain of Calvary, for the priesthood.

Tweet

And note this: Among mortal sins, we can make a differentiation. True, all mortal sins send a person to Hell. Die in that state and a soul is lost forever. But there are types of mortal sins. There are sins of weakness, of a momentary or passing nature that — while still putting you on the road to Hell — you can be pulled back from because a person knows their action is sinful. They don't embrace the sin as a lifestyle; they don't commit themselves to it one time after another after another, eventually accepting it in their hearts as good. They know it's wrong, evil and deadly, and while they did commit it, they bolt to confession. Their conscience is still intact.

But then there is the other type of mortal sin from which the sinner never really chooses to come back. Maybe at first, the first instance or couple of instances, there's some regret or contrition, but repeated falls and the conscience begins to dull — worn out from the non-stop rationalization. Such a man begins to not just sin mortally, but also to actually set his house up in a world of mortal sin, losing any real desire to return to a state of grace.

Not even the fear of Hell is sufficient motivation to get his house in order, and eventually, his fate will be what the Scripture says of him: "I will turn him over to a reprobate mind." God withdraws His grace because for such a sinner to continue to refuse to cooperate with the grace of God — the grace that God is extending him, to throw it back in His face — that itself becomes a whole new, fresh occasion of sin. So out of love for the sinner — for that is the only motivation God can ever act from — He ceases the graces so as to prevent the sinner from sinning even more.

So now, let's apply this to various members of the hierarchy — bishops who offer Mass in a state of mortal sin, not to mention priests who likewise offer the Holy Sacrifice in mortal sin, who add sacrilege to their list of crimes. At some point, a bishop who has embraced the world sets himself up as an enemy of Christ, steeped in mortal sin. Homosexual, vindictive, abusive, thieving, lying, arrogant, merciless — what do you suppose would be the fate of such a man?

What hope could there be for a man who, having once enjoyed the condition of high office, abandons it privately, in his soul, for lust or power or money, yet on the outside retains the visible trappings? It isn't that God doesn't want to save him. Our Lord always wishes to save them. But the tragedy is, they do not wish to be saved. They no longer believe.

And by their fruits you shall know them — those who rationalize distributing sacrilegious Holy Communion; who cover up the sin of homosexual predation — their own or others; who steal from the faithful; who lie to preserve their own positions; who refuse to reveal the truth of

scandal in the Church and more importantly confess their own complicity in it.

Imagine a man dying in this state — a successor of the Apostles. How could anything but Hell be his lot?

In the Upper Room, Our Lord turned to Peter and warned him that Satan was demanding the Apostles from Him to "sift you like wheat." It is no coincidence that the demand was revealed in the upper room at the Last Supper, when Our Lord was instituting the holy priesthood. Satan wants the priesthood destroyed. The priesthood brings Christ down from Heaven to feed us His Body and Blood.

It is undeniable that he has made gigantic inroads. So to this end, we laity must appeal to the Queen of Heaven to intercede. We must unite our suffering to hers on Golgotha. Among the various realities of Our Lady's existence is that she is the mother of the High Priest.

She stood at his Cross, his Altar, willingly accepting sufferings to be united to His for the salvation of mankind. Her suffering is a model for us. We too must accept suffering, unite it to Hers through the High Priest for the sake of the priesthood. That's the key.

On this month's Retreat at Sea, we brought this particular point up with the hundreds of retreatants and asked them to find something important in their lives and give it up specifically for the priesthood.

We laity need to act, certainly — fight back, expose, instruct, educate, protest — all of that. But we must also hurt, in the body, in the temporal realm, and bear in our own flesh some pain of Calvary, **for the sake of the priesthood.**

So, please consider this request, seriously. Find something, whatever it is, and do it for the rest of your life. Our Mother suffered for the priesthood of her Son. We are her offspring. We too must suffer for the priesthood. It is in mortal danger.

On February 28 I woke up to this email from the author, Joseph Hanneman, and received the gift of the fuller version of the article which is posted below. May it lead you deeper in your life with Jesus.

Hello Father,

I came across your note atop a PDF version of a story I wrote for Catholic World Report on Venerable Fulton J. Sheen's words on the celibate, all-male priesthood. It is always edifying to see that something I've written is a

help to someone else. Although in this case, the writing was really done by the good Archbishop Sheen.

