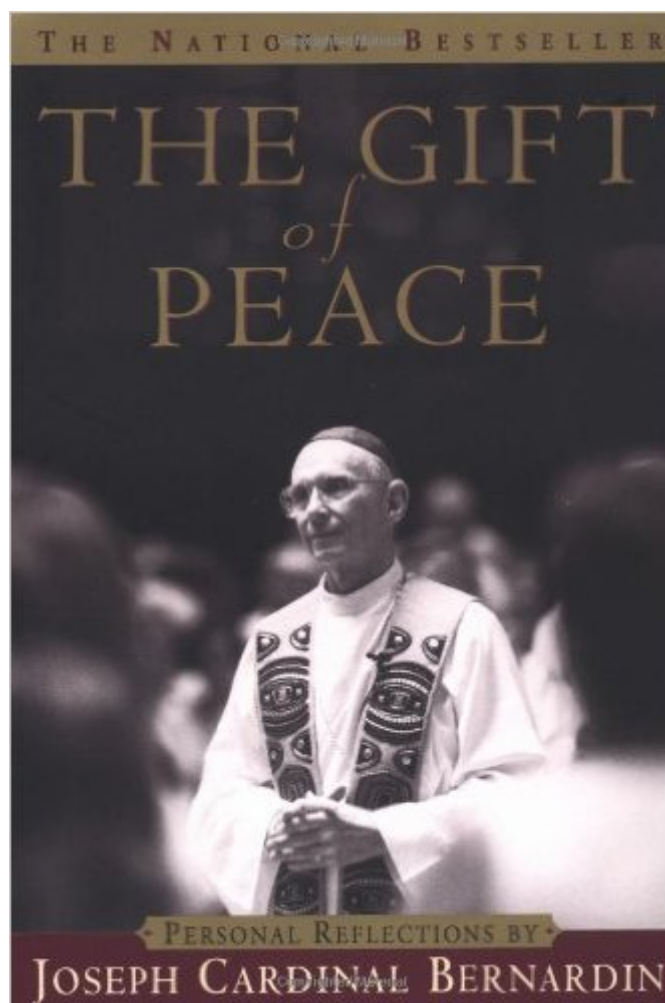


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The Gift Of Peace: Personal Reflections



Synopsis

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin's gentle leadership throughout his life of ministerial service had made him an internationally beloved figure, but the words he left behind about his final journey would change the lives of many more people from all faiths, from all backgrounds, and from all over the world. In the last two months of his life, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin made it his ultimate mission to share his personal reflections and insights as a legacy to those he left behind. *The Gift of Peace* reveals the Cardinal's spiritual growth amid a string of traumatic events: a false accusation of sexual abuse; reconciliation a year later with his accuser, who had earlier recanted the charges; a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and surgery; the return of cancer, now in his liver; his decision to discontinue chemotherapy and live his remaining days as fully as possible. In these pages, Bernardin tells his story openly and honestly, and shares the profound peace he came to at the end of his life. He accepted his peace as a gift from God, and he in turn now shares that gift with the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Joseph Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago was one of the leading lights of the Roman Catholic church through the past few decades; in the last three years of his life (he died in 1996) he endured the beginnings of the scandals of the church (including accusations, later proved false, against himself) as well as a recurring battle with cancer. Through all of this, Bernadin was able to find peace, and it was the peace of God, a peace that is a gift and grace from God. While the issue of the false

accusation is the first piece of the text, it does not dominate it. After a few pages, it is over and done with. One wonders at such power of forgiveness. Perhaps it was in response to the next, final battle that became much more dominant. Prominent throughout the book is the battle with cancer. Bernadin speaks of his own struggles and fears, but puts these in perspective as he became acquainted with the others who were getting treatment with him. He became, in his words, an unofficial chaplain to the other cancer patients. Bernadin struggled to maintain his sense of faith that all who similarly suffer must endure - as Bernadin said, it was finally time to practice what he preached! He renewed his sense of the importance of prayer, and his sense of ministry. While his post-operative treatments would only require ten minutes, he often found his visits would last for hours, as he visited with others. When the hospital staff offered to make private entrance and exit arrangements so that he would not be 'disturbed', he countered with the observation, 'I'm a priest first, a patient second.' Bernadin shares letters he received from other cancer patients, their families and friends, all added to his prayer list. It grew from the handful of people he met to well over 700 names in a very short time.

America was drawn to the story of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin when he publicly shared with the community of the Archdiocese of Chicago the news that his liver cancer was inoperable on August 30, 1996. The Cardinal wrote *The Gift of Peace* to share his thoughts on the last three years of his life. His writing reflects the principal role of a Roman Catholic bishop - - the teaching office, to nourish within the community the principles of faith illustrated by the realities that present themselves in the course of everyday life. Like most Americans outside of Chicago, I first learned about the Cardinal in the news coverage that accompanied his last year on the front pages of the newspapers. He wanted to walk with the community as he confronted his death. Sharing with the community both the pain of his illness and the discoveries of the intellect that bridged for him, first acceptance of his terminal illness, and then the process of personal reconciliation of his life journey. There are so many books upon the shelves of .com on the topic of Death and Dying. None of them adequate to the task of being "how to's", but offering reasonable guidance for that most personal of tasks, confronting personal death and death in the family. Yet, I keep coming back to *The Gift of Peace*. Perhaps, because of the Cardinal's one-to-one conversation by which he engages the reader. For those of us that can prepare for death, a struggle may develop as we form a personal inner conversation to embrace with grace and maturity and purpose our changed fortune. The Cardinal models in the journey of his illness the direction our own path may take. Upon hearing the first fateful news of his illness, the Cardinal experienced a feeling of helplessness.

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