My Personal Bishop Sheen Story

My personal story begins around 1974 or 1975 when I first bought a set of cassette tape recordings of that 1973 Bishop Sheen Retreat. In one of his talks, I remember the Bishop saying "I pray every day I drop dead in front of the Blessed Sacrament, on any Feast Day of Our Lady." See Conference 5.12. For whatever reason, that statement stuck in my head.

As you may know Bishop Sheen died Dec 9, 1979 which was a Sunday. At that time I was living in California in the Los Angeles area. Early in the morning of Dec 10, which was a Monday, I clearly remember walking by a newsstand. Thinking back, this was abnormal for me because a normal weekday morning for me meant having breakfast at home, getting in the car, and driving straight to work with no stops in between. I cannot recall the reason why this Monday was different. Anyway as I was walking by this newsstand, I happened to see the front page of a newspaper called the "Register" which was a popular newspaper in the Los Angeles area. On the front page was a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe side by side with a picture of Bishop Sheen. As best as I can recall, the two pictures took up the entire front page. The caption under the Bishop stated that he had died the day before. I do not recall exactly what the Blessed Mother's caption was, but I am sure it had something to do with Her Guadalupe Apparition Feast Day. Seeing this front page, and recalling the Bishop's prayer, I immediately connected the dots and put two and two together and concluded that God had granted the Bishop's wish for dying on a Feast Day of Our Lady which had to be Dec.9. It dawned on me a little later that the Catholic appointed Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is Dec 12 and not Dec 9. So I then proceeded to do some research to determine the reason for the apparent disconnect. Here is what my search revealed. Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego a total of four times in 1531. The first two apparitions occurred on Dec 9 and the last one occurred on Dec 12. Also on Dec 12 the miracle of the appearance of Our Lady's image on Juan Diego's tilma occurred. So I assume that is the reason why the Catholic Church decided to make Dec 12 the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe as opposed to Dec 9. However, we must keep in mind that Dec 9 remains a special day because of the fact that it is the day of the first recorded apparition of Our Lady in America.

Bishop Sheen lived in a three room apartment in New York City where he was found dead on Dec 9. In that apartment, he had a bedroom, a study, and in between the two rooms a chapel that housed the Blessed Sacrament. See Conference 3.11. Bishop Sheen said he prayed one hour a day for 54 years before it, a devotion he recommended to all his fellow priests. See Conference 5.11. He said he must have passed that chapel 100 to 200 times a day. See Conference 3.11.

Here is an excerpt from Wikipedia which is an important part of my story.

Excerpt from Wikipedia:
"Soon after an open-heart surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital, Sheen died on December 9, 1979, in his private chapel in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. "

So it looks like the Good Lord granted two of the Bishop's wishes, namely dying on Our Lady's Feast Day and in front of the Blessed Sacrament.
Anyway getting back to my story, I bought the Register newspaper, took it home, and placed it in my file cabinet for safe keeping. Two years later in 1981, my family and I moved back to New York. I remember that move-in day in New York when the moving van came to deliver our furniture. It was a very large van and was packed with other people's furniture alongside of mine. I got involved with quick and hectic unloading of the truck, and the act of marking off a checklist either had skipped my mind or became impossible. Long story short, all our belongings were delivered safe and sound except for my file cabinet. It was a day or two after that I realized that my file cabinet was missing. I suspected that it was mistakenly mixed in with other people's furniture on the truck. I called the moving company, explained the situation but had no luck. My file cabinet was gone. That was a very sad day for me. I recall caring little for anything in that file cabinet, except for the newspaper with the pictures of the Bishop together with Our Lady. Soon after, I made several phone calls to the Register asking for a copy of that beautiful front page. That exercise got me nowhere. After a while I gave up the search and sadly accepted my loss. As time went on, I often wondered why the Good Lord allowed me to lose that newspaper. Then in 2019, 38 years later, I presented my Bishop Sheen story at a KofC meeting. I sadly explained why I did not have a copy of that Register front page to show them. That was a very important piece of my story. At that meeting, one of the Knights said to me, "You've been searching in the wrong places." At our next meeting he gave me a phone number to call. Lo and behold that phone call and $25 later produced good fruit. I received an electronic copy of a front page of a Register Newspaper dated Dec. 10, 1979 the day after Bishop Sheen passed away. However, it was not the same front page that I remember. I was told that the copy that I received must have been that of a different edition. So I performed another search for some other Dec 10 Register Edition, but had no luck. However, the front page that I did receive dated Dec 10 does have a picture of the Bishop together with Our Lady which provides sufficient support for my personal story. I will always be grateful to that member of the KofC who helped me find this newspaper page.

Note: This is <u>not</u> the exact front page I remember. I am assuming it is the front page of another edition, but good enough to support my story.



Fran's Auction Nets $5,000 To Rebuild Charred Brothel
Page A3

Rams Wallop Falcons, 34-13, Win 7th Straight Division Title
Page C1

It's Monday, December 10, 1979

The Register

METROPOLITAN ORANGE COUNTY'S MAILFUL NEWSPAPER

Seven Sections—84 Total Pages ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA Daily 90¢—Sunday 2

U.S. Seeks World Court Iran Ruling

Iran Backs Off On Trial Threats

Archbishop Sheen

NY Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Dead At Age 84

Brown Slogan, Finances Differ

Oil Firms Gave $100,000 To Man They 'Fear Most'

Gas Supplies Reported Near Shortage Point

Heavy Fog: Highs 60-65

Inside Today's Register