I wanted to point you to an expanded version of that essay, which includes a crucial section on the male priesthood and marriage nuptials with the Church. My original essay was cut quite a bit in the editing process, so I put the original online on my personal web site. I hope you find this version even more useful.

May God bless you, and I thank you for your priestly vocation!

Joe Hanneman

<https://www.jcommjoe.com/blog/2020/2/i-chose-a-higher-love-venerable-fulton-j-sheen-on-the-celibate-priesthood>

'I Chose a Higher Love:' Venerable Fulton J. Sheen on the Celibate Priesthood

February 20, 2020

ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN'S PERPETUAL APOLOGIA OF THE CELIBATE, ALL-MALE PRIESTHOOD

*By Joseph M. Hanneman
Catholic World Report*

Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen could not recall a time in his life when he did not want to be a priest. At his First Communion, he prayed that one day he would be ordained to the priesthood. That day came in September 1919, when the 24-year-old son of Newton and Delia Sheen was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Ill.

Sheen would become a towering figure in the Catholic Church in the 20th century, known to millions as a brilliant orator, a master teacher of the faith on television and radio, in many dozens of books, and from the pulpit. But for more than 60 years, Sheen was first, foremost and always a priest. His priesthood was more than a vocation, more than life's work, and even beyond his identity. It was his *essence*, lifeblood; indeed his very nature. Or, as he often described it, Christ's nature dwelling in him.

Sheen wrote and spoke often about the priesthood. He gave many retreats later in life to remind his brother priests who and what they truly are. Even more than 40 years after his death, Sheen's teachings stand as a faithful sentinel against modernist wishes to "reform" the priesthood by dispatching with celibacy and even changing the all-male nature of the priesthood. It is easy to imagine him today before a podium and microphone, explaining in stirring tones and rich voice why Our Blessed Lord made the holy priesthood as He did. It's easy because he gave those talks and wrote passionate words about his vocation and his life *in persona Christi*.

Ven. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

Celibacy and masculinity are the very defining characteristics of the Catholic priesthood, Sheen said.

Alter Christus; Ambassadors of Christ

Sheen emphasized that priests were ambassadors of Jesus Christ and *alter Christus*, "other Christs," who are "dispensers of the mysteries of God." The role and essential characteristics of the priesthood come from Christ Himself, Sheen said; meaning to attempt to change or modify them would be to oppose God's

divine plan. Christ calls the priest, makes the priest and provides the grace for him to completely offer himself as priest and victim.

“This is the way he continues the priesthood of Our Blessed Lord,” Sheen said in his talk, “Holy Orders.”¹ “Our Lord was not a priest because He was eternally begotten by the Father. Our Lord was a priest because He had a human nature, which He could offer up for our salvation. And so we too, continuing that priesthood, are something like Jacob’s Ladder — it reaches up to the heavens and yet at the same time it is placed on the earth. Therefore every priest is a kind of another Christ, having vertical relations to Christ and Heaven and horizontal relations to men on earth.”

What Sheen described across the many decades of his ministry is a beautiful, divinely appointed plan under which ordained men continue Christ’s saving work as his priests, and a woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary, represents the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. “Mary at the foot of the Cross was the symbol of the Church,” he said. “Our Lord on the Cross was the New Adam. She was the New Eve.”² Writing in his book *The Priest Is Not His Own*, Sheen continued: “The priest first gives up the earthly love of a woman, as Mary gave up the earthly love of a man. His ‘I have no knowledge of woman’ balances her ‘I have no knowledge of man’ ” (Luke 1:34).³

Total Gift of Self

In his many retreats for priests and bishops, Sheen often said that priestly celibacy is misunderstood as an undue burden; a cruel cross that is unfairly forced upon priests. Rather, celibacy is a gift from Christ to His priests. That gift comes with the supernatural grace to maintain and protect it. “For anyone to say that Christ was forced on us is just as false as to say that any gift such as celibacy is forced on us,” Sheen said. “It is not man’s gift to God, it is God’s gift to man.”⁴

Celibacy, Sheen said during one retreat, is a treasure the the Blessed Lord keeps in “pots of earthenware.” The earthenware pots “have received a gift. A *gift*: celibacy. That is the way Our Lord describes it, as a gift. That is the way the Vatican council

describes it. Celibacy is a gift that is given to some men. He gave it to us. We did not offer celibacy, we received it. And as long as we remain close to Him, we will have it and keep it.”⁵

Life is Worth Living

Then-Bishop Sheen behind the DuMont network camera on the set of his popular "Life is Worth Living" television program.

