

## COLUMNISTS

## We will remember late cardinal at Easter

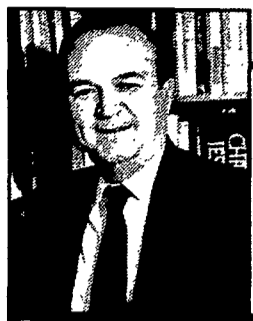
It has been a Catholic custom since the 11th century to pray for the deceased on the feast of All Souls (Nov. 2). The feast proclaims that Jesus Christ is the hope of the living and of the dead, and that our new life in him enables us to face death with faith and serenity.

We do not usually think of Easter as a feast in any way connected with All Souls, but it is. Both feasts are concerned with death and new life, and both are shaped by a hope that is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is just as fitting, therefore, to make a special remembrance of our deceased loved ones at Easter as it is on the feast of All Souls.

On this Easter we should remember those who have gone before us, bearing with them the same hope in the resurrection to which we adhere. And we should remember them as sacraments of God's loving presence in our world, in our church, and in our own personal lives.

This Easter many of us will be remembering in a special way the late cardinal-archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Bernardin. The courageous and serene manner in which he confronted the three greatest crises of his life became a model not only for committed Christians, but for every person of good will: the false accusation of sexual misconduct, the onset of pancreatic cancer, and the inexorable ap-



## essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

proach of death itself.

Cardinal Bernardin's personal reflections on these three crises are contained in his final testament, a spiritually powerful little book entitled *The Gift of Peace*, to which I will devote a separate column.

His life and manner of dying were for millions of people around the world a source of edification, literally, a building-up. Joseph Bernardin instilled in so many of his sisters and brothers in the church and in the human community at large a renewed strength, courage, hope, and peace, indeed "the gift of peace."

But a sad and troubling development has occurred since Cardinal Bernardin's death last November. His memory is now being besmirched and trashed by some Catholics on the far right of the ecclesiastical spectrum — individuals who have brought the notion of "mean-spiritedness" to a new low.

The unsavory process began with a full-page article in the independent, lay weekly, *The Wanderer*, by Father Charles Fiore, a former Dominican who was allowed to resign from his order before the procedures for expulsion had been completed. It was Father Fiore who said on a Chicago radio station that he thought the charges of sexual misconduct against the cardinal were true. It was also Father Fiore who counseled the man who later brought the accusation of sexual misconduct against the cardinal.

The cardinal referred in *The Gift of Peace* to Father Fiore's role without naming or disparaging him. Father Fiore acknowledged that he was indeed the priest to whom the cardinal referred, and then proceeded to level an ugly broadside against the cardinal's memory in the Feb. 13 issue of *The Wanderer*. The article's content and tone exceeded even *The Wanderer's* usually liberal estimation of the limits of publishability.

But one can at least understand, without condoning, Father Fiore's personal ire. He is, after all, linked forever — rightly or wrongly — with efforts to destroy Cardinal Bernardin.

What is beyond understanding is the sustained eight-page attack on the cardinal's moral integrity by someone who, unlike Father Fiore, is a professional and with no apparent personal axe to grind: James

Hitchcock, professor of history at Saint Louis University. His article, "Cardinal Bernardin's Legacy," appears in the February issue of *The Catholic World Report*, published by Father Joseph Fessio, SJ.

Professor Hitchcock charges that Cardinal Bernardin used his influence to promote attacks on the church's teachings and traditions, that he was primarily interested in power, and that his vaulted reputation as a godly man was mainly a creation of the media to which he cravenly bowed. Indeed, Hitchcock makes the astonishing claim that the cardinal was "most admired by those who are most distant from the church's inner life, while he was least admired by those who at least try to live the fullness of Catholic teaching."

Before the far-right backs its next dump truck onto Cardinal Bernardin's resting place, the genuinely conservative cardinals, archbishops and bishops who knew and admired Joseph Bernardin should step forward once again to proclaim their abiding love and respect for their departed brother and to make clear to those who have for so long abused the honorable name of "conservative" that an attack upon Cardinal Bernardin is an attack upon them all.

