

Prayer/Reflection - Fr Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen OFMConv
“ONE IN CHRIST, UNITED IN MISSION”
WITH ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN,
CHAMPION OF MISSIONARY ANIMATION, FORMATION AND SUPPORT
HOLY HOUR IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BEATIFICATION

Introduction — Before Jesus, the Missionary Lord

Lord Jesus, here we are before You, truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. We come before You not simply to speak about You, but first of all to remain with You, to adore You, to listen to You, and to allow You to renew our hearts.

Today we stand in communion with the whole Church and especially with Pope Leo XIV, who has sent Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle here with us to represent him at the Beatification of the Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

As we prepare for this grace-filled event, we place ourselves before You and ask You to help us contemplate the missionary life of this extraordinary servant of the Church.

Fulton Sheen was not only a great preacher, a communicator, or a man of the media.

He was a man consumed by the missionary fire, a missionary animator, a missionary formator, a passionate promoter and supporter of the missions. He helped generations of Catholics to discover that the mission of the Church is not something distant from us, but belongs to every baptized person.

And his missionary passion did not end with his earthly life. His missionary legacy continues to bear fruit today. His voice continues to evangelize.

His writings and recordings continue to form.

His witness continues to awaken missionary hearts.

And the fruits of his generosity continue to support the missions of the Church throughout the world.

Lord Jesus, as we enter into this Holy Hour, give us the grace to receive something of the missionary fire that burned in the heart of Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

May his example help us to rediscover our own missionary vocation.

May his beatification awaken in us a renewed desire to make Christ known and loved to the ends of the earth.

I. “A BEACON OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE” Fulton Sheen: a missionary animator

Let us contemplate, first of all, the missionary passion of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

In his address to the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies on 1 June 2026, Pope Leo XIV spoke of him with words that deserve to remain in our hearts.

He called Sheen “one of the most famous National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies.”

He described him as “a beacon of faith, hope and love.”

And the Holy Father added something deeply personal:

“I myself witnessed his evangelization when I was growing up.”

Pope Leo recalled that Sheen’s broadcasts reached millions of people with the hope of the Gospel and that his initiatives and efforts generated enormous spiritual and material assistance for Churches in territories of first evangelization.

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the missionary witness of Fulton Sheen.

He understood that missionary animation begins by awakening hearts.

He spoke about the missions.

He made the needs of distant Churches present to the faithful.

He helped people to see beyond their own parish, their own diocese, their own country.

He opened their hearts to the universal Church.

He taught Catholics to pray for missionaries, to know the missionary reality of the Church, and to participate personally in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

He was, in this sense, a great **missionary animator**.

But he was also a great **missionary formator**.

Through preaching, writing, radio and television, he formed generations of Catholics in the faith and awakened in them a sense of responsibility for the universal mission of the Church.

He did not simply ask people to give money to the missions.

He sought to form missionary disciples.

He wanted Catholics to understand *why* they should pray, give, sacrifice and participate in the mission of the Church.

Lord, we ask You:

Where is our missionary fire today?

Have we become accustomed to speaking about mission without allowing ourselves to be transformed by mission?

Do we still have the desire to make Jesus Christ known and loved?

Do we still feel the suffering and hopes of the young Churches?

Do we recognize that the Church in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania and in so many other places is not “someone else’s Church,” but our Church, the one universal Church of Christ?

Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Fulton Sheen, **give us a missionary heart.**

Give us the courage to animate.

Give us the patience to form.

Give us the generosity to support.

Give us the fire to evangelize.

Silence.

II. “ONE IN CHRIST, UNITED IN MISSION”: Fulton Sheen: missionary formation and missionary conversion

Lord Jesus, we now contemplate another dimension of Fulton Sheen’s missionary legacy.

He understood that missionary cooperation is born from a missionary conversion of the heart.

The missionary does not begin by asking: “What can I do for the missions?”

The deeper question is: “Lord, what do You want to do through me for Your mission?”

This is at the heart of Pope Leo XIV’s message for the 100th World Mission Day: **“One in Christ, United in Mission.”**

The Holy Father calls the entire Church to a deeper communion in Christ and to a fuller participation in His divine mission of love. He also urges us to embrace an ongoing missionary conversion.

Fulton Sheen lived something of this missionary conversion.

He did not keep the Gospel within the walls of the Church.

He went out.

He went through the radio, through television, through books and newspapers, through conferences and personal encounters.

He went wherever he could find a human heart capable of listening.

And he used every gift God had given him for one purpose: **that Christ might be known, loved and proclaimed.**

This is missionary animation.

This is missionary formation.

This is missionary conversion.

And this is why his witness remains so relevant today.

His missionary work did not simply produce activities.

It produced missionary consciousness.

It helped people to discover that the whole Church is missionary and that every baptized person has a place in the universal mission of evangelization.

Lord Jesus, convert us again.

Convert us from being spectators of mission into participants in mission.

Convert us from a narrow vision into a universal vision.

Convert us from asking only what the Church can do for us into asking what we can do, according to our vocation and gifts, for the mission of the Church.

