

## Fifteenth anniversary of Cardinal Bernardin's burial

Thomas C. Fox | Nov. 14, 2011 NCR Today

It was 15 years ago today, a blustery day in Chicago, that Monsignor Ken Velo offered a homily at the funeral mass of Joseph Bernardin in Holy Name Cathedral. The following are excerpts from his remarks.

Somewhere over Greenland in mid-September, his Eminence showed me his funeral plans. I began to cry. I saw the things that he had listed. I saw my name. I saw the name of Cardinal Mahony, whom he asked to celebrate this Mass of Christian burial. . . . As I cried, he said, 'Don't worry. I have cried too.'

I was somewhat fearful, but I think the homily of this Mass in truth has been given over these past months of illness through the forgiveness he gave to all sorts of people and through his life of service and ministry.

It was here in the pulpit last October 7th, that the cardinal addressed his priests. He talked about Jesus. He told us that Jesus was a person of integrity, one who was loved and loving, and Jesus was patient, that Jesus was a man of integrity and a teacher. . . . He said to us, "Jesus' friends saw him experience an excruciating death, and they were locked in that room for fear, fearful of the limitations they had, what would happen to them.

They were fearful because they just didn't understand everything he had to say. Then Jesus came. He showed them his hands and side. He stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you, my peace I give to you.' You can imagine what it was like for them. They must have been nudging themselves, saying, 'Didn't he teach us? Didn't he show us the way?'"

Cardinal Bernardin was many things to people, but he was a teacher. He taught lessons of life. . . .He brought people together. He worked hard at doing that. He had the gift of resilience. It was on a trip with some of his bishop friends when he took a moped. He went out. There was an accident. They found him in brambles and thorns with the wheels turning up and around, and he said, 'I finally got the knack of it.'

See the faces of the people standing in line this past week to make a final visitation to their archbishop. He taught us to respect others. He made us proud of being priests while recognizing and affirming emerging ministries in the church.

He was a man of humility. He told a story of being on vacation. He was far away from Chicago, dressed in casual clothes, walking the aisles of a grocery store to prepare for the evening meal. A man saw him. 'Oh, I can't believe you're here. Do you have one minute to see my wife? She's in the parking lot, one minute.'

The cardinal said, 'He recognized me.' He walked down the aisle, walked through the grocery store turnstile. He walked into the parking lot. The man said, 'My car is over there. There is my wife.' He walked up to the car. The man said, 'Helen, look who's here! Dr. Kresnick!'

People know him now, and they love him. What a presence he had here in this church of Chicago, to the people of Lake and Cook Counties. To you, my brothers and sisters who are part of this great archdiocese, didn't he teach us? Didn't he show us the way?"

May he rest in peace and his in glory!

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