It's Easter, after all.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Christ won; so did we

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) John 20:1-9. (R1) Acts 10:34, 37-43. (R2) Colossians 3:1-4.

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered and World War II was over. In celebration, people packed the city streets, hugged each other and shouted, "We won!" We named that day VE day for "Victory in Europe." On May 8, we still remember VE day.

But how can we say, "We won?" Most of us have never been to Europe. With a few exceptions we did not fight that war. Many of us were not even born yet. Yet we won. We won because we are citizens of the nations that won. We benefit from what that victory brought — an end to a murderous Nazi regime and a continued life of freedom.

Now here's another piece of good news: When Jesus rose from the dead, we won an even bigger victory. We are the beneficiaries of what Jesus' victory brought: an end to sin's domination and a beginning of new life in Christ. He won and so did we, even though born 2,000 years later. Jesus said, that all who believe in me, even though they die, yet they will live. His victory, then, is ours. So, Alleluia!

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to grieve the dead Jesus. Her tears spoke of her anguish. When Jesus lost, she lost. It is universal among humans to feel death as a loss. Religion says death is a passage



## a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

to a new life. The death of a loved one, however doesn't feel like a victory. It feels like a wrenching, jolting pain. When Mary stood at the tomb, she not only lost someone she loved; she lost her hopes for the future.

When she saw the stone removed, the body of Jesus not in the tomb, she assumed someone had taken it. She told the disciples, "They have taken Jesus and I do not know where they have laid him." Back at the tomb, she saw two angels. They asked her why she was weeping. None of us expects the dead to rise. Neither did Mary. But Jesus came to her. She mistook him for a gardener until he spoke her name. What a powerful thing it is to speak someone's name! When he did, Mary knew he was alive. She fell at his feet and cried out, "Rabbouni, Teacher."

Easter is so important because it tells us life is stronger than death, that death

is but the blinking of an eyelid that does not shut out vision. What a comfort it is to know that when we have lost someone we love to death, we know he lives with God forever.

When C.S. Lewis lost his dear friend Charles Williams, he wrote something he said he thought he would never write. It sounded so like sentimental claptrap. He wrote that since Charles Williams died, heaven was no longer a strange, far-off place. Why? Because now his friend was there.

When his beloved wife, Joy, died, Lewis said the same thing. Heaven was closer still, for Joy was there.

When Humphrey Bogart died on Jan. 14, 1957, his wife Lauren Bacall placed a gold whistle inside his coffin. The inscription on the whistle read, "If you need anything, just whistle." That was a line from their first film together, "To Have and To Have Not."

Easter is so important for us, because it says love is stronger than death. Easter is important not only in what it says about life beyond the grave, but what it says about life on this side of the grave.

Since Christ lives, life has meaning. There is hope even in the most difficult circumstances. At the end of my rope, here is a knot I can hang on to. I can live courageously, victoriously. I can overcome my fears by his grace and I can be all he intends for me to be.

If Christ be risen from the dead, we need fear nothing in this world. We can love and be loved. We can enjoy the wonder of life and escape the fear that one day it will be snatched from us. He faced death and conquered it. And by his grace, so can we!

The Easter story is almost too big to tell. But it can be reduced to two simple words that have changed the world forever: Christ lives!

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

## Daily Readings

Monday, March 31

Acts 2:14, 22-32

Matthew 28:8-15

Tuesday, April 1

Acts 2:36-41; John 20:11-18

Wednesday, April 2

Acts 3:1-10; Luke 24:13-35

Thursday, April 3

Acts 3:11-26; Luke 24:35-48

Friday, April 4

Acts 4:1-12; John 21:1-14

Saturday, April 5

Acts 4:13-21; Mark 16:9-15



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Kids' Answers  
from page 16

1. F (40; v. 3),
2. T,
3. F (He left in a cloud; v. 9),
4. T,
5. F (Matthias; v. 26)

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