

THE GIFT OF PEACE

by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had someone close to you die of a terminal illness? If so, how did that person handle the journey? What feelings did his/her experience generate in you?
2. In Cardinal Bernardin's opening letter he states, "...if we let Him, God can write straight with crooked lines." What do you think he means? Do you see areas in your life where God wrote straight with crooked lines? Explain.
3. In the first chapter, Cardinal Bernardin talks about letting go. He says that we need to release from our grasp those things that inhibit us from developing an intimate relationship with Jesus. What do you need to let go? What are you holding on to?
4. Have you fallen into the trap of thinking that your good works are more important than prayer? If so, how will you remedy this matter? Do you give quality time to prayer?
5. What is meant by "God's peace?" Are you experiencing God's peace? Think of a time when you weren't at peace. What caused it? How did you eventually regain God's peace, if you did?
6. Have you ever been falsely accused or suspected of wrongdoing? Have you ever been the victim of untrue rumors or gossip? If so, how did you handle it? What feelings did it generate in you? How tempting is it for you to talk badly about others? What fuels this temptation?
7. What would be more difficult or traumatic for you—being falsely accused of a heinous crime or being diagnosed with life-threatening cancer? Explain.
8. On page 46, Cardinal Bernardin states, "*The essential mystery of the cross is that it gives rise to a certain kind of loneliness, an inability to see clearly how things are unfolding, an inability to see that, ultimately, all things will work for our good, and that we are indeed, not alone. This sense of being abandoned, this extreme experience of loneliness, is evident in Jesus' cry: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*" (Mt 27:46) Have you experienced the kind of loneliness that Cardinal Bernardin is talking about? Have you ever felt forsaken by God? Have you ever experienced a trial that eventually worked out for the good? Explain.
9. On page 46, Cardinal Bernardin states that there is a decisive difference between our pain as disciples and that experienced by those who are *not* the Lord's disciples. Have you observed this to be true?

10. Think of a time when you or someone you love had to undergo medical tests for something serious, even life threatening. What feelings did you experience at the time? What did you ask of God? How did everything turn out? If the outcome wasn't what you wanted, how did you handle it? Did you ever blame God?
11. Cardinal Bernardin said to, "*Pray while you are well, because if you wait until you are sick you might not be able to do it.*" Have you ever been in so much discomfort or pain that you couldn't pray?
12. If you were given a year or less to live, how would you spend it? Do you look upon death as a friend, an enemy, or both? Elaborate.
13. What touched or inspired you the most about Cardinal Bernardin's journey? What did you learn?
14. How do you handle suffering? In yourself? In others? Name some ways in which we can help those who are suffering with serious illness.