



CARDINAL JOSEPH BERNARDIN AWARD 2005

Under the leadership of its President, William P. Leahy, S.J., Boston College imaginatively and courageously responded at a moment of particular crisis and widespread disillusionment with the leadership of the Catholic Church by launching the Church in the 21st Century Initiative. Taking seriously its responsibility as a Catholic university, Boston College identified three pressing challenges and brought its unique resources to bear to address them: relationships among laity, priests, and bishops; the understanding of sexuality in the Catholic tradition and in contemporary culture; and handing on the faith to the next generation. The College thus provided an urgently needed forum for reflection and discussion among people of different viewpoints and offered tangible signs of new hope to over thirty thousand participants in its programs.

Boston College's Church in the 21st Century Initiative has striven to exemplify the principles set forth by Cardinal Bernardin for common ground: respectful dialogue, careful discernment, faithful and hopeful service of the Church. Boston College has now taken the further important step of establishing the Church in the 21st Century Initiative as a permanent center to promote ongoing study and conversation as the church moves toward the future. It realizes that the task must be a collaborative one, engaging the best efforts of all who cherish Christ and his church. It thus heeds the call of Cardinal Bernardin: "to examine our situation with fresh eyes, open minds, and changed hearts" so that "we can more effectively respond to the challenges of our times as we carry forward the mission the Lord Jesus gave to us his disciples."

In recognition of this singular contribution to the church in the United States, the Catholic Common Ground Initiative is pleased to give its 2005 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award to Boston College.

With us this evening to accept the award on behalf of Boston College is its Vice-President for Mission and Ministry, the Rev. Joseph Appleyard of the Society of Jesus. Fr. Appleyard has played a major role in planning the Church in the 21st Century activities and the foundation of the center.