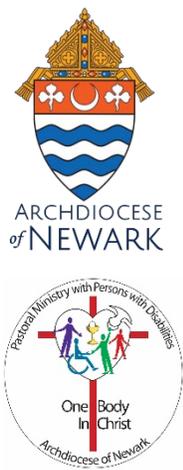


Some Resources for Pastoral Accompaniment, Participation & Catechesis with Persons w/ Disabilities

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Introduction to Ministry with Persons with Disabilities

Our mission is to foster the appreciation of individuals with disabilities as indispensable members of the Body of Christ, to empower parishes to provide meaningful participation in all aspects of the life of the Church through engagement, relationship, and appropriate supports, and to nurture the growth and capability of persons with disabilities so they experience a true sense of belonging in our community.

It “begins in our hearts. It begins with affirmation. We should open our hearts to one another and recognize the strengths of every person...When we open our hearts and our community to the gifts each person brings, we are all strengthened.”

~ Joseph Cardinal Bernardin,
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Formation is an ongoing process ..., *under the guidance of the Spirit and in the living womb of the Christian community ...* (131)

The primary purpose of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ. (NDC, 19)

All learners have different gifts and challenges. Therefore, it is more appropriate to refer to *supports for* catechesis, rather than “special religious education” or “special catechesis.” Disability, whether minor or significant, should not isolate someone from their catechetical peers or the worship community. Even if separate programming is appropriate at first, there are still ways to nurture connections and interactions.

No formal training in education or special education? Don't worry! An open heart, a willingness to learn and a sincere desire to share your faith go far in making individuals and families with disabilities feel welcome. Ask how they learn new material or skills in school, or home. The same strategies can work for parish and catechetical environments.

When discussing challenging situations, focus on the behavior, not the person. If speaking with parents about something that happened in the catechetical program, say something like, “I love Johnny's enthusiasm, but his behavior (and name it) when he is excited, or at other specific times, causes a problem. What can we do about that? “

Even still, parents often hear “constructive” comments as criticism of their child or them as parents. You may need to repeat yourself, even say specifically, I am not judging Johnny, it is the behavior I need to understand.

For more detailed information or questions, please feel free to contact me via phone or email. Also, there are many resources and suggestions on the ministry website. I am also happy to visit your parish.

Anne Masters, Ph.D., FAAIDD
Director,
Office for Pastoral Ministry with Persons with Disabilities
Archdiocese of Newark
Anne.Masters@rcan.org
973-497-4309
www.rcan.org/disabilities

Suggestions for Registration Forms to Support Participation and Learning

A good host wants people to be comfortable and able to participate. For *any parish events or programs (all ages)*, a simple question in the registration form will help tremendously, “Do you need any accommodations to be able to participate in this event?” Provide space for their answer and contact information if they wish to speak with the event planner.

For Parish Catechetical Program

I am often asked by concerned parish catechetical leaders, “Why don’t parents tell us their son or daughter has a disability?” It’s a fair question. When you ask for information, it would be nice to receive it, so you can provide the appropriate supports. Knowing why you don’t get it may help. Some of the reasons are:

- Parents want some place where their son or daughter is, ‘just one of the group.’
- Parents may be concerned about how the information will be used or shared. Will it be shared with people beyond the catechetical office and catechist?
- It may sometimes have to do with how the information is requested.

A critical task for you as a parish catechetical leader is to establish relationships with the families and learners you serve. Parents need to trust you if they are going to share such information about their sons and daughters. Trust with you, your intent, and how you will use the information. Setting the stage for such questions will be important and is done through the way you present your program, how you talk about its purpose, what type of relationships you foster with the parents, and what their sons and daughters’ experience is like. All parents would be interested to know that you are seeking to provide an engaging environment to nurture lifelong faith development for their children.

Questions to consider:

- Does your son or daughter have any accommodations in school? Yes/no
- Does your child’s school recommend particular learning strategies for him or her? Yes/no
- Do you have any recommendations on teaching or motivation strategies that would be helpful? Yes/no
- Does your son or daughter:
 - Have any concerns with social relationships or situations? Yes/no
 - Use alternative communication devices or methods Yes/no
- If you answered yes to any of the above, please describe below in the space provided. [provide a few lines for their response.]
- Please know that I am happy to meet with you if you wish to discuss this in more detail to provide an environment in which your child is comfortable and engaged.

