

# COLUMNISTS

## Cardinal Bernardin was gift from God

We are mourning the death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

For those of us engaged in moral theology, Cardinal Bernardin will remain an important contributor to our endeavors for many years to come.

For American Catholics, he will remain an important and beloved pastor, who gave us a way to live in the unity that unites our many differences.

For all Americans, he will remain an example of how one can be terminally sick and still make of our dying a profound gift to others and a source of deep meaning for ourselves.

For priests, he will remain a model of how that wonderful vocation can be lived in a joyful, loving and faithful way, and how it can profoundly and positively influence the life of the whole church.

Speaking as a moral theologian, I must confess to a great debt of gratitude to Cardinal Bernardin. It was he who urged us to link the whole range of issues dealing with protecting life. Through his call to think in terms of a "consistent ethic of life" that makes a "seamless garment" of our efforts to end war and poverty and abortion, to resist assisted suicide, to reject capital punishment, to promote the dignity of human life, Cardinal Bernardin made an important pastoral contribution, and reframed



the moral life

BY PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

our moral thinking, too. He urged us all to stretch our thinking and caring about single issues, to move out of our pockets of righteousness, to recognize the link that unites the issues and unites ourselves.

As a Catholic American, I am almost awestruck by the way in which this man has influenced the church in our country. As we all struggled to adjust to the renewals called for by Vatican II, Cardinal Bernardin consistently called us to move beyond our individual fears and opinions, and recognize the true source of our unity, which is in Christ.

Cardinal Bernardin recognized that Catholics can and do differ in their views about moral issues, about the reality of change itself, about directions the hierarchy should be taking, about our response to American political, social and cultural life.

But he recognized, too, that Catholics have always differed on these sorts of questions. That's part of what "Catholic" means. What Cardinal Bernardin recognized and made visible for the rest of us, is that the unity that makes our differences possible is far deeper, far more important, and it is what gives Catholicism its genius and its reason for being. Much of the energy of the last days of his life was spent helping us find a way to search for "Common Ground" and make it a reality after he was gone. The importance of this endeavor is manifest most clearly, perhaps, in the controversy it elicited, sadly, from his brother cardinals.

As an American living at the end of the 20th century, Cardinal Bernardin's final days showed us so well what he was so good at teaching us all through his life. His dying showed us in a way impossible to miss what an incredible fool Dr. Kevorkian is, and what an incredible fraud his "alternative" actually offers.

Cardinal Bernardin showed us that dying really is a part of living, that dying well can be an enormous gift to others, that being sick and facing death can be ennobling and an integral part of one's WHOLE life story. To a culture that wants quick, instant fixes for any discomfort or inconvenience, let alone real suffering,

Cardinal Bernardin showed that human fulfillment and real human joy come through living and loving and dying with the Lord.

And in an age when the vocation to priesthood seems to be especially affected by many other controversies, Cardinal Bernardin gave us a picture of what effective, compassionate, contemporary and relevant priestly ministry looks like. He showed "in the concrete" how genuine priestly leadership can make a profound, positive difference for the whole church.

When we met him, we came into contact with someone whose level of human fulfillment was beyond doubt, and we sensed in him a man whose joy in serving the church gave him strength enough to face the issues head-on, survive an incredible personal attack, rise above the pettiness and fear that characterize so many of his less courageous colleagues, and witness to what is most important about life and faith.

Cardinal Bernardin often referred to himself as "our brother Joseph." Let's all thank God for the wonderful gift we all received in the life and death of our brother, Joseph.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

## Shepherd knows his 'sheep'

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Matthew 25:31-46; (R1) Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; (R2) 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28.

Next Sunday, the last of the Church Year, is the feast of Christ the King. The role of Christ now is that of shepherd; at the end of the world it will be that of judge.

In the Bible sheep and shepherds were always a part of Hebrew life. Sheep are mentioned about 500 times. When Jesus compared himself to the Good Shepherd, everyone could immediately relate to the analogy. The people depended upon sheep for their livelihood and the sheep depended upon the shepherd for protection.

In his book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Philip Keller recounts his own experience raising sheep. He tells how ewes, when chased by dogs or other predators will lose their unborn lambs. One morning he found nine of his choicest ewes, all soon to lamb, lying dead where a cougar had harried the flock during the night.

After that he slept with a rifle and flashlight by his bed. At the least sound of the flock being disturbed, he would leap from bed and, calling his faithful collie, dash into the night, rifle in hand, ready to protect his sheep.



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

In time, Keller came to realize that nothing so quieted and reassured the sheep as to see him in the field. His presence put them at ease as nothing else could do, and this applied day and night. The sheep look to the shepherd for protection. The good shepherd knows his sheep and is known by his sheep.

Jesus, the King, is now the Good Shepherd even willing to lay down his life for his sheep. Can we imagine that?

But there is another image of Christ in the Gospels radically different from that of the gentle shepherd. It is that of Christ as just judge of all.

We don't like to think of Christ as a judge. But on the last day that is exactly

what he will be. He will divide people into good and bad as the shepherd divides sheep from goats. The good will go into eternal happiness; the wicked into eternal fire.

Can you imagine how surprised everyone will be?

Can't you almost hear the goats complaining, "Jesus, there must be some mistake! I should be on the right side with the sheep."

"I was hungry and you gave me no food," Jesus will reply. "Thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. Naked ..."

And then the goats will ask, "When? When did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked?"

"What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me," Jesus will tell them.

The surprised sheep will ask, "Lord, when did we see you and minister unto you?"

"When you did it to the least of these you did it to me," Jesus will tell them.

Isn't that good news!

The last time you did something nice for someone who could not return the favor, you also did it to the Lord. Like the

sheep, we usually are unaware of that.

Mother Teresa was asked how she could minister to people with such horrid illnesses, and she replied, "I just pretend they are Jesus."

What a wonderful attitude! Every time we do something that helps those who cannot help themselves, we are ministering to Jesus.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming, N.Y.

### Daily Readings

- Monday, November 25**  
Revelation 14:1-3, 4-5; Luke 21:1-4
- Tuesday, November 26**  
Revelation 14:14-19; Luke 21:5-11
- Wednesday, November 27**  
Revelation 15:1-4; Luke 21:12-19
- Thursday, November 28**  
Joel 2:21-24, 26-27; Mark 4:26-29
- Friday, November 29**  
Revelation 20:1-4, 11-21; Luke 21:29-33
- Saturday, November 30**  
Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22

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