Because it comes from God, celibacy is not an impossibility for priests, Sheen said. It is one of three so-called “impossibles” mentioned in the Gospels. One is the Virgin Birth. The second is poverty, shown by the rich man who went away sad because Christ called him to donate all of his possessions and follow Him. The third was celibacy, which Christ described when discussing the types of eunuchs.

In Sheen’s autobiography, *Treasure in Clay*, he quotes Christ: “ ‘There are eunuchs born that way from their mother’s womb. There are eunuchs made by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way.’ Then He spoke of celibates who do not marry ‘for the sake of the Kingdom of God,’ finally giving away the secret of how men could be celibate. He called it a gift. He said that celibacy is not for everyone. It is only for those who receive from Him this gift. It is ‘only for those to whom it is granted. Let anyone accept this who can.’ ”⁶

In his magnum opus *Life of Christ*, Sheen wrote that when Jesus recommended celibacy, the disciples objected to the severity of the teaching because they feared it would dissuade men from entering marriage. “His answer shows that they understood His meaning. Their error was in failing to realize to what sacrificial heights He would summon men for the sake of His Kingdom.”⁷

In his priest retreat, “Restoring the Vineyard,” Sheen asked, “Why was the Lord, why was He a celibate? And why does he ask us? He asks in order that we might be able to make a totally committed love without division and without compromise. Just to be totally His.”⁸

The gift of self by priests is manifested in part through being in service at all times, day and night. “There is no such thing as saying at the end of a day, ‘Well I’ve done my duty for the day.’ Rather, Our Lord said we have to call ourselves unprofitable

servants. ...Labor union rules are not sufficient for us. We belong to a different union, where love, not hours, is the standard. When we think of all Our Lord has done for us, we really can never do enough. The word 'enough' does not exist in love's vocabulary."⁹

The limits demanded by celibacy are among the distinguishing characteristics by which the priesthood can be identified, Sheen said. "How do you know the identity of Honolulu? How do you know the identity of the Philippines? How do we know the identity of the state of New York? How do we know the identity of a football field? By its boundaries. By its limits."¹⁰

Fire or Diamonds?

Sheen said the key is for priests to be so closely conformed to Christ as to take on His nature and imitate Him. "Celibacy is hardest when we fall out of love with Christ," Sheen wrote. "Then it becomes a great burden. Once we priests put celibacy in the context of the Church and discuss its history, its sociology and the like, there is a groaning under the burden. Once we see it in relation to Christ, then it is less a problem and more a matter of love. Celibacy as an ecclesiastical law is hard. Celibacy as a question of discipleship is hard too, but bearable and joyful."¹¹

Sheen always implored priests to make a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, a practice he carried out every day of his priesthood (nearly 22,000 Holy Hours). Any priest who does this, he said, would not be lost. "I could draw a curve of my own life ... my attitude toward celibacy would be seen always in direct relationship to my personal love of Christ. Once our passions cease to burn for Him, they begin to burn toward creatures. Celibacy is not the absence of passion; it is rather the intensity of a passion."¹²

Sheen cited two men who gave up love of a woman for community ideals: Gandhi, who did so for the "untouchables" in India's caste social system, and former United Nations Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld, who practiced celibacy for world peace. Unknowingly, Sheen wrote, these men were saying the same thing as St. Paul: "An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's

affairs. All he need worry about is pleasing the Lord. But a married man has to bother about the world's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife. He's torn in two ways" (1 Cor 7:32-34).¹³

"If a man gives up freedom for a woman he loves, then it is also possible for a man to give up a woman for Christ," Sheen wrote. "Love in the service of celibacy rises and falls with the love of Him. Once Christ becomes less regnant in human hearts, something has to take over to fill the vacuum."¹⁴