If you are concerned about space, I still recommend including something like the above stated goal about providing an engaging environment to nurture lifelong faith development. Then:

- Does your child require supportive strategies for learning, behavior or communication? Yes/no
- Provide space for a few sentences
- Please know that I am happy to meet with you if you wish to discuss this in more detail to provide an environment in which your child is comfortable and engaged.

Notice language is focused on support strategies for learning, communication and behavior. There is no diagnostic language, which I strongly recommend avoiding.

Questions to Ask to Support Learning and Participation¹

There are many possibilities for interactive participation. When you are first approached by a family, the first step is to develop a good understanding of the person's abilities, challenges, and desired supports. These questions were first developed to support participation in our parish catechetical programs. However, they work equally well for participating in all areas of parish life. We continue to learn throughout life, including in new communities.

Determine what the individual (as much as possible) and parent(s) want regarding the level of participation. Besides the person, families, their teachers and/or service providers can be the best source of information and ideas for parish pastoral leaders and catechists.

In this conversation, demonstrate an attitude of openness and support. To learn how to support for the person before you, begin asking about their interests and talents, what makes them unique, and then proceed to their preferred supports. We are each a person first. Particularly in a faith community, different abilities and disabilities do not determine our value as a person, though they do influence what each person is able to do. The questions that follow can guide you in this conversation. But remember, it IS a conversation. You are not simply filling out a form.

During the conversation, assure them that your questions are motivated by a sincere desire to provide the most supportive environment possible and that privacy will be respected. The information, and how much of it, will be shared only as they approve. Hopefully, this will at least include the people interacting directly, such as catechist, circle of friends, etc. This will help to explain different behaviors, leading to awareness and improved understanding in the parish. Also, respect that each person/family will have different goals and supports, AND that each person/family will have different desires for parish involvement.

Quick Reminders for the Conversation and Assessing Helpful Supports

- Person First Language is preferred, seek to understand the person, not the disability.
- Ask about their gifts, likes, dislikes AS WELL AS specifics of diagnosis and learning supports.
- Parents, teachers & the person are a great source of insight and guidance.
- Possibly observe in other settings: school, home, enrichment activities, etc.

A List of Questions to Guide the Conversation, with the Individual as Possible and Parents

1. What kind of experience do you want – what level of participation?

¹ Updated 11/10/2022

2. What are their particular interests?
3. What are their particular talents?
4. What kind of situations do they find challenging?
5. What is their diagnosis? This is only to provide some additional sense of supports that *could* be helpful.
6. Do they have particular or potential interests in Mass or Catholic traditions? (for example, really enjoys music, ritual, singing, etc)
7. How would you describe their social relationships?
8. What methods of communication are used?
9. What have been effective learning strategies?
10. What are good motivators?
11. Are there any challenging behaviors?
12. What are possible triggers of challenging behavior?

13. What are helpful responses to challenging behavior?
14. What is helpful for holding their attention?
15. What is their school or day environment like: inclusive setting, separate programming, or mixture?
16. What adaptations and supports for learning and participation are used there?
17. Do you attend Mass together? If yes, briefly describe the experience. If not, why not? (This is not for judgment, but to determine if there are any behavioral issues preventing it. If so, learning to attend Mass is a part of the catechetical experience and may be the place to begin.)
18. Do they have any diet or environmental issues?
19. Do they have any medical issues you need to be aware of?
20. Do they have siblings? How do they relate to each other?
21. How do they relate to other members of the family and community?
22. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Some General Strategy Suggestions

Think of the WHOLE Person

- Begin with the person before you.
- Relationship is central to who we are
- Ask about his/her gifts, likes, dislikes AS WELL AS specifics of diagnosis and learning
- Parents, teachers, and the individual are a great source of insight and guidance
- Communication and behavior are critical considerations for learning across ALL abilities

Attend to Communication - Receptive/Expressive/Combination

- Is it happening? What are the capabilities?
- Use shorter phrases
- Avoid speaking in the negative
- Wait before repeating yourself.
- Visualize sequenced directions.
- Avoid misunderstandings.

