



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624

August 20, 2026
Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Religious, and Faithful of the Diocese of Rochester:

It is with great excitement that I write to you a little over one month before the beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the Sixth Bishop of Rochester. This momentous occasion should bring us all great joy – it is not every day that a diocese has one of their bishop emeriti beatified. Bishop Sheen’s beatification should give us hope, I know it gives me hope, because although he was not perfect, he strived daily to fulfill the mission entrusted to him. Is that not what the Lord asks each of us to do? To be faithful to the mission entrusted to us, to do our best with the gifts that we have been given, and to leave the rest to the Lord.

I wanted to write to you all today to share some exciting news. Thanks to the generosity of the Diocese of Peoria and Bishop Louis Tylka, the Diocese of Rochester will be receiving a “substantial” first-class relic of Bishop Sheen. The week after Bishop Sheen’s Beatification in Saint Louis on September 24, 2026, Bishop Tylka will be visiting the Diocese of Rochester to bring us the relic. We will receive this relic in a special Mass on **Tuesday, September 29, 2026, at 7:00pm, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York.** I cordially invite you all to join me for this special event when Bishop Sheen returns to his Cathedral, our Cathedral!

After this initial Mass, we will be bringing Blessed Fulton Sheen on the road to the different deaneries of the Diocese. We will be hosting a Mass with the veneration of the relic in each deanery. I invite my brother priests to join me as concelebrants for the Mass in your deanery, and to invite the faithful you serve to join us for these special celebrations. The schedule and locations of the Masses are enclosed. I look forward to this opportunity to celebrate the beatification of Fulton Sheen with all of you and to meet more of the good people of the Diocese of Rochester on this occasion.

Finally, I would like to use this special occasion to make an appeal: Pray for vocations to the Priesthood. I ask that all of the faithful of the Diocese of Rochester to join me in asking Blessed Fulton Sheen **every day** to send us good and holy priests. On April 4, 1967, Bishop Sheen wrote a letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Rochester, in which he said:

Vocations are dwindling. We leave to others to seek out the causes of the decline. What is important is not to analyze chemistry of the waters which flood the sinking ship of vocations, but to refloat it. Today a thousand devices are used to instill vocations, such as deluging our youths with letters, pamphlets and appeals. But Our Lord gave only one way – and that way was prayer. [...] It may be a little disappointing to us that the solution to the problem of vocations is so simple, when we thought it was public relations, pictures of novices playing tennis and smiling like Hollywood teenagers. We have been inclined to follow every human resource before we come to what seems to be that “unpractical one of prayer.” We are not face to face with a decline in vocations, but rather with a decrease in prayer. This is where we must begin.

What Bishop Sheen wrote almost sixty years ago is true today. And so, I humbly beg you, pray for vocations. I ask every person in the Diocese of Rochester to pray **one Hail Mary** everyday for vocations, and to add Bishop Sheen's prayer from his letter: "**Lord, infuse young hearts with vocations.**" What a great thing if we all unite in this common prayer, and what a great thing to ask Blessed Fulton Sheen, the Sixth Bishop of Rochester to pray for.

As we anticipate the beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, may each of us be renewed in faith. May we be inspired by his example to seek holiness, and to be faithful to the mission entrusted to us. May we unite in a common prayer begging the Lord of the Harvest to send us laborers to build up the next generation of saints.

I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming months. In the meantime, let us pray for one another.

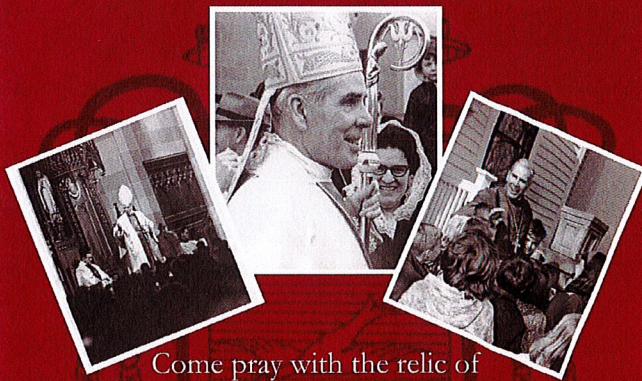
United in a common mission, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ John A. Bonnici

*The Most Reverend John S. Bonnici
Bishop of Rochester*

Blessed Fulton Sheen Relic Tour



Come pray with the relic of
Rochester's sixth bishop!

Locations/Dates

SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL

Rochester

Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2026, 7:00pm

ST. STEPHEN

Genesee

Thursday, Oct. 1, 2026, 7:00pm

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Spencerport

Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2026, 7:00pm

ST. MARY

Genesee

Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2026, 7:00pm

ST. JOSEPH

Penfield

Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026, 7:00pm

ST. MARY OUR MOTHER

Horseheads

Thursday, Oct. 29, 2026, 7:00pm

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Ithaca

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026, 7:00pm