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and, it is said, he refused to take the credit that belonged to God. He died on December 9, 1979, in his private chapel, in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Two months before that, Saint Pope John Paul II came to Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York, called the old archbishop forward out of the crowd, embraced him, and said, "You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a loyal son of the Church."

Every beatification process is preceded by nothing less than one verifiable miracle. In 2010 James Fulton Engstrom was born without a pulse and stayed that way for an hour, while his parents begged Sheen to intercede for their son. The boy is now 16 with no impairment of any kind, and he will be the one to carry the archbishop's relic up the aisle at the beatification Mass.

Bishop Sheen has been an inspiration and teacher to me and many, but he is not the only one. Certainly, among my favorites and my beloved patrons, is the poor friar himself: Saint Francis of Assisi.

Francis of Assisi was the son of a cloth merchant, and he wanted to be a knight. Instead he went to war, was captured, and spent a year in a prison in Perugia. Upon being freed, on one occasion, a leper met him on the road below Assisi. Francis got down off his horse and embraced him. At the end of his life he wrote that what had seemed bitter to him had turned to sweetness. Among the most signature stories was the apparition of our Lord to him in the ruined chapel of San Damiano. There, from the crucifix, Jesus told him to repair His house which was falling down. He took it literally and began hauling stones. Only later did he understand that it was the greater Church which our Lord was asking this friar to help restore.

What followed were years of prayer and retreat, and out of them came the Franciscan order and so many who joined him. Chief among them was Saint Clare. At 18 years old she slipped out of her father's house on Palm Sunday night. Francis and his brothers received her at the little church of Saint Mary of the Angels. She became a cloistered nun and, eventually joined by many sisters, she lived her remaining days on earth in fervent prayer and fasting, often visited by Popes and those seeking prayer and good counsel.

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There are many other such stories of inspiration and faith. Francis sent Anthony of Padua to teach the brothers. He crossed to Egypt in 1219, in the middle of a crusade, stood before the Sultan, and came home alive. At Greccio he set up the first Christmas crib (Nativity scene). On Mount La Verna, in September of 1224, he received the Stigmata (the wounds of Christ) on his body. Then, near the end of his life, nearly blind and dying, he composed the famous prayer and poem, the Cantic of the Creatures. He asked to be laid on the bare ground at Saint Mary of the Angels church where, on October 3, 1226, he died. The Church canonized him inside of 2 years, so renowned was his holiness.

One thing we can say of saints for sure is this: Saints know other saints. When we look at the lives of the saints, grace precedes them and follows them. It becomes clear that saints don't grow in isolation. They give rise to other ones and accompany others on their journey. Look at what came out of the company of one poor man from Assisi: Clare, Anthony, Bonaventure, and countless others! Even from among the Third Order were Elizabeth of Hungary and Louis the King of France. And Sheen had a pope, who is now a named saint, tell him that he had spoken well of Jesus Christ. Grace runs in company. And so we do well to have saintly friends, and even try to be a saintly friend to others.

Maybe you would like to get to know these saints or others. Sheen's television talks are easy to find online, and they hold up remarkably well; his book 'Life of Christ' is well worth the read. For Francis, read the Cantic of the Creatures and the Little Flowers, a collection of stories and legends surrounding his life, is a classic. This jubilee year the Holy Father has given us runs until January 10, with a plenary indulgence attached to a pilgrimage made to a church named for Saint Francis, under the usual conditions.

When I wonder what it takes to be saintly, as a Catholic, I am inclined to summarize it in this way: Be faithful to God through the Holy Catholic Church, and be faithful in a persevering way. Be faithful when you feel like it and when you do not. Be faithful when you agree and when you don't (in all things but sin). And remember that, for all the hardships we can feel and face in our Catholic life, the saints had their own challenges, and often times many more. So, in them we find friends who both understand and assist us in our needs and trials.

Here in the parish: That Man Is You, our local area men's group is off to a great start. We have a current class registrar of 59, with 44 men there this weekend.

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By the sounds of it, the ladies have as many or more signed up for our area women's group: She Shall Be Called Woman. Mark Kociemba and our team of catechists are off to a great start this year with Faith Formation. And I am happy to share that more, and new, opportunities for stewardship and spiritual enrichment in our parishes, like these, will be announced in the weeks ahead.

And so my friends, be cheerful, for the mercies of the Lord are not exhausted. May you have a blessed week, and may God bless you.

Our Lady, Queen of All Saints, pray for us.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

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FATHER MITCHELL'S PASTORAL BULLETIN

Sunday, September 20, 2026

**To the parishioners of the catholic communities in Melrose, Meire Grove,
Greenwald & Spring Hill, on the church campuses in Melrose & Meire Grove**
*The Holy Father's prayer intention for September: "Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of
water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it."*

Greetings.

This Thursday, September 24, in St. Louis, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen will be declared Blessed. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle will preside as the representative of Pope Leo XIV at his beatification Mass. This same year the whole Church marks the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, who died on October 3, 1226. The Holy Father has given us a jubilee year for it, running until January 10. Two men, 700 years apart, and both of them worth knowing.

Fulton Sheen was baptized Peter John in El Paso, Illinois, where, at a young age, his mother laid him on the altar of the Blessed Mother and gave him to her. He studied at Saint Viator College and then at the Saint Paul Seminary, right here in Minnesota (my alma mater).

He was ordained on September 20, 1919, at the Cathedral of Saint Mary in Peoria. On that day he made 2 resolutions: to offer the Mass every Saturday in honor of the Blessed Mother, and to spend an hour every day before the Blessed Sacrament. He kept them both for 60 years, better than 21,000 hours: preparing his sermons and praying for the People of God.

And the preaching went a long way. 4 million people listened to him on the radio on Sunday nights. As many as 30 million watched Life Is Worth Living where, in cassock and cape, he taught with nothing but a chalkboard and his "angels" to erase it. When he received an Emmy for this show, in 1952, he thanked his 4 writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

From 1950 to 1966 he directed the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and raised millions of dollars for the missions. He received a great many converts