Preparation for Transitions - Advance Warning Systems

- Verbal countdown
- Picture or word schedule
- Concrete language

Using Visuals to Reinforce What We Say

Writing Stories to Help Anticipate New Situations

Thinking Alongside the Person – understanding how he/she learns and interacts with the world.

Ask for suggestions/guidance from schoolteacher.

Behavior Supports

- Schedules, text or pictures: Promote Independence; Provides predictability; Allows Self-Mgt
- Making Routines Comfortable
- Task Analysis
- Shaping
- Prompting and Prompt Fading



Pastoral Support Plan(s) for:

Parish:

<p>Goals</p>	<p><i>Include learning, practice and interactive participation goals for each step. Interactive participation refers to interaction with 'typically developing' peers, both for compatibility and collaborative learning partners. Fostering relationships within the Body of Christ is integral to formation process.</i></p>
<p>Long Term:</p>	
<p>Short Term:</p>	
<p>Next Stage:</p>	

Pastoral Plan	Objectives, Strategies, and Resources
General learning supports:	
Objective & Strategy	
Weekly Time Estimates	
Review: establish timeline/dates	<i>Purpose is to assess and reassess: are goals being properly served or counteracted?</i>
Who is Involved?	
Who is Involved?	
Who is Involved?	

Showing Respect for Persons with Disabilities: Etiquette and Hospitality²

The suggestions below refer to opportunities for engaging with individuals with disabilities that may occur during Mass or other moments in parish life when welcoming someone who is new to the parish, or that you are just meeting. Some basic premises to follow are to assume: the ability to participate in some way; a preference for some level of autonomy, rather than be waited on; and that helpful supports for each person will be different, even among people with the same disability. If you know the person has a disability, based on suggestions below, you can ask how you might help. Sometimes, though, the disability isn't obvious, as in the case of some intellectual/developmental disabilities or mental illnesses. If you observe behavior that you don't understand, it is good to remain aware for possible supports and be nonjudgmental. What may appear to be willful, disruptive behavior may be due to stress in the family (divorce, unemployment, etc) or a "hidden" disability or condition, such as autism or a mental health concern.

General Tips

- Gestures often convey acceptance. Sit next to a person with a disability, but respect boundaries.
- If a person has a seizure, you cannot do anything to stop it. Be sure head is protected.
- As an usher or greeter, please respect person's needs and requests whenever possible.
- Assume ability rather than disability. Respectfully ask if assistance is needed if you have doubts.
- A person who may appear drunk or sick may have a disability or medical emergency.
- Ask a person with a disability to take up the offertory gifts or serve in other roles of ministry.
- Ask a person with a disability to be an usher.

Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

- Greet person normally, with age-appropriate language.
- Repeat information about yourself if necessary.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person doesn't understand.
- Treat people equally.
- Even if person doesn't read, offer reading materials.

Speech Disabilities

- Let the person know you do not understand him/her rather than pretending you do.
- Ask the person to repeat himself/herself if you can't understand.
- Wait for the person to finish; do not finish his/her sentences.
- Wait for the person to finish, and then restate to be sure you understand.
- Suggest another way of facilitating communication if needed.

² Pastoral Care for Persons with Disabilities Archdiocese of Philadelphia, adapted some and used with permission. <http://archphila.org/evangelization/resplife/deafapos/deafapos.htm>

Behavioral Supports

- Create a space available that parishioners can go to de-escalate challenging behaviors.
- If the individual is with a parent or other adult, wait before offering assistance and if you do, first ASK if it is desired. Supportive strategies for challenging behavior can take time before effecting change. However well intended your offer, it may be intrusive and counterproductive.
- Ask how you can help, find out if there is a support person who can be sent for.
- Ask what will make him/her most comfortable and respect these supports to the maximum extent possible.
- If attempts at conversation fail, wait for rational moments. Do not force conversation or argue.

