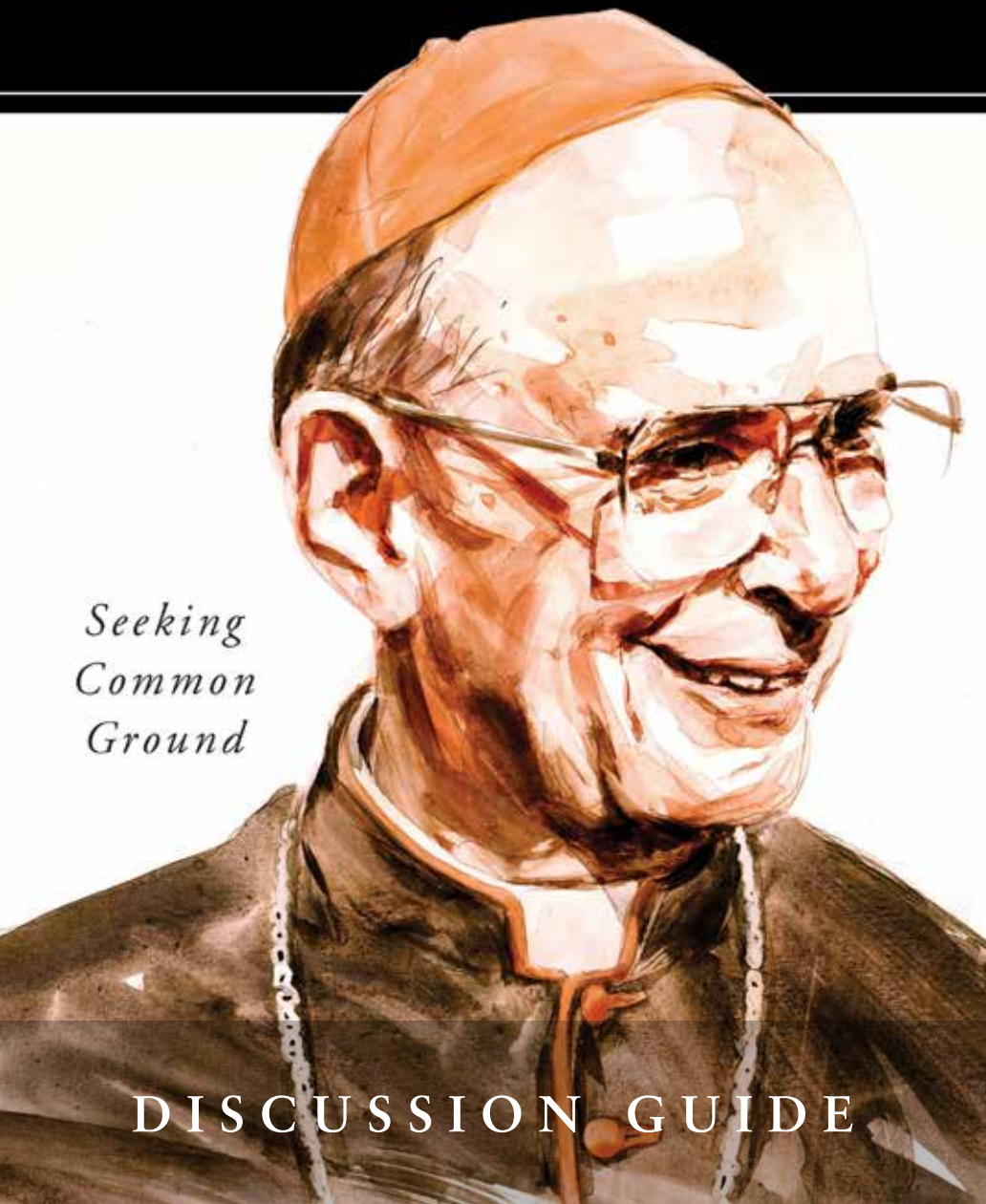


STEVEN P. MILLIES

JOSEPH BERNARDIN

*Seeking
Common
Ground*

DISCUSSION GUIDE



About the Book

As a priest, archbishop, and president of the US bishops' conference, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin lived a ministry marked by thoughtfulness, compassion, and conviction. Relying on interviews with the cardinal's assistants, friends, and family members, as well as on some previously unavailable archival material, Steven P. Millies explores Bernardin's controversial "seamless garment" approach to life issues, his founding of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, the disturbing abuse allegations against him that were later recanted, and his experience of cancer that prompted him to write the bestselling book *The Gift of Peace* and that ultimately took his life. Millies offers a fresh new portrait of one of the most remarkable Catholic leaders of the twentieth century.

