

Sheen

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turned away, an assistant would erase the blackboard, and the archbishop would joke that an angel had cleaned it.

The excerpts in the book cover such topics as finding one's purpose in life; enjoying work; relieving fears and anxieties; forgiving one's self and others; and living prayerfully and mindfully. Here are some samples of Archbishop Sheen's insights:

✕ **Encounter with God:** "People today do not come to God through the order of the universe; they come to God through disorder in their own lives ... Hence, (priests must pay) attention to the anxieties, fears, remorse and pains in the human heart."

✕ **Sin:** "There is no evidence whatsoever to sustain the position of some modern psychiatrists that consciousness of sin tends to make a person morbid. To call someone an escapist because he or she asks God for forgiveness is like calling a householder whose home is on fire an escapist because he sends for the fire department."

✕ **Love:** "Love may be defined as mutual self-giving and self-outpouring which ends in self-recovery."

✕ **Charity:** "Charity must deal not only with society but also with individual souls ... Charity may embrace a grouping of persons, records, statistics, committees, graphs and budgets. It may be these, but something more; it is organic — organic because alive with the life of a body; organic because the flesh and blood of its members are the living members of the body of Christ."

✕ **Temptation:** "Analyze yourself and you will find this astounding fact: You have more temptations to be good than you have to be bad ... How many times have you been tempted to help a poor family, and how often have you felt sad

if you did not and happy when you did? How often were you tempted to give up excessive drinking, bad temper, stealing, to see 'what is in the Bible,' to be kinder to your spouse, less cranky with your employees, less sarcastic to your neighbor, to try praying, to share your wealth with the hungry, to be more interested in community welfare?"

Archbishop Sheen sought through his writing to combine cool, intellectual logic with heartfelt appeals to his readers' common sense. Many of his best pieces served up enough analytical meat for the well-educated, but also employed catchy phrases to gain the attention of those who would not normally be attracted to spiritual and philosophical tomes.

New York Auxiliary Bishop William J. McCormack welcomed publication of "From the Angel's Blackboard." The

bishop was Propagation of the Faith director for the New York archdiocese when Archbishop Sheen was the agency's national director. Bishop McCormack now serves as national director himself.

Bishop McCormack said the excerpts from the centennial book would fit people's attention span, now "more attenuated than when he was speaking."

After serving as national director of the Propagation of the Faith from 1950 to 1966, Fulton Sheen became bishop of Rochester, a post he held until resigning in October, 1969. He retired in that year as well, and was named titular archbishop of Newport in Wales. From Rochester, he returned to New York City, living there until his death.

His time in Rochester proved to be a frustrating experience. Although he was widely hailed on his arrival in the diocese, the famed bishop's attempts to implement a progressive and post-Vatican II agenda earned him as many detractors as it did allies.

Some of his moves won local praise. Among them was his establishment of a priests' council to serve in a consultative capacity to the bishop, a move prompted by the commands of the Second Vatican Council.

He also broke new ground in ecu-



'From the Angel's Blackboard' is a collection of Sheen's earlier writings that can be purchased at local bookstores starting this week.

menical relations, and was particularly popular among the diocese's Jewish community, according to Retired Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, who served as his vicar general.

And, in a move that distinguished him from the rest of the nation's bishops, Archbishop Sheen created the nation's first Vicariate of Urban Ministry, to serve the inner-city poor.

"I always felt he was ahead of his time in many things," Bishop Hickey commented, noting that Archbishop Sheen was also one of the first U.S. bishops to come out against the Vietnam War in 1967.

"It was like living in the eye of a hurricane when he was here," Bishop Hickey added. "He broadened our outlook, and got us out of our provincial way of looking at things."

Yet, Archbishop Sheen sometimes took actions that undermined his own efforts to realize his grand visions. In particular, he experienced a backfire in his attempt to give the property of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for use as a housing site for the needy — a decision he made without consulting St. Bridget's parishioners. When HUD learned of the intense dissent provoked by the bishop's decision, it pulled out of the deal.

"It was perhaps the first real failure of his life, and it shook him deeply," Father Robert F. McNamara wrote in a 1989 *Catholic Courier* article about the late bishop.

Nonetheless, none of the contemporary accounts of his time in the diocese contains the slightest criticism of Archbishop Sheen's personal holiness and integrity. Whatever his administrative flaws, the archbishop always retained the awe, respect and genuine affection of many here in the diocese.

Father Michael C. Hogan, priest-in-residence at St. John of Rochester in Fairport and brother of Archbishop Sheen's successor in Rochester, Retired Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, served as the famed cleric's secretary from 1967 to 1969.

Father Hogan recalled that Archbishop Sheen was always kind to his subordinates, who still recall his great sense of humor.

Despite his position as a well-known public figure, the archbishop always had time for anybody he met on the street, Father Hogan remembered. He noted that the bishop would speak with street people quite often when he was entering or exiting the former diocesan Pastoral Center located in downtown Rochester.

"He'd stop and talk to them," Father Hogan said. "He'd give them a dollar or two. He always remarked on what a beautiful smile they had."

"He practiced what he preached," Father Hogan added. "To be a part of his life was really a great honor for me."

Contains reporting by Catholic News Service.

MISSION NEWS



Pope John Paul II, *TIME* magazine's "man of the year," has become the spokesman for the world's greatest needs. ♦ To those in Sudan, long-devastated by civil war, he said: "You may think you are forgotten by the rest of the world. But never are you far from the mind and heart

of God." ♦ To the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, he sent this message: "...may the...weapons finally be silenced, may hearts be opened to the ardent task of peace!" ♦ In the Pope's name, the Propagation of the Faith encourages your prayerful and financial support of the Church in Sudan, in Bosnia and throughout the mission world.



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