Mental Health

- Be sure to greet the person.
- Give your name and ask theirs but respect boundaries.
- Offer to sit with or near, but respect wishes to be alone.

Physical/Mobility

- Ask about preferred location for seating.
- Ask permission to push or touch a person's wheelchair first.
- Individuals with canes or crutches may or may not prefer to use a ramp rather than stairs. Ask.
- Individuals with canes and crutches need their arms to balance themselves, so do not grab their arms.
- Speak to the person in the wheelchair and not to the person that may be accompanying them.
- Be eye level, if possible, with persons in wheelchairs when talking to them.
- Always ask before offering help. Don't be offended if the person says no.
- Never pat anyone on the head.
- A person with a respiratory or heart condition may have difficulty walking long distances. Offer a place to rest before ushering to a seat.

Blindness/Partially Sighted

- Prearrange tour of church with audio description.
- Identify yourself and your role (I am the greeter/usher).
- Ask person "Would you like assistance?" Offer your arm.
- Describe the scene if the person is moving through an unfamiliar space alone. Keep your voice at a volume the individual can hear, rather than for people in the general area.
- Walk on the opposite side of a service dog.

Blindness/Partially Sighted cont.

- Don't touch a person's cane or guide dog.
- Give verbal cues that are specific such as, "there is a trash can in front of you," instead of something vague like, "watch out."
- Guide an individual's hand to a banister or the back of a chair to help direct to a stairway or seat AFTER asking permission to do so.
- Inform a person who is blind and attends church regularly of any physical changes.
- Offer bulletins in large print or Braille and large-print prayer books and hymnals.
- Establish before Mass IF a person would like accommodations for Communion (e.g., Eucharistic Minister to come to them, a sighted guide, etc). Do not assume.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HOH)*

- Using someone who knows sign-language is not an adequate replacement for an interpreter.
- Determine whether the individual prefers to use sign language, writing, gesturing, speaking or a combination of all to communicate.
- To get the attention of someone who is deaf/HOH you can tap him/her on the shoulder, wave your hand or flicker the lights.
- When speaking to a person who is wearing a hearing aid, use normal volume, speaking clearly. If you shout, your words will be more distorted. Move closer to the individual if they have trouble hearing you.
- Face the person directly when speaking, and do not obscure your mouth when communicating.
- When speaking through a sign-language interpreter, look directly at the person who is Deaf, and maintain eye contact, talking directly to him/her.
- Background noises are a problem for people who are HOH. You may need to turn off radios and air conditioners.
- Use these suggestions to initiate interaction when possible. There is nothing worse than being left out and ignored.
- Offer assisted listening devices if available; have a note pad and pen available.

* Individuals who are Deaf typically prefer what is known as *identity-first language* rather than *person-first language*. They consider Deafness to be a culture whose language is sign language, American Sign Language (ASL) in the US.

Parents of Individuals w/ Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD): A Brief Description of Experiences and Pastoral Implications¹

Stress combined with inadequate coping mechanisms is an accepted contributor to poor marriage relationships and divorce. In the particular case of parents of children with developmental disabilities, it is typically a combination of multiple stressful events and issues which make ongoing demands that can undermine a marriage if there are not enough or appropriate coping mechanisms, strategies or resources. Many such stresses are:

- The initial experience that something is “wrong,” which if not a diagnosis, can have destabilizing effects if there are different perceptions by the wife and husband.
 - And differing ways/ideas of men/women/family histories/individual differences
- The diagnosis can bring relief that there is a name or it can bring grief at confirmation of the “typical” child not born and the associated expectations, even unspoken.
- The wear and tear on the spirit of each parent from going through the extra daily tasks associated with the additional supports for their child with a significant disability.
 - Perception of different levels of involvement can cause anger, resentment.
- Physical exhaustion is often a regular part of life from sleep deprivation and/or the extent of physical involvement in care, for example, having a 6-year-old who is not toilet trained, and likes to decorate with his or her feces.
- Often there are financial issues (beyond those that normally occur in life) to provide necessary services and supports that are not “covered.”
 - These can particularly impact the husband’s self-esteem by feeling he is not able to “take care” of his family.
- The wide assortment of services, supports, extra activities, extra jobs, require a strategy of “divide and conquer” even more than typically occurs in family life that can isolate husband and wife from each other.
 - Magnified by cultural expectations of independence and not asking for help.
- Families often feel isolated from “typical” families and may not have connections with families who share their struggles that could give support.
- Disagreements over appropriate courses of action.
- Disagreements over appropriate courses of action can be magnified when there is different level of involvement in doctor visits and treatment appointments. Both parents feel the same right to decision based on parenthood, but if one parent is more involved they may not validate the other’s opinion/desire.
 - Can create baggage that transcends issues.
- There can be jealousy from reduced attention/time for the spouse because of the extra time and attention providing support their child(ren) with a significant disability or health condition.
- The above also can get compounded by additional supports for other sons and daughters, ups and downs of life cycles, careers, illness, etc...
- These are an ongoing part of life.

