

## MEDIA RELEASE

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*For immediate release*

### Extraordinary timing hoped for Fulton Sheen beatification

National Director of Catholic Mission Father Brian Lucas says the beatification of the Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen would be timely in the year of the Extraordinary Missionary Month.

Earlier this month, Pope Francis paved the way for the beatification of the high-profile American archbishop, who has a close link to Catholic Mission.

‘Archbishop Sheen is well-known as one of the first to utilise television for evangelisation of his own people—and he later won an Emmy for it—but his heart was always for mission to the ends of the earth,’ said Fr Lucas.

‘To that end, he was a National Director of the Propagation of the Faith in the US, one of the four societies that make up the Pontifical Mission Societies, known in Australia as Catholic Mission.’

It is widely hoped that Archbishop Sheen’s beatification will come in time for the Extraordinary Missionary Month in October this year. ‘Bishop [of Peoria Daniel] Jenky hopes and prays that ... Archbishop Fulton Sheen will be Beatified during this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of his ordination to the priesthood,’ a statement from the Diocese of Peoria reads.

Fr Lucas agrees the timing would be perfect. ‘It would be fitting for an extraordinary missionary like Archbishop Sheen to be beatified amid such a momentous occasion,’ said Fr Lucas.

Pope Francis announced that October 2019 will be an Extraordinary Missionary Month, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Benedict XV’s Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*, which aimed to renew missionary spirit following the end of the first world war.

On July 5, Pope Francis officially approved a miracle reported to have occurred in 2010, when a stillborn baby inexplicably recovered to full life in Illinois.

Medical professionals attempted to revive James Engstrom, who showed no signs of life until his parents, Bonnie and Travis, prayed for Archbishop Sheen’s intercession.

After his miraculous turnaround, young James had gained a second chance and a second name: James *Fulton* Engstrom.

Archbishop Sheen’s cause for canonisation was first opened in 2002 by the Diocese of Peoria, after the Archdiocese of New York said it would not explore the case. The latest development means one more miracle must be officially attributed to Archbishop Sheen before he can be made a saint.

‘The case for his beatification confirms what we knew already; that Archbishop Sheen was one of the Church’s great missionaries and a servant of the those on the margins, both in his homeland and more broadly,’ Fr Lucas said.

Should Archbishop Sheen be beatified in time for the Extraordinary Missionary Month, it will be the second sanctification of a former National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in twelve months after the October 2018 canonisation of El Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

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