

Faith Formation for Adults with Cognitive Disabilities

August 25

Catholic Diocese of Buffalo

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What is a cognitive disability?

- Intellectual Disability
- Mental retardation
- Developmental Disabilities

People with spina bifida or cerebral palsy have DD, but may not have cognitive or intellectual disabilities. They can be very brilliant.

Vast majority of people with MR are mild or moderately limited in cognitive abilities.

Inclusion in Parish Life

- We must recognize and appreciate the contributions that persons with disabilities can make to the Church's spiritual life and encourage them to do the Lord's work in the world according to their God given talents and capacity.
- Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities.
United States Catholic Bishops, no. 5-311. 1999

THE WELCOMING COMMUNITY

- We are the Church: the Church is All the people of God.
- We slow down because we are in the presence of God's grace among people who are the adopted sons and daughters of God.
- We stop and look at the faces of our brothers and sisters.
- Our human eyes see differences; the grace in us sees the beloved children of God made in his image and likeness. We see our brothers and sisters as beloved of Our Father, as Christ bearers and blessed with Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We share the Christ we bear within us with our brothers and sisters; from our brothers and sisters, we accept with joy the Christ they bear in their bodies. As the beatitudes spoken by Jesus Christ describes his kingdom, the kingdom comes when we let the beatitudes flourish in us and in our brothers and sisters.

We let the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit flow from us to our brothers and sisters;
we let the love of the Father, son and Holy Spirit within our brothers an sisters flow through us.

As our heavenly Father loves us the way He created us, we love our brothers and sisters the way they are.

As our heavenly Father graciously forgives us for our faults, we forgive our brothers and sisters for their mistakes.

As our heavenly Father lovingly gives His attention to our prayers and needs, we listen to our brothers and sisters.

As our heavenly Father kindly showers us with extravagant gifts, we give to our brothers and sisters with loving kindness.

As our heavenly Father graciously accepts our every prayer and good deed, we receive with appreciation the gifts our brothers and sisters share freely with us.

As our heavenly Father never fails to be pleased with His children who love Him, we smile at our brothers and sisters.

We begin to know and love ourselves as God knows and loves us, best, when we are in community with our brothers and sisters.

Worshipping in a faith community with all of our brothers and sisters, we all, as if in a mirror, look like the people of Christ's kingdom.

We are the Church: The Church is All the People of God.

Participation in Parish Ministries

- Parish liturgical celebrations and catechetical programs should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation according to their capacity.

USCCB, Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities

Your Parish

- Do you see people with Developmental Disabilities participating at masses in your parish?
- Do you know people with DD that you could invite to ministries?
- What ministries could they be involved in?

St. Gregory Parish

- Children included in religious education
- Parents formed a committee
- One lady Eucharistic minister for 10 years
- One gentlemen with down syndrome is an usher at 6pm mass.

Open Doors Mass

Lector

Sign Language Interpreter

All masses available live at website

- Since the parish is the door to participation in the Christian experience, it is the responsibility of pastors and laity to assure that those doors are always open.

– Paragraph 6, Welcome and Justice

Participation in the Liturgical Life of the Parish

- It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to people with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together.
- To exclude members ,even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community.

Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate more fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations such as the sacraments of reconciliation, Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick. The experience and needs of individuals with disabilities vary, as of those of any group of people.

EVANGELIZATION

- In the case of many people with disabilities, integration into the Christian community may require nothing more than issuing an invitation and pursuing it.
- For others, full participation can only come about if the Church exerts itself to devise innovative programs and techniques. At the very least, we must undertake forms of evangelization that speak to the particular needs of individuals with disabilities, make those liturgical adaptations which further promote their active participation and provide helps and services that reflect our loving concern.

USCCB Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities.

- Change of Heart, Attitude and Efforts
- Make a commitment to an evolving plan beginning with concrete situations
- DO NOT TELL FAMILIES WHAT THEY NEED TO DO TO BE PART OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY
- Parish community will commit to assisting in the development of an inclusion plan for the family.

When people with disabilities are made visible in the faith community, their fellow parishioners will appreciate their contributions to the life of the parish.