¹ Inputs from Parent Advisory Counsel.; Higgins, Daryl J., Bailey, Susan R., Pearce, Julian C.. “Factors associated with functioning style and coping strategies of families with a child with an autism spectrum disorder. Sage Publications and The National Autistic Society: 2005, Melbourne, Australia. pp. 125-137. Masters, Anne. *Pastoral Ministry WITH Persons WITH Disabilities Parish Resource Guide, A PRAISE Resource*, Archdiocese of Newark, The Advocate Publishing Corp: 2013. pp. 208-209.

Some Pastoral Implications

- The list on previous page focuses on the challenges and struggles. Even in families where they exist, know that there are also moments of great love, joy, happiness, etc. this also should be noted, affirmed, and celebrated.
- While affirming parents in the love they have and the care they provide for their sons and daughters with disabilities, be careful not to set them on a pedestal. Though well-intentioned, such comments often make it difficult for the parents to then voice the frustrations and fears they have.
- Need to educate the “person in the pew” about the struggles these families are living with and their need for a supportive faith community.
- This is not only a nice thing to do, but is called for by our identity as a Eucharistic people.
- Importance of preparing catechists so diverse learners can be welcomed in catechetical programs with their same age peers as possible.
- Provide respite care for parents: family fun nights, with age-appropriate options, during Mass for younger children (could be beginning of religious education).
- Develop strategies to reduce sense of isolation, create connections w/ others in parish.
- Support groups for mothers and fathers, grounded in faith.
- Recognize that parents may be angry with God and/or the Church and may need someone to walk with him/her in faith.
- Meet each family where they are and determine preferred supports and strategies.

Quotations from Church Teaching

Vatican *Directory for Catechesis*

Formation is an ongoing process ..., *under the guidance of the Spirit and in the living womb of the Christian community ...* (131)

The *kerygma* imposes certain guidelines for catechesis ... [it] “should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom.” (59)

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ ...” (75)

“Catechesis, in reference to preparation for community life, therefore has the task of developing the sense of *belonging* to the Church; teaching the sense of ecclesial *communion*, .. *forming believers in the sense of ecclesial* co-responsibility, contributing as active participants to building up the community and as missionary disciples to its growth.” (89)

“The Christian community is the origin, locus and goal of catechesis ... the womb ... is a real community, rich with gifts and opportunities, but not exempt from limitations and weaknesses. ... in which one has the concrete experience of God’s mercy, the exercise of mutual acceptance and forgiveness is made possible.” (133)

“The communication of the faith in catechesis, which also passes through human mediation, nonetheless remains as event of grace, brought about by the encounter of the word of God with the experience of the person.” (195)

“[T]he Church recognizes in persons with disabilities the call to faith and to a life that is good and full of meaning.” (269)

“At the cultural level, unfortunately, there is a widespread conception of life, often narcissistic and utilitarian, that does not grasp the manifold human and spiritual richness in persons with disabilities, forgetting that vulnerability belongs to the essence of humanity and does not prevent happiness and self-realization.” (269)

“It is the task of the local Churches to be open to the reception and ordinary presence of persons with disabilities within programs of catechesis, working for a *culture of inclusion* against the logic of the ‘throwaway culture’³.” (271)

