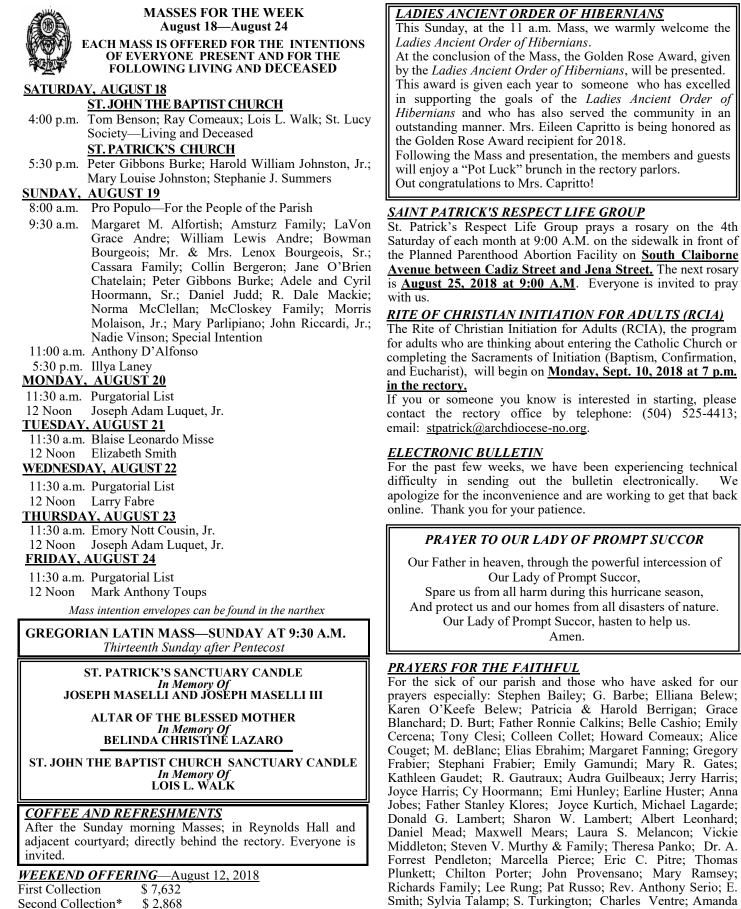
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M. Waring; Albert Weidenbacher, Jr.

# **ARCHBISHOP SHEEN'S WARNING OF A CRISIS IN CHRISTENDOM**

"First of all, we are at the end of Christendom," Bishop Fulton Sheen solemnly said during a television show in 1974. "Now not Christianity, not the Church. Remember what I am saying."

Then he defined what he meant. "Christendom is economic, political, social life as inspired by Christian principles. That is ending — we've seen it die. Look at the symptoms: the breakup of the family, divorce, abortion, immorality, general dishonesty."

That was 1974. Today we know it's even worse with the definition of marriage and gender drawn into the picture. And the crisis within the Church.

He reminded that of 22 civilizations that have decayed since the beginning of the world, 19 rotted and perished from within.

"We live in it from day to day, and we do not see the decline." Remember, that was in 1974. "We take it for granted—we get used to things, and almost accept them as the rule." Despite the decline blaring today, isn't that a rule? How many Catholics accept the counter message to Humanae Vitae?

Sheen pointed out "the press that we read, the television that we see, is in no instance inspired by Christian principles. As a matter of fact, there is, on the part of many of us, the tendency to go down to meet the world — not to lift the world up. We are afraid of being unpopular — so we go with the mob."

The good bishop noted we were living in the fourth 500year period of Church history, explaining "the Church is not a continuing thing — it dies and rises again. It proceeds on the principle of Christ himself as priest and victim.

"And there comes the defeat, the seeming decay, we are put in the grave, and then we rise again. We have had four deaths in our Christian history."

## First Three Falls and Rises

The first time the Church was in dire straits was in the fall of Rome, the first 500-year period. It had a rebirth when great saint missionaries like Augustine in England and Patrick in Ireland spread the faith.

Then came a second "decay" around the year 1,000 with the Moslem invasions and the split of the Church with a schism in Constantinople.

"It seemed to be the end of everything. And then we came to life again," Sheen said.

In the third 500-year period he said the Church became "rotten" as nuns and priests were defecting. Then came the reformers who "almost always reform the wrong things. And they began reforming the faith, and there was nothing

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St. Patrick's takes up a second collection at all Sunday Masses. Unless otherwise indicated, the second collection is *exclusively* dedicated to the restoration and maintenance of St. Patrick's Church. As a historical landmark and a priceless work of art, our 19th century church is in constant need of maintenance and restoration so as to ensure this treasure for future generations. Please be generous in contributing to this worthy and important cause!

wrong with faith — it was the morals that needed to be reformed. It's not renewal — it's really a moral reformation that is needed today, too." Remember, that was 44 years ago.

All the more so in our day. On just one point, how many listened to, and took to heart, Humanae Vitae? Even theologians defected from it.

After that period the Church came to life again, Sheen said.

"And now we're at the fourth period, and we're rotting — we're spoiled — no great zeal, no great learning, no great fire." Yet there's hope because "anyone who knows history is not particularly disturbed."

### **Church's Enemies**

"But the enemy in each of the 500-year periods has been separate and distinct," he continued. "We had, and here I am speaking generally of enemies within the Church, in the first 500 years, false doctrine centering around the person of Christ...the Christological heresies. So the Church was just split open, and that was one of the reasons that made it possible for the Moslems to develop."

The next period saw attacks on the head of the Church, leading to the Eastern Church breaking away.

By the 16th century the attack was on "the body of Christ, the mystical body, the Church." It was Reformation time.

#### **Today's 4th Enemy**

"Our enemy today is the world — the spirit of the world," Sheen made clear.

"Today we have to conform to the world or we're branded" he said. Must be politically correct. "Our Lord said, I have taken you out of the world. We say, 'No we have to win the world, and to win it you have to be one with it.' Our Lord says, I pray not for the world. He was praying for the spirit of the world. And this is the easiest kind of way to fall off the log — worldliness. It's so simple, and it can be justified for a thousand reasons; namely, the Vatican Council said we have to go into the world — indeed, but not to be world, which is quite a different matter. So this is our attack today."

Sheen saw this as "one of the basic causes of our degeneration, of our death. We're dying. What about it? What's the answer?"

"The answer is: these are great and wonderful days in which to be alive. I thank God... that I can live in these days, because these are days of testing." Since 1974 the testing pressure has increased.

> Joseph Pronechen National Catholic Register

## A "SHOUT OUT" FOR ST. PATRICK'S

Log on to: <u>https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eTQQjZABd-I</u> the YouTube website of EWTN's program *Journey Home*, and listen to a convert from Protestantism as he explains his decision to convert to Catholicism and the important role that St. Patrick's clerics, sacred beauty, music and chant played in the decision. It is an interesting story and a great compliment to all who support this grand church.