When parishioners can personally recognize the person with a disability for his or her gifts and talents, they will find themselves most aware of the powerful love of Christ for all.

- Recruit and train specific to a situation
- Existing groups should be welcoming people with disabilities
- Physical accessible

EUCCHARIST

- Source and Summit of Christian Life
- The place to begin the welcome
- Primary gathering place where parishioners can interact and build relationships

IMPORTANT

- EDUCATION
- AWARENESS
- SENSITIVITY
- Encourage people with disabilities to tell their own story
- Be willing to take time to build relationships
- Creating an inclusive faith community is a lifetime effort.

Community residences

- Proposals arouse fear and negativity
- Positive expressions of support-tangible signs of the light of Christ in the midst of darkness and misunderstanding
- Inform parishioners of the community residences in their parish
- Homilies by priests on the gifts to the community they bring

Making a Welcoming and Inclusive Parish become a reality

- Adopt one or several or all the people living in a CR.
- Remember people on Birthdays, Christmas, Holy Week, out reach on a personal level. Cards, small gifts, phone calls
- Visit- offer bulletin, information about masses

- Visits or small celebrations can be part of a ministry of several parish groups
- All saints day, St. Valentine's day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, May Day, St. Joseph the Worker
- Invite to various parish activities-parish dinners-complimentary tickets, decorating for Easter or Christmas.

SMALL FAITH SHARING GROUPS

- Ongoing formation not been a factor in their lives
- Monthly sharing and praying together
- Often, their faith is “uncluttered”
- They focus on God’s love for them and their love of God and others.

- Provide pastoral care when a resident is facing illness, impending death or the illness or death of a parent, family member or another member of the residence.
- Presence of priest or other community members can bring a sense of comfort and peace.

- Assure residence managers of our desire to provide for the pastoral needs of the residents.
- Routine participation-inquire about sacraments- Eucharist or Confirmation

WAYS TO INVITE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE

- Invite to be ushers, greeters, choir members
- Invite to participate in church groups, or help in religious education programs (office aid- collecting attendances, passing out supplies, routine tasks)
- Invite to use their gifts and abilities- encourage to volunteer

PARISH ADVOCATE

- Liaison between people with disabilities and the parish
- Liaison between the parish and the Disabilities Action team
- One person or chairperson of parish committee

CATECHESIS

- Determine their needs with their family/CR
- Participation in Eucharist
- Sacraments
- One on one instruction with someone in the community, inclusion with class
- Faith Formation

PROGAMS

God's Family

- Baker Hall School, Lackawanna
Third Saturday, Noon to 2:30 pm
- St. Gregory Parish, Williamsville
Sunday morning, Thursday evenings

VICTORIOUS MISSIONARIES

- National Group

The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

- Dedicated to the spirituality of persons with disabilities

- www.wmusa.org

- Local group

Deacon Bill Willis, moderator

Carol Buchla, President 639-7542

Meets the First Saturday of the month at 11am

14 Holy Helpers, 1345 Indian Church Road

(corner of Union), West Seneca, Gardenville

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

- Founded by Ginny Loecher, parish advocate and parent
- Third Monday evening at 7pm
- Social activity

Seasonal events: Easter Hunt, Potluck dinner, Chili cookoff, Bingo Night, summer picnic, game night, pumpkin hunt, thanksgiving dinner, Christmas Party

Contact Donna Michael after 4 at 553-3715

FAITH AND SHARING RETREAT

- Jean Vanier
- The Becks brought from Canada in the 30's
- Mix of people with disabilities and those without for 3 day retreat in March
- Stella Niagara, March 2-4, 2011

National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry

- Called together as persons with or without mental retardation witness to the Good News that all persons are created in God's image and likenedd
- Seek to promote the full incorporation of persons with MR and their gifts into the Body of Christ as proclaimed by the teachings of the Church
- www.nafim.org

National Catholic Partnership on Disability

- Established to welcome the over 14 million Catholics with disabilities to participate in the celebrations and obligations of their faith, and advocates for their inclusion.
- Offers resources
- Webinars
- Pastoral Documents

- For additional information,

contact Sharon Urbaniak at

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