Acknowledges that persons with disabilities are “called to the fullness of sacramental life ... therefore *no-one can refuse the sacraments to persons with disabilities.*” (272, *emphasis added*)

“*Pastoral inclusion* and involvement in liturgical action, especially on Sundays, is therefore important. Persons with disabilities *can* become adept in the lofty dimension of the faith that includes sacramental life, prayer, and the proclamation of the Word. In fact, they are not only recipients of catechesis, but participants in evangelization.” (272)

³ “Throwaway culture” translation from Italian provided by Cristina Gangemi, The Kairos Forum, as a more accurate representation of the original Italian text. In fact, this phrase has been used by Pope Francis, so it makes sense.

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. . . . This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few.” (300)

Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops On People With Disabilities

As pastors of the Church in America...we call upon people of good will to **reexamine their attitudes** toward their brothers and sisters with disabilities and promote their well- being, acting with the **sense of justice and the compassion that the Lord so clearly desires**. Further, realizing **the unique gifts** individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church, we wish to address **the need for their integration** into the Christian community **and their fuller participation in its life**. (1)

Prejudice starts with the simple perception of difference, . . . Even if we do not look down upon them we tend all too often to think of them as **somehow apart – not completely one of us**. (2)

We all struggle with life. We must carry on this struggle in a spirit of mutual love, inspired by Christ’s teaching that in serving others we serve the Lord Himself. (cf. Mt 25:40) In doing so, **we build a community** of interdependent people and discover the Kingdom of God in our midst. (5)

Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* stresses the **innate dignity of all men and women**.**It is a fundamental principle that every human being is a ‘person’** . . . [One] has rights and duties.....Flowing directly and spontaneously from [one’s] very nature. These rights are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable.” (7)

Defense of the right to life, then, implies the defense of other rights which enable the individual with a disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. (10)

It is not enough merely to affirm the rights of people with disabilities. We must actively work to make them real in the fabric of modern society.... (11)

If people with disabilities are to become equal partners in the Christian community, injustices must be eliminated and ignorance and apathy replaced by increased sensitivity and warm acceptance. (13)

Guidelines For The Celebration Of The Sacraments With Persons With Disabilities: Revised Edition

The Church continues to affirm the dignity of every human being, **and to grow in knowledge and understanding of the gifts and needs of her members who live with disabilities**. . . . All members of the Body of Christ **are uniquely called by God by virtue of their Baptism**...the Church seeks to support all in their **growth in holiness**, and to encourage all in their vocations. **Participating in, and being nourished by, the grace of the sacraments is essential to this growth in holiness**. (Opening)

It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities... ***To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community.*** All human beings are equal in dignity in the sight of God. Moreover, by reason of their Baptism, all Catholics also share the same divine calling.(1)

Sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them. (2)

Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation, according to their capacity. Pastoral ministers should not presume to know the needs of persons with disabilities ... Full accessibility should be the goal for every parish, and these adaptations are to be an ordinary part of the liturgical life of the parish. (3)

Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs ... as much as possible, persons with disabilities should be integrated into the ordinary programs. (5)

Having received the sacraments ... persons with disabilities, like all other parishioners, should be encouraged to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry that are available and for which they are qualified. (6)

The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodation to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. ... Pastoral ministers are encouraged to foster attitudes and a parish culture, and to develop informational materials, aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord. (7)

Baptism

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the baptized have the right to the love and help of the community. (10)

Because it is the sacrament of universal salvation, baptism is to be made available to all who freely ask for it, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving. Baptism may be deferred only when there is no reason for hoping that the person will be brought up in the Catholic religion. (11)

Reconciliation

Nevertheless, even young children and persons with intellectual disabilities often are conscious of committing acts that are sinful to some degree and may experience a sense of guilt and sorrow. As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound intellectual disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability. (28)

In the case of individuals who are nonverbal or have minimal verbal communication ability, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through some gesture rather than verbally. ... Catholics with significant communication disorders may be permitted to make their confessions using the communication system with which they are

most fluent. ... (29)