About the Author

Steven P. Millies is director of The Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry and associate professor of public theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, having previously served as associate professor of political science at the University of South Carolina Aiken in Aiken, SC. His articles about the Catholic Church's relationship with American politics have appeared in *America*, the *National Catholic Reporter*, and *Commonweal*. He was born and raised in the Archdiocese of Chicago.



Discussion Guide

Introduction

1. What do you already know about Joseph Bernardin before reading this book? What do you hope to learn about him?
2. What's your go-to prayer in times of trouble or stress?
3. How does the Prayer of Saint Francis encapsulate the spirituality of Joseph Bernardin?

Chapter One

1. How did his father's death influence Joseph (p. 5)?
2. How did Bernardin's immigrant experience—moving from Italy to South Carolina at such a young age—shape his sense of the church (pp. 8–9)?
3. Why was Maria so adamantly against her son becoming a priest (p. 10)?
4. Why do you think Joseph was appointed to so many leadership positions in such a short span of time and at such a young age (p. 14)?
5. Reflect on the tragedy of the African-American woman on page 16.
6. What effect(s) did the Second Vatican Council have on Joseph (p. 21)?

Chapter Two

1. How was Archbishop Hallinan able to bring Governor Maddox and Martin Luther King Jr. together (p. 25)?
2. Why do you think Joseph made such a smooth transition into the post-Vatican II era (p. 30)?
3. What accounts for Joseph's preference of parish work over administrative work (p. 32)?
4. How does the contrast between true and false patriotism continue today (p. 34)?
5. Why did Joseph speak out against labels (p. 35)?
6. Have you ever seen a similarly constructive partnership in ministry as that of Archbishop Hallinan and Bishop Bernardin? What accounts for their success?
7. What stalled a "greater spirit of collaboration" among the US bishops (p. 44)?
8. How did Joseph Bernardin handle the results of the NCCB study of the American priesthood (p. 46)? What challenges did he (and the church) have to face?

Chapter Three

1. What accounts for Joseph's uncharacteristically strong reaction to *Roe v. Wade* (p. 53)?
2. Reflect on Joseph's quote on page 55. What do you think of his "seamless garment" metaphor?
3. How did Joseph's position on abortion affect the US Catholic Church's relationship to party politics (pp. 56–57)?
4. Did Joseph and Cardinal Dearden indeed emerge from the Call to Action meeting "on opposite sides," as some press outlets suggested (p. 59)?
5. What drew Joseph into the Franciscan fold (pp. 61–62)?
6. How could you make more time in your life for prayer (pp. 63–64)?
7. What brought Joseph into ministry with separated and divorced Catholics? With charismatics? With Jews (pp. 71–72)?

Chapter Four

1. Why was Joseph chosen as a replacement for Cardinal Cody (pp. 73–74)?
2. What did Joseph say about liturgy in his first pastoral letter as archbishop of Chicago (pp. 76–77)?
3. What was *The Challenge of Peace*, and why was it so important to the US bishops (p. 78)?
4. Do you think the issues of abortion and nuclear war are related (pp. 81–82)? If so, how?
5. Why did church leaders think that transferring priests to different parishes would solve problems of misconduct (p. 83)?
6. Why do some dioceses even today refuse the model of reform in dealing with sexual abuse in the church (p. 85)?
7. How does Millies argue that Joseph was different from most other bishops of the time (pp. 86–87)?
8. How did Joseph respond to the AIDS crisis? Was it an adequate response (pp. 89–90)?
9. Reflect on Joseph's acts of kindness in this chapter. Do you know anyone who reaches out to strangers with similar kindness?

Chapter Five

1. Discuss the instance of bullying among bishops on page 96.
2. How did the episode with Steven Cook affect Joseph (p. 99)? Have you ever been strengthened through such a time of difficulty?
3. What do you think of the reconciliation between Joseph and Steven Cook (pp. 102–3)?
4. Why was the relationship between Catholics and Jews so important to Joseph (pp. 101–2)?
5. What does it mean to see death “as a friend” (pp. 105–6)?
6. What was the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, and why was it so important to Joseph (pp. 107–8)?
7. What does Millies mean when he says that Joseph was “their pastor” (p. 114)?

Conclusion

1. Why did non-Catholics mourn Joseph's death (p. 115)?
2. How did Archbishop Hallinan and Cardinal Dearden provide models for Joseph's life and ministry (p. 116)?
3. How did Joseph's immigrant experience shape his ministry (pp. 116–17)?
4. What in this book surprised you about the life and work of Joseph Bernardin?