

Keynote Address Outline for the Sports Faith International 15th Annual Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Fulton J. Sheen Award Ceremony

**Lincolnshire Marriott Resort, Lincolnshire, Illinois
May 27, 2023**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

- I. Thank you to Patrick McCaskey and SFI Board for honoring me with the Fulton J. Sheen Award.
 - A. I am humbled to be honored in the company of so many accomplished people, some of whom I have known for years.
 1. The late Cardinal George Pell – Fr. Smyth Award
 2. Fr. Matthew Foley, whom I have known for years as a fellow Chicago priest. He served as pastor on the south side of Chicago in the Little Village neighborhood, not far from where I grew up.
 3. Travis Lulay, who played football at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, and is an inductee in the Montana Football Hall of Fame. My connection with Montana was through my Rector at Mundelein Seminary, who became the Bishop of Great Fall, Montana, in 1978.
 4. Alan Webb, the American mile record holder and a member of the LIFE Runners.
 5. The 2023 All-Star Catholic High School Team of the Year: Boys Varsity Soccer Team of JSerra High School in Capistrano, California, which I visited on December 2, 2020, when I came to Southern California to tour the St. Michael Norbertine Abbey and St. Junipero Serra School.
 6. Finally, my good friend, Coach Ken Leonard: Ken Leonard is not only the winningest coach in Illinois High School history, but a man of faith. I know because it has been my privilege to pray with him and the team before and after games and stand on the sidelines with Coach Leonard and the team during games, including the State Football Championship game this past November in Champaign, Illinois. He is not afraid to talk about Jesus with his players and give witness to our Christian faith!

B. It is daunting to consider the legendary status of the person for whom this award is named, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

1. I grew up watching him on TV.
2. In 1931, Fulton Sheen wrote an essay he titled, "A Plea For Intolerance," in which he said, "America, it is said, is suffering from intolerance - it is not. It is suffering from tolerance. Tolerance of right and wrong, truth and error, virtue and evil, Christ and chaos. Our country is not nearly so overrun with the bigoted as it is overrun with the broadminded."

II. My essays in the scholarly journal, *First Things*:

A. "Eucharistic Coherence," August 2021

1. Phrase comes from the "Aparecida Document" of the bishops of Latin America, which included then Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis.
2. "The Bible clearly teaches about the proper disposition to receive Holy Communion. In the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes: 'Whoever . . . eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself' (1 Cor. 11:27-29). This biblical teaching is reflected in Canons 915-16 of the Catholic Church's Code of Canon Law. Canon 915 addresses the minister of Holy Communion, who is not to admit individual persons to the Sacrament under the circumstances clearly defined in that canon. Canon 916 is addressed to the person who is 'conscious of grave sin.' Thus, whereas Canon 915 puts the burden of discernment on the minister of Holy Communion, Canon 916 places responsibility for self-discernment on the person who desires to receive the Sacrament. These principles for the proper disposition for being admitted to Holy Communion are in keeping with the maxim that 'law follows theology' – that is, that the laws of the Church are not created in a vacuum but are practical applications of biblical and theological truths in actual situations.

In seeking Eucharistic coherence in an incoherent era, we must remember that our goal is conversion and readmission to Communion, not exclusion and permanent expulsion from the community of faith. Even when a difficult decision must be made not to admit someone to Holy Communion until there has been repentance and reconciliation, such discipline does not contradict the love by which it is motivated."

B. "Imagining a Heretical Cardinal," February 28, 2023

1. "Imagine if a cardinal of the Catholic Church were to publish an article in which he condemned 'a theology of eucharistic coherence that multiplies barriers to the grace and gift of the eucharist' and stated that 'unworthiness cannot be the prism of accompaniment for disciples of the God of grace and mercy.' Or what if a cardinal of the Catholic Church were to state publicly that homosexual acts are not sinful and same-sex unions should be blessed by the Church?"
2. I pointed out the canonical consequences of heresy.
3. I intentionally did not mention names, as I had more than one cardinal in mind, and I wanted to focus on what was being said, not on who was saying it.
4. I have received many letters and emails: 95% of them supportive.
5. The negative letters were irrational, emotional, and downright insulting.
6. It is noteworthy that no one wrote a substantive rebuttal defending the heretical teachings.
7. Criticism basically focused on process: I should have addressed this privately, not in a public forum.
 - a. But this was not some private disagreement.
 - b. If public dissent is not addressed publicly, people think it is acceptable.
 - c. See today's Office of Readings, the third letter of the apostle John: "I did write to the church; but Diotrefes, who enjoys being their leader, ignores us. Therefore, if I come I will speak publicly of what he is doing in spreading evil nonsense about us."
8. It was also suggested that I was judging a cardinal, and cardinals can only be judged by the Pope. However, I did not judge or accuse anyone by name of being a heretic but offered my opinion that certain views expressed by some Cardinals could be construed as heretical. This is an important and essential distinction. I recognize that I do not have the authority to judge a Bishop or a Cardinal. But I do have the right to express my opinion as stated in canon 218: "Those engaged in the sacred disciplines have a just freedom of inquiry and of expressing their opinion prudently on those matters in which they possess expertise, while observing the submission due to the magisterium of the Church." My essay in *First Things* expressed my opinion on matters concerning public statements made in contradiction of magisterial teachings of the Church and in which I possess

expertise as someone with a doctorate in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University as well as many years of experience in the practice and teaching of canon law.

- C. St. Josemaría Escrivá: “If we are not humble, deeply humble, it is easy to end up with a deformed conscience. It may well happen that, through weakness, we do wrong. But we must have a clear conscience. What we cannot do is commit acts that are wrong and say they are holy. The less humility there is, the more serious the consequences of the conscience’s deformation. Some people are not content merely with tranquilizing their consciences subjectively, but regard themselves as heralds of a new morality, missionaries and prophets of these evil claims, and they spread their errors with the fervor of a new crusade. They draw along in their wake those who are weak, who find in these new doctrines a justification for their own depravities, and who in this way feel dispensed from the unpleasantness of rectification, which for humble people is a joyful duty” (*Collected Letters of St. Josemaría Escrivá*, vol. 1, n. 37, pp. 103-104).
- D. St. Paul’s letter to Titus (2:1): Engraved in Latin on the ambo in our Cathedral in Springfield: *LOQUERE QUAE DECET SANAM DOCTRINAM* (“You must say what is consistent with sound doctrine”).

III. May God give us this grace. Amen.