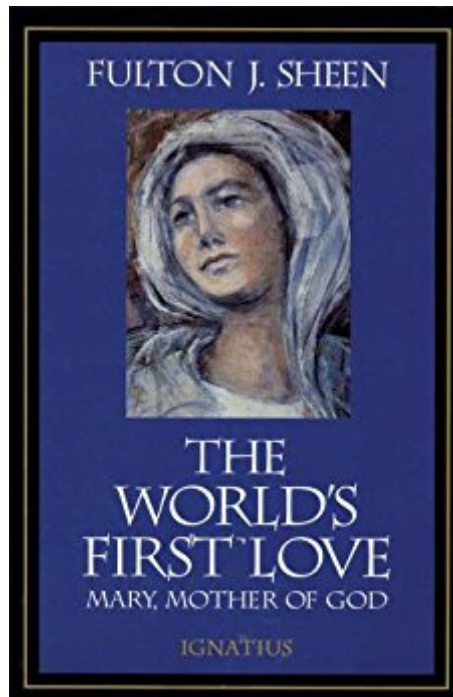


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The World's First Love



Synopsis

With his characteristic eloquence and brilliance, Fulton Sheen presents a moving portrayal of the Blessed Virgin Mary that combines deep spirituality with history, philosophy and theology. Mary's whole life is lovingly portrayed in this word portrait that is a never failing source of information, consolation and inspiration. While considering the different phases of Mary's life, Bishop Sheen discusses various problems common to mankind of every age and reveals clearly that every problem can be resolved. He emphasizes the unique dignity, strength and gifts of women and their ability to help heal the world's problems. Sheen stresses mankind's need of the Mother of God and her burning love for all her children. The great resurgence of devotion to Mary is God's way of emphasizing the worth and dignity of every person against the false doctrines that have so confused the modern world.

Book Information

File Size: 553 KB

Print Length: 277 pages

Publication Date: October 16, 2009

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B002T7DE2S

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #412,873 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #58

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Customer Reviews

This book tells the story of Mary. It is not a biography, but a theological and devotional treatise on the Mother of God. Bishop Sheen adeptly considers the different phases of Mary's life from her Immaculate Conception to her Assumption. He examines Marian beliefs ranging from her position

as Mother of God to her Apparitions at Fatima in 1917, and the importance of the Rosary. Sheen sets out to prove that devotion to Mary cannot be separated from devotion to her Son, Jesus. Likewise, true love for Jesus should lead the disciple to a devotion to Mary. Sheen points out that without Mary, we could not have Jesus and we should love Mary simply because Jesus did! One cannot help but be moved by the authors portrayal of this Woman of Faith. It was Sheen's hope that his book would draw the reader to Mary as he was, "like a piece of iron to a magnet but never without her Son." It is this readers view that Sheen succeeded admirably.

The late Archbishop Fulton Sheen pulls together common misconceptions various religions have about the Catholic Church's beliefs about Mary, and gives insights and Biblical reasons why Catholics honor her so greatly. There is also a chapter I found really informative on "Mary and the Moslems" which tells about the Islamic beliefs of Mary, i.e. that she is to be the most honored of women and that the Koran speaks of Mary and the Virgin Birth of Jesus. This book would be wonderful for those wishing for a greater love for Our Blessed Mother, as well as those Protestants who mistakingly think Mary should be less revered and those beginning their conversion to Catholicism.

A beautiful book on Our Blessed Mother -- remarkably thoughtful and incisive, and very well written. Moreover, for a book first published 50 years ago, "The World's First Love" remains fresh and relevant. To be sure, some aspects are a bit dated: Communism is not the threat it was in 1952, and the same is true of atomic war. Also, Archbishop Sheen has proven to be more optimistic than history has warranted. He more or less predicts, for example, that within 30 years (that is, by the 1980s) the world would have pretty much seen the Light that is Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Tragically, that wasn't true 20 years ago, and it's certainly not true today (if the sewage was up to our waist in 1982, it's up to armpits in 2002). No matter. This is a beautiful book on Mary, and I heartily recommend it (along with "A Woman Clothed with the Sun" as a delightful companion piece).

I was surprised that I enjoyed this book to the extremes that I did. I was equally surprised by the elegance of the writing. I know that many women will read this book and cringe at statements such as "Here is the essence of womanhood--acceptance, resignation, submission"(83). Reading this line did scare me, but if read within the context of the entire book and keeping in mind Sheen's undeniable love and respect for women throughout his discussion, it can be thought of in a

completely different way. Basically, I view much of the writing in the book as ideals, such as ideals of love or ideals of men/women. Unfortunately, the world is often so corrupt that it is difficult to live or even think in ideals. This book is full of such beauty that it will make many women consider what it means to be a feminist or complete woman. I don't think women have to become men to be successful. Besides all of this, it is a wonderful introduction to Mary and the rosary within a broad discussion of love. The book does have some outdated sections, due to its publication in 1952, but much of it remains timeless. Even if you end up hating what the book says, you will not be able to deny the beauty of some lines such as "All human love is an initiation into the Eternal" (12).

Bishop Sheen was Bishop Sheen because of several factors. The most important of which is that he was a book reading machine, a scholar & thinker, from an early age. Consequently, when he writes, he synthesizes and combines from that vast reading and thinking experience to produce fresh concepts either never noticed before or never popularly presented, in addition to his many quotable gems. This is a good book to add to your library concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are two chapters within this book that I especially took note of: (1) Ch 17 "Mary and the Moslems": This is the most quoted chapter of this book. Basically, Sheen relates the story of Fatima, Portugal, a former Muslim town hundred years ago. It was named after Muhammad's (founder of Islam) daughter Fatima who was venerated in the Koran, but the Blessed Virgin Mary is the most venerated in the Koran above Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Sheen relates God's plan over coincidence and states that the Blessed virgin chose to appear as 'Our Lady of Fatima' as a pledge and sign of hope to the Muslim people and as an assurance that they, who show her so much respect, will one day accept her Divine Son too. (2) Ch 21 "Mary and the Sword": Great depth in explaining that a double edged sword pierced both Jesus and Mary. Covers extensively the 7 Dolors of Mary. Goes on to explain that Jesus was, in one respect, the one wielding the double edged sword that both pierced him first, then his mother, through all stages of his life and through his mission and passion. The best book on the Blessed Virgin Mary and understanding Marian Doctrine: True Devotion to Mary by St. Louis DeMontfort, a classic....

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