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CARDINAL JOSEPH BERNARDIN 1928-1996

Chicago grieves a man of grace

From the most powerful to the average person on the street, the people, no matter their religion, feel a sense of loss in the death of someone whom they called 'Joe' or 'our cardinal.'

HIS LIFE

From lowly childhood to heights of church

By Louise Kiernan and Ron Grossman
Times Staff Writers

The son of an immigrant Italian stonemason, Joseph Bernardin grew up in the South and described himself as twice an outsider because of his heritage and religion.

His family was so poor that his mother made his first priest's suit out of a bolt of black cloth.

Yet from those humble beginnings, Bernardin rose to become one of the most influential leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in America and one who, fittingly, reached out to those of other faiths and creeds.

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who died of pancreatic cancer on Thursday, was known as a master mediator who worked to reconcile the increasingly fractious elements of the American church and spoke out on controversial issues such as the Vietnam War and the nuclear arms race.

Privately, he is remembered as a man with a gentle wit, who occasionally invited friends over to try out his pasta, bought a piano he rarely played and spoke of buying a vacation home but never got around to it because he worked so much.

During the 14 years he led Chicago's Catholics, Bernardin revitalized a dispirited and disorganized archdiocese and tackled some of its most emotionally charged issues, among them the closing of schools and churches.

His severest personal test came when he was falsely accused of sexual abuse, an ordeal he described as more painful than the cancer that took his life.

In his final and greatest challenge, he turned his impending death into a public meditation on faith.

On the day he announced he was dying, Bernardin talked about what he wished would become his legacy. "I hoped that through my ministry, my life, I would leave a community that would be more gentle, more loving, more compassionate," he said.

It was a characteristically modest statement from a man whose

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Times photo by Chris Walter

In his classroom at Holy Angels School on Chicago's South Side, 10-year-old Steve Bennett offers a prayer Thursday upon the death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

HIS FINAL DAYS

Working to the end

By Steve Klobas
Times Staff Writer

In his last hours, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin slept quietly in his bedroom, statues of Jesus and Mary at his head, family and friends surrounding him.

The people he loved held prayer books or rosaries, or Bernardin's hand. Some whispered supplications. From time to time, his doctor dabbed the cardinal's lips with water from a glass by his bedside.

At 1:30 a.m., the cardinal, too weak to speak, took his last labored breath.

A minute or two passed, then Bishop Raymond Goodert left the room to telephone the pope's representative in Washington. The cardinal's sister, Elaine Addison, got up to call family in South Carolina and Italy.

Outside the tranquil scene in the mansion on North State Parkway, word of his death would transform a cold November Thursday in Chicago into the first day of a pageant of mourning and tribute that will unfold over a full week. It will culminate with a funeral at Holy Name Cathedral expected to draw dignitaries from around the world.

In Rome, the news set off an intensive search for a successor who will lead one of the most important archdioceses in the United States and help shape the future of the Roman Catholic Church.

The friends who gathered

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AP photo

Monsignor Kenneth Velo (from left, top), a longtime friend, and Elaine Addison, sister of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, accompany his body as it is removed from his residence on North State Parkway. He died early Thursday after a battle with cancer.

HIS PEOPLE

Thankful for the memories

By Ellen Warren and Catherine Falasni
Times Staff Writers

The children arriving at Blessed Sacrament School in North Lawndale, giggling and goofing around, knew immediately that something important had happened.

Bundled jumps of muted energy watching their breath turn to fog, the youngsters entered the main hallway Thursday morning, but all was dark. And quiet as a church.

Clutching daddy's hand, they wandered in big, visible whispers—what was going on?

The only light was the unreliable flicker of a single red candle on a table in the hall, and soon the children knew the news. On the table with the candle, they spotted a framed photograph of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

Throughout the day, pairs of students in

blue and white uniforms took turns in a silent vigil, watching over the tiny makeshift shrine.

You could almost call it a miracle: quiet in the hallway of a busy, bustling grade school.

Nearby, principal Sabrina Roy clutched a tissue and said softly, "He was just a strong supporter of Catholic schools, especially in the inner city. He just believed in Catholic education for all children."

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin talked to presidents and pontifices. He commuted with God. But sometimes it is the smallest moments, the quiet footnotes that tell the most.

