



Pilgrims pray while listening to Catholic musician Matt Maher perform ahead of the beatification Mass for Venerable Fulton J. Sheen Sept. 24, 2026, at The Dome at America's Center in St. Louis. (OSV News/Bob Roller)



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When Tobias Ellis was a young boy, visits from his grandmother meant bringing out the family's Fulton Sheen videocassettes. After the children went to bed, she would watch the Catholic preacher whose voice had reached an earlier generation through television.

On Thursday, Ellis, a seminarian nearing the end of eight years of formation, traveled to St. Louis with fellow seminarians for Archbishop Sheen's beatification. The trip gave him a chance to learn more about a man who had been present in his family's life long before he began preparing for the priesthood.

Ellis recalled that before his grandmother's visits his family would say: "Oh, she's coming. Bring out the Fulton Sheen."

Sheen was [beatified](#) Sept. 24 during a Mass at The Dome at America's Center. Before his decades as a radio and television evangelist, Sheen studied at the [St. Paul Seminary](#) in Minnesota, where Ellis, who is set to be ordained next spring, is studying. He spoke to the National Catholic Reporter by phone from the bus on the way to St. Louis with the other seminarians.

"Some are sleeping or catching up on homework. Others are working on photos and social media posts," he said. The group also spent time in prayer.

He said he had been thinking about what Sheen's life might teach him, adding that he had not known much about the priest until recently.

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Reading Sheen's book, *The Priest Is Not His Own*, helped Ellis think about priesthood as a life directed toward Christ and the people he will serve.

He has also thought about Sheen's commitment to a daily Holy Hour, which he began while studying at the St. Paul Seminary, in the chapel where seminarians still pray. Ellis had also been reflecting on Sheen's willingness to use the communications tools of his era to share the Gospel and wondered how he might use the means available to him in his own ministry, even if doing so calls for

creativity.

Fr. Joseph Taphorn, St. Paul's Seminary's rector, said Sheen's beatification was a rare occasion for the community that offered a chance to celebrate Sheen and introduce seminarians more deeply to his example of prayer, devotion to Mary, teaching of the faith and work as an evangelist. He hoped the journey to St. Louis would also give the seminarians time to reflect on their relationship with Christ.

"This is a pilgrimage; it's not a vacation," Taphorn said. That sense of possibility was also felt in Sheen's hometown region. Sarah Hogan, principal of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School in Peoria, Illinois, where Sheen spent most of his life, said Sheen's life gives her students a local example of holiness.

"It shows our students that holiness is attainable for them," she said, noting that Sheen was from Peoria, attended Catholic school there and grew up devoting his life to the church."

She described Sheen as an important figure in her own faith, particularly through his devotion to the Eucharist. Prior to the beatification ceremony she said she looked forward to some of the school's faculty and staff experiencing the excitement of a major gathering of the church.

She ultimately hoped the day would renew their awareness of God at work in the world.

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