Christ on the Cross and in the Eucharist are the touchstones on the question of celibacy, he said, underscoring the need for the daily Holy Hour. "The more we fall away from response to that gift, the less we want to look at a crucifix, the less we want to visit the Lord in His Sacrament. We become like the man who crosses the street when he sees a bill collector on the other side. The Cross, therefore, is where Heaven and hell meet. It is a hell when we see the part we have played in His Crucifixion by our infidelity. It is Heaven when we remain faithful, or when we fly again to His feet for pardon."¹⁵

The sex drive can be transformed, Sheen said, with a focus on Christ's presence dwelling in His priests. "Carbon may either become fire or it may become a diamond. The libido may be spent or it may be harbored. It may seek unity with another person *without*, but it may also seek unity with another person *within*, namely God. ...So celibacy is not just the renouncing of the person outside but a concentration on the person inside. God is not out there. He is in us: 'I will abide in you and you will abide in Me.' Celibacy is a transformer which multiplies an energy within to concentrate entirely on Christ Who lives in the soul."¹⁶

Priests are imitating Christ, carrying a cross to prolong His redemption, Sheen said. The more closely they follow Christ, all the easier to be His. "If I belong to the new humanity which was born originally of a Virgin, why should I not live in exclusivity for the Master? I never felt? I gave up love in taking the vow of celibacy; I just chose a higher love."¹⁷

Priestly celibacy and marriage are both honorable vocations, but should not be compared like some competing ideals, Sheen said. "...It is like arguing about the relative perfection of the right leg over the left. Both want God, and the degree of possession does not depend upon the state of life, but on the degree of response to the grace that God gives. The celibate is working for the Kingdom of God by 'begetting children in Christ' in baptism; the married by having children through the profound unity of two in one flesh. God has two kinds of lovers — those who go directly to the ultimate, such as the celibate, and those who go mediately through marriage."¹⁸

The begetting of children in Christ, Sheen wrote, is a higher form of generation that uses the energy that would otherwise serve the flesh and transforms it into chaste generation of the Spirit. "What a blessed life is ours. What a beautiful role celibacy plays when it facilitates a higher kind of generation, when it inspires the priest to imitate the Father in begetting The Word, to imitate the Christ who begot us in the Spirit as *alter Christus*."¹⁹ Priests must so closely conform themselves to Christ, Sheen said, that they are not mere followers or servants, but *douloi* — slaves. The Greek word *doulos* (δοῦλος) is used nearly 50 times in the New Testament to refer to Christ. "How then do we really become true liberators?" Sheen asked in one retreat for priests. "When do we begin to be effective at liberating souls from evil, having power over nature? Now here comes the paradox of Christianity. By being *slaves*. Slaves of Christ. That's what we are. The *douloi* of the Good Lord."²⁰

That work, Sheen said, is to liberate people from evil, not to liberate them from morality, family life, the Church or the Commandments. " 'Thanks be to God, who continually leads us about, captives in his triumphal procession.' That's what we are. Captives in Christ's triumphant procession. 'And everywhere uses us to reveal and spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of Himself' " (2 Cor 2:14-15).

"So that is what we are. The secret is out," Sheen said. "Christ has won the battle; only the news has not yet leaked out. And we, we are slaves in Christ's triumphal procession."²¹

Priesthood and Nuptials

Sheen said the idea of women as priests comes from a fundamental misunderstanding not only of the priesthood, but God's divine plan.

“Mary was not a priest. If her Divine Son wanted women to be priests, He would have made His own mother a priest. The woman is a symbol of the Church.”²²

The Woman I Love

Sheen said women, as evidenced by the special role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, are the symbols of the Church.

The key to the all-male priesthood is found in Scripture's many references to marriage nuptials, Sheen said. “Why in the divine, biblical order can they (women) not be priests? Is it because we want a monopoly on it? Certainly not. It is because the whole divine order is based on nuptials. Creation began with nuptials —the nuptials of man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Then there came the nuptials of Israel and God. In the prophet Hosea we read, ‘I, your Creator am your husband.’ See how the natural and the divine order are linked together?”²³

In the Old Testament, God tells Hosea to marry a harlot. Despite her unfaithfulness to Hosea, God tells the husband to take her back. “She is the symbol of Israel,” Sheen said. “‘Israel is my bride.’ Unfaithful. Disloyal. Disobedient. But I will always love Israel.”