"The patience of listening, a lit candle, a gentle touch, an unexpected Christmas phone call, silence where there had been raucous noise.

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Complete newspaper and Internet coverage

THE FUNERAL PLANS

Cardinal will lie in state from Monday afternoon to Wednesday morning. **Page 24**

THE WORLD REACTS

Political and religious leaders of all faiths pay their respects. **Page 24**

THE SUCCESSION

Choice of successor will have a major effect on church in the U.S. **Page 25**

ON THE INTERNET

Find additional information, including a virtual scrapbook with remembrances of the cardinal at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com>

TODAY'S TRIBUNE

What's up, jock?

Bugs Bunny and that tall bald guy make a dynamic duo thanks to the high-tech wizardry in 'Space Jam.'

Friday

Weather

Friday: Rain possible; high 41. Friday night: Windy; low 37. Saturday: Cloudy; high 47. See 2, pg. 11



U.S. wants cease-fire in Zaire before sending troops

By Michael Kilian
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—Amid reports of new fighting in Zaire, the U.S. is demanding a cease-fire between warring factions before it sends troops to central Africa as part of a United Nations relief mission, the Pentagon said Thursday.

President Clinton was trying to negotiate better conditions on the ground before committing some 4,000 American troops to the operation in central Africa, where more than 1.2 million Rwandan

refugees, mostly members of the Hutu tribe, are without food, water or medicine because of renewed tribal and political fighting in the area.

"Our plan is to move into the area when there is a de facto cease-fire," Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said. "We need assurance [from the African parties involved in the fighting] we can carry out our humanitarian mis-

sion. We have not received that."

Hoping to minimize casualties, Defense Secretary William Perry said American forces would have a combat role and would not be used to forcibly separate militia gunmen from refugees in the refugee camps.

U.S. troops, however, would be fully armed and prepared to defend themselves, Perry said. The UN mission would be under Canadian command, but American forces would take their tactical orders, including troop placement, from U.S. commanders.

"Our troops that go in will go in armed and with rules of engagement that will provide for their own protection," Perry said. "They are not going in as a model of conducting military operations. So I want to make a clear distinction."

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CARDINAL JOSEPH BERNARDIN 1928-1996

He was a man of humble origins who rose to help reshape Catholicism and reinvigorate the Chicago archdiocese. His outlook combined a vision of the future with reverence for the past.

Government from Page 1
 imprint seems certain to be complex and far-reaching.
 — He was as tireless in his ministry that one friend joked that he could become the patron saint of bureaucrats. Yet he radiated a quiet grace that prompted the same man to recently describe him as "immaculate."
 — One colleague remembered that in times of tension in the Catholic hierarchy, officials declared: "We need Joe."

— The country's most senior active Catholic bishop, Bernardin never talked about becoming a priest until the day he told his family he was dropping out of college to enter the seminary.
 — He went on to devote the greatest measure of his energy and devotion to the church, but he unfailingly returned home to South Carolina to baptize each of the Bernardin family's children, who called him "Zio," the Italian word for uncle.

During his ecclesiastical career, Bernardin was a principal architect in reshaping Catholicism following the reforms adopted by the Second Vatican Council, convened from 1962 to 1965.

He was far from a revolutionary, though. He clung to long-held church doctrines on abortion, euthanasia and artificial birth control. His philosophy, which he called "the constant ethic of life" was later embraced by Pope John Paul II in his writings.

Bernardin himself wrote a number of influential theological essays and pastoral letters, and, at the time of his death, had completed a draft of a book reflecting upon the events of his last years.

Friends and colleagues invariably described him as a compassionate and humble man, whose virtually seamless public and private lives embodied Christian virtues. He also possessed the keen business acumen and political skills needed to run the country's second-largest archdiocese, with its 2.3 million Catholics and \$697 million annual budget.

In what proved to be his last major undertaking, Bernardin established the Catholic Common Ground Project last August. Through this proposed series of gatherings, he hoped to diminish the polarization among Catholics over controversial topics that have threatened the church's future.

No wider did his influence reach than during his last days, when he deliberately used his words to shape the public nature of his life in hopes of illuminating the meaning of death.

"All my life I have been teaching people how to live, and I thought if I could teach them how to die, that would be important," he said.

Typically, he did this on both a personal and political level.