Convert us from speaking about missionaries to becoming missionary disciples.

Convert us from indifference to compassion.

Convert us from fear to courage.

Convert us from self-centredness to communion.

Lord Jesus, make us **one in You, so that we may truly be united in mission.**

Silence.

III. “RENEW WITHIN US THE FIRE OF THE MISSIONARY VOCATION”: Fulton Sheen: missionary support whose legacy continues

Lord Jesus, we now contemplate the third dimension of Fulton Sheen’s missionary witness: **his concrete support for the missions.**

For Sheen, missionary animation was never separated from missionary solidarity. Formation led to commitment.

Prayer led to generosity.

Evangelization led to cooperation.

His love for the missions became concrete.

As National Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in the United States and later also of the Society of St Peter Apostle and the Pontifical Missionary Union, he raised enormous resources for the missions. Concretely, he raised more than \$200 million (\$2.1 billion in today's money) to sustain the then about 650 missionary dioceses and territories. Moreover, the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States record that he donated more than ten million dollars of his personal earnings to the missions. His missionary generosity also continued beyond his earthly life: he left the copyright of his books and audio recordings, as well as 40 percent of his estate, to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

What a powerful missionary witness!

His missionary support was not merely an episode of the past.

His generosity continues to bear fruit.

His voice continues to speak.

His writings continue to form.

His legacy continues to animate.

And through the Pontifical Mission Societies, his missionary passion continues to be connected with the concrete needs of the Church in mission.

In this sense, Fulton Sheen remains not only a memory.

He remains a missionary presence, a missionary inspiration, a missionary teacher.

He remains, in a very real sense, a **missionary for missionaries**.

And perhaps this is one of the most beautiful things we can contemplate today.

A person who gave himself to the missions can continue to inspire others to give themselves to the missions.

A person who formed missionary consciousness can continue to form missionary consciousness.

A person who supported missionaries can continue, through his legacy, to support the missionary work of the Church.

Lord Jesus, renew within us the fire of the missionary vocation.

Teach us to pray for the missions.

Teach us to form ourselves for mission.

Teach us to animate others, to support missionaries, to give generously.

Teach us to cooperate with the Pontifical Mission Societies.

We entrust to You the four Pontifical Mission Societies:

the Society for the Propagation of the Faith,

the Society of the Holy Childhood,

the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle,

and the Pontifical Missionary Union.

May they continue to awaken missionary responsibility among all the baptized, to form missionary hearts, to strengthen young Churches, and to build a worldwide network of prayer, charity and missionary cooperation. Pope Leo XIV has emphasized that these Societies continue to nurture missionary awareness and connect communities throughout the world through prayer and charity.

Lord, in this year of the 110th anniversary of the Pontifical Missionary Union, help us rediscover that missionary formation is not secondary to mission. It is part of mission.

Missionary animation is not an accessory to evangelization. It prepares hearts for evangelization.

Missionary support is not simply philanthropy. It is an expression of ecclesial communion and participation in the one mission of Christ.

Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Fulton Sheen, make us missionary disciples who pray, form, animate, collaborate and give.

May we hear again the invitation of Pope Leo XIV:

“Inspired by these testimonies [of missionary saints], let us all commit to contributing, according to our own vocation and the gifts we have received, to the great mission of evangelization, which is always a work of love.”

Silence.

CONCLUSION — “ONE IN CHRIST, UNITED IN MISSION”

Lord Jesus, we remain before You in silence.

We thank You for the gift of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.
We thank You for his priestly and episcopal ministry.
We thank You for his passion for the Gospel.
We thank You for his missionary animation.
We thank You for his missionary formation.
We thank You for his generosity and his concrete support for the missions.
We thank You that his missionary legacy continues to speak to the Church today.
As we prepare for his Beatification, may his example help us to become more deeply aware that the mission belongs to the whole Church.
May we become more one in Christ, more united in mission.
May we rediscover the joy of missionary discipleship.
May we allow ourselves to be continually converted by the universal mission of the Church.
May we pray, form, animate, support, evangelize.
And may everything we do have one purpose:
that Christ may be known and loved to the ends of the earth.

Let us pray for Pope Leo XIV.
Let us pray for Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle and for all those who will participate in the Beatification.
Let us pray for the universal Church.
Let us pray for missionaries throughout the world.
Let us pray for the young Churches and the territories of first evangelization.
Let us pray for the Pontifical Mission Societies and all their collaborators, benefactors and members.
Let us pray that the witness of Fulton Sheen may awaken in the whole Church a new missionary springtime.
And let us pray that each one of us may receive the grace of a renewed missionary conversion.
Lord Jesus, we remain for a few more moments before You.
We do not wish to celebrate this Holy Hour with many words. We want to allow what we have heard to descend into our hearts.

We entrust to You the Church in the United States and the universal Church. We entrust to You all those who are engaged in evangelization and missionary cooperation.

And let us conclude this reflection by praying together in our heart the prayer with which Pope Leo XIV ends his Message for the 100th World Mission Sunday:

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.