In the new order, Sheen said, we have not just the nuptials of man and woman, “but the nuptials of divinity and humanity in the Incarnation of Our Blessed Lord. Then on the Cross we have the nuptials of God-man and the New Israel, which is the Church. And out of this marriage, a bridegroom and bride on the Cross, the New Adam and the New Eve, there begins the new progeny. John the firstborn. Then it multiplies at Pentecost and it has been multiplying ever since. So nuptials becomes the foundation of the covenant order. God continues it.”²⁴

Christ referred to the woman who touched the hem of his cloak and was healed “my daughter” (Matt 9:20). He called the apostles “my children.”

“There are other ways of begetting,” Sheen said in his talk, “Pots of Earthenware.” “The Word is the seed. The seed is The Word. And The Word gives the seed to the earth, The Word gives the seed to the Church. Every time we mount the pulpit, The Word is the seed. Man gives the seed. The woman receives the seed. She fecundates it, nourishes it, brings it to life, educates it, caresses it, loves it, so that in the new order we have Christ and His Bride, the Church.

“Now those who want women to become priests no longer want the bridegroom Christ to have a bride. Should not they be proud of the fact that they symbolize the bride, which is the Church? As we have to be proud of symbolizing Christ Himself, and the Church is the ecclesial Body of Christ.”²⁵

After 60 years and nearly three months of priesthood, Sheen died while making his Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, just one day after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in December 1979.

“We cannot live without love,” Sheen once said, “and if we’re in love with Him, oh he provides the means. We have all the joys of another kind of love, that love that leaves all other love a pain; the unpossessed that makes possession vain.”²⁶

– See the article at [Catholic World Report](#)

– Listen to Sheen's Talk, "[Pots of Earthenware](#)"

– Listen to Sheen's Talk, "[Holy Orders](#)"

– Check out my friend Thomas C. Reeves' [excellent biography](#) of Fulton J. Sheen

End Notes

¹ Sheen, Fulton J., 12:24 mark, “Lesson 35: Holy Orders,” *The Sheen Catechism: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*, [FultonSheen.com](#) and [CatholicVault.com](#). Sheen’s audio talks are available in various other places on the internet.

² Sheen, Fulton J., “Mary and the Mass,” *Various Topics: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*, [FultonSheen.com](#) and [CatholicVault.com](#).

Sheen's audio talks are available in various other places on the internet.

³ Sheen, Fulton J., *The Priest is Not His Own*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), location 3885 of 3996, Kindle version, Amazon.com.

⁴ Sheen, Fulton J., *Treasure in Clay: the Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen*, (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 1980); Page 211, Kindle version at Amazon.com.

⁵ Sheen, Fulton J., "Pots of Earthenware," *Prayer, Suffering and the Spiritual Life: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*, FultonSheen.com and CatholicVault.com. Sheen's audio talks are available in various other places on the internet.

⁶ Sheen, *Treasure in Clay*, Page 212.

⁷ Sheen, Most. Rev. Fulton J., Ph.D., D.D., *Life of Christ*, (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 2008); Page 194, Kindle edition at Amazon.com.

⁸ Sheen, Fulton J., "Restoring the Vineyard," *What a Priest Should Be: Fulton Sheen Audio Library*, FultonSheen.com and CatholicVault.com. Sheen's audio talks are available in various other places on the internet.

⁹ Sheen, "Lesson 35: Holy Orders."

¹⁰ Sheen, Fulton J., "Holy Ambassadors — Other Jesuses," *Venerable Fulton J. Sheen: Priesthood*, KeeptheFaith.org Saddle River, N.J.

¹¹ Sheen, *Treasure in Clay: the Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen*, Page 214.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., Page 217.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., Page 222.

¹⁸ Ibid., Page 210.

¹⁹ Sheen, *The Priest is Not His Own*, Location 792 of 3996.

²⁰ Sheen, Archbishop Fulton J., *Called and Chosen: the Never Changing Face of the Priesthood*, audio CD collection, St. Joseph Communications, 2002.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sheen, “Mary and the Mass,” 08:52 mark.

²³ Sheen, “Pots of Earthenware.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sheen, “Restoring the Vineyard.”