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# The New Bishop of Rochester

By FATHER HENRY ATWELL

Bishop Sheen was told the day he was appointed the new Bishop of Rochester, "You'll have to be a good speaker if you're going to succeed Bishop Kearney."

"I'll try," he replied.

His efforts in this direction, however, have not waited for his appointment to Rochester.

And the success of those efforts is certainly one of the best known facts about Bishop Sheen.

Of all the churchmen in the centuries since the command was given to "... go ... preach ..." none has ever so consistently had an audience so large as has Bishop Sheen.

His fame began, however, with a reluctant audience.

Women of the Eucharistic Guild at the Cenacle Convent in Boston were disappointed when they were told that a young priest just back from study in Europe was going to substitute for their regular speaker at their monthly meeting.

This reluctant audience soon became the young Father Sheen's first enthusiastic audience and the name Sheen has ever since been synonymous with eloquence.

This eloquence catapulted him from lecture platform to radio to television.

And his topics a decade ago are like a forecast of today's headlines and the still-to-be-realized hopes of the Vatican Council.

In a 1943 talk in Rochester, the then Monsignor Sheen voiced a plea to "Men of Good Will" for "inter-creedal cooperation"—and two years later deplored the escalation of weaponry saying development of the atomic bomb would no more deter war than did the invention of dynamite.

Again in Rochester, in 1946, he pointed to the growing turbulence of the younger generation—now the comfortable suburbanites—and said, "Modern youth is in revolt because it is looking for something absolute with which to fight evil. Passion is back and they have it; we have the truth and no zeal, they have zeal and no truth."

He was one of the first spokesmen in the nation to sound a warning on Communism, but on this subject many missed a critically important point—"While we can hate Communism, we must love Communists," he said in 1943, something widely lacking in much of today's anti-communist activity.

And the present Arab-Israeli cauldron seething in the turbulent Middle East was recognized 15 years ago as a likely area for the major powers to test their strength and nerve—in 1951 Bishop Sheen, in a talk to a capacity-filled Eastman Theatre, said the fate of the world may hinge on whether Moslem leaders ally themselves ultimately with the free world or with Communism.

Bishop Sheen never lost his optimism, however.

Again in the Eastman Theatre a year later in 1952, he said, "As evil intensifies in one part of the world, so does good advance in another area." This he termed a "polarization" of forces. Did he think the forces of evil might possibly gain the victory? "No ... evil can never triumph."

But this optimism was tempered by his realization that the forces for good could be delayed in their victory and to speed this he called for "a Spartan way of life."

And with his optimism, he also retains a characteristic sense of humor.

"I am reminded," he told his audience at that time, "of the day our blessed Lord was playing golf with St. Peter in heaven. St. Peter drove off first, his ball landing a few inches from the hole. Placing his hand on the blessed Lord's shoulder, St. Peter said, 'Remember now, no miracles!'"

Victory normally comes, Bishop Sheen pointed out, to those who want it and are willing to sacrifice for it, not as a hand-out from the Lord.

His own daily schedule for the past several decades—and quite likely to be basically continued here in the Rochester Diocese—begins at 6:15 a.m. He then spends a "holy hour" of prayer and meditation prior to his Mass at 8, usually in his private chapel.

As Bishop of Rochester he will probably be out in parish churches or at the chapels of the many diocesan institutions or at the schools of the Diocese for Mass and a talk on many mornings to meet his people as their spiritual shepherd at the altar of the Lord.

His breakfast is frugal—orange juice, hot water and toast, a combination of mortification and practical necessity: he's suffered from ulcers but they don't bother him much now.

Like most businessmen, he's been at his desk at the Propagation of the Faith office on Fifth Avenue in New York City promptly at 9. Once in Rochester, he might arrive at his Chancery desk even earlier because he'll only have to go up two floors from his residence quarters to his office at the Columbus Civic Center building.

His morning is usually filled with appointments, correspondence, writing for his newspaper columns, magazine articles and books or editing one of his mission magazines. Much of this volume of work he will continue as Bishop of Rochester.

He has his lunch at 1 and then says his breviary and is back at his desk by 2.

At the Propagation of the Faith office for the past several years, the clatter of typewriters and the purr of an efficient organization at work has come to a halt at 3—for many years for the recitation of the Rosary and in the past year for either the Rosary, some other appropriate prayer or a talk on the Scriptures by Bishop Sheen.

He's home about 5:30 and says the final portion of the breviary, Compline, with his priest assistants prior to supper at 6.

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... in St. Peter's piazza at Rome.

Father Atwell is editor of the Courier.