He prayed individually with other cancer patients, and, the week of his death, urged the U.S. Supreme Court in a letter to reject arguments in favor of granting terminally ill people the right to commit suicide with their doctors' help.

In assessing Bernardin's life, some church leaders and historians say his singular outlook — which combined a vision of the future with reverence for the past — may be replicable.

"He was perfectly equipped by his personal gifts and family background to be a bishop in the late 20th century, a time of tremendous change in the Catholic Church," said Bill Ryan, a church administrator who worked with Bernardin at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the 1980s.

"When you think of how perfectly made he was for the job that had to be done, that alone would be enough to renew your faith in Providence."

A lifetime of service to man and God

From Columbia, S.C., to Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin served the Roman Catholic Church in many ways, all of which laid the groundwork for his role as archbishop of Chicago.



A serene moment in 1984: Bernardin in his office in the Gold Coast residence of Chicago's archbishops.

Humble beginnings

Joseph Louis Bernardin was born April 2, 1928, in Columbia, S.C. His parents emigrated from Tonawanda, a northern Italian hamlet not far from the Austrian border.

His father, Joseph, who was nicknamed Bepi, came to the U.S. just after World War I. He worked first as a shoemaker in Vermont before moving to the granite quarries of South Carolina.

In 1927, Bepi returned to his native village and courted Maria Simon, who was 15 years his junior. They married in Tonawanda, and when the couple sailed for America, Maria was pregnant with Joseph.

A few years later, Bepi's brother Severino also went back to Tonawanda and married Maria's sister Lina. During the Great Depression, the two families shared a rented house in Columbia.

At the time, no more than 1 percent of South Carolina's population was Catholic.

This fact may well have shaped Bernardin's approach to change in the Catholic Church, according to his biographer, Eugene Kennedy.

"Bernardin was born in the South at a time when Catholics were still second-class citizens," said Kennedy, a psychologist and author of "Cardinal Bernardin." "He was intellectually free to consider the possibility of re-ordering the church when Vatican II came along."

The more immediate lesson Bernardin drew from his upbringing was resilience and responsibility. When he was 6, his father died of sarcoma, a form of cancer.

His mother, who spoke only Italian, had to find a way to support Joseph and his younger sister, Elaine.

She went to St. Peter's Catholic School, where a nun taught her a few words of English so she could get work as a seamstress. Bernardin's sister, Elaine Addison recalled.

"In the evenings, she made our clothing. Joe always reminded me of our mother," Addison said.

"With both of them, it's always been work, work, work." Bernardin's schoolmates remember him as a serious but friendly kid, a bit reserved. Rev. C. Fitzgerald Allison, the retired Episcopal bishop of South Carolina, was a classmate of Bernardin's at Columbia High School.

"Joe was deprived of an adolescence," Allison said. "I don't remember him ever playing sports or games. He was very polite and never out of line."



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"An air about him"

Like the rest of his family, Bernardin attended church regularly and attended Catholic grade school. But he never mentioned that he might be considering a clerical vocation.

"Then in his third semester, right out of the blue, Joe told us he was leaving college because he wanted to become a priest," Addison said. "I remember we were all walking up the stairs, and my mother and I had to sit down and think that one over."

The moment he stepped into a classroom, Bernardin's students discovered that he had a remarkable capacity to connect with young people, recalled Norma Palm.

Joseph replied that there was no doubt in his mind that he would become a priest.

His sister specializes that he may have been influenced by a nun named Sister Julia, who ran a library at Provident Hospital, where Bernardin went to read and talk about books. And he was close to several older priests. In that era, too, the priesthood often attracted ambitious, talented young Catholics, many who still faced discrimination elsewhere.

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Then, in 1946, Bernardin was accepted into St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. He was told to report for classes wearing a black suit. With the help of a tailor friend, his mother made one for him.

Bernardin studied at the Balti-more seminary for two years, then moved onto Theological College at Catholic University in Washington for graduate studies.

At both institutions, he impressed faculty and his fellow seminarians as being destined for great things. He made straight A's.

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Ordained in 1952, Bernardin was assigned as an assistant pastor at St. Joseph Church in Charleston, S.C. When the school year began, he was informed that he would also be teaching history and civics at Bishop England High School.

The moment he stepped into