Eucharist

It is important to note, however, that the criterion for reception of Holy Communion is the same for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities as for all persons, namely that the person be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally...If it is determined that a parishioner who is disabled is not ready to receive the sacrament, great care is to be taken in explaining the reasons of the decision. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament. (22)

Catholics with Celiac Sprue Disease made aware of the options to receive a low-gluten host or to receive under the form of wine alone. ... As people may feel self-conscious at the prospect of needing special arrangements for the reception of Holy Communion, pastoral sensitivity in this area is particularly important. (25)

When baptized Catholics who have been regular communicants develop advanced Alzheimer's or other age-related dementias, there is to be a presumption in favor of the individual's ability to distinguish between Holy Communion and regular food. (26)

Confirmation

... Persons who because of intellectual or developmental disabilities may never attain the use of reason can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and should be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents to receive it. (18)

Anointing of the Sick

Since disability does not necessarily indicate an illness, Catholics with disabilities should receive the Anointing of the Sick on the same basis and under the same circumstances as any other member of the Christian faithful. (34)

Marriage

Pastors of souls should make the necessary provisions to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in marriage preparation programs. ... the local ordinary should consult with men and women of proven experience and skill in understanding the emotional, physical, spiritual, and psychological needs of persons with intellectual disabilities. ... (43)

Closing Paragraph

These guidelines are presented to all who are involved in liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical ministry. All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church. When persons with disabilities are embraced and welcomed, and invited to participate fully in all aspects of parish community life, the Body of Christ is more complete.

National Directory of Catechesis

49. Catechesis for Persons with Disabilities*

"We are **a single flock** under the care of a single shepherd. **There can be no separate Church** for persons with disabilities."** ... All Persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of

faith and offer valuable gifts ... **They are not just the recipients of catechesis – they are also its agents.** (*pp. 206-209, quoting *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, no. 1.

...The whole community of faith needs to be aware of the presence of persons with special needs within it and be involved in their catechesis.

“no family is ever really prepared for the birth of a disabled child.”(*Pastoral Statement*, 15) The Church’s pastoral response in such situations is to learn about the disability, offer support to the family, and welcome the child.(Cf. *Welcome and Justice*) However, **parishes should not assume that the parent of a child with a disability will serve as primary catechist.** The level of parent participation should be tailored to meet the needs of the parent, the child with a disability and other students.

Catechesis for persons with disabilities must be adapted in content and method to their particular situations.

Specialized catechists should help them interpret the meaning of their lives and give witness to Christ’s presence in the local community in **ways they can understand and appreciate.**

“Great care should be taken to **avoid further isolation** of persons with disabilities through these programs which, as far as possible, should be integrated with the normal catechetical activities of the parish.” (*Pastoral Statement*, 25)

Catechetical efforts should be promoted by diocesan staffs and parish committees that include persons with disabilities. (Cf. *Welcome and Justice*, 2)

Additional References

CCC 1255 “...The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.”

CCC 1269 “Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.”

“Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has the right to the love and help of the community.” (“Introduction, Rite of Baptism,” *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, 366.)

Document References

Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, 1978, rev. 1989, USCCB, "Pastoral Statement."

Revised Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 2017, USCCB, "Guidelines."

Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities: A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1998, USCCB, "Welcome and Justice."

National Directory for Catechesis, 2005, USCCB, "NDC."

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second ed.

"Introduction, Rite of Baptism," *The Rites of the Catholic Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. 1990.

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. *Directory for Catechesis*. 2020.

Organizations for Information, Support and Services

Organization/Contact Info	Website Resources
Local Pastoral and	Service Support Resources
<p>Pastoral Ministry with Persons with Disabilities for Archdiocese of Newark Anne Masters, Ph.D, FAAIDD, Director 973-497-4309 Anne.Masters@rcan.org</p>	<p>www.rcan.org/disabilities Provides guidance on supportive strategies to facilitate meaningful participation of individuals with disabilities within the parish and to promote appreciation of individuals with disabilities as indispensable members of the Body of Christ.</p>
<p>MOM2MOM 877-914-6662 877-914-MOM2</p>	<p>www.mom2mom.us.com Peer support services for mothers and other caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Excellent as a compassionate listener who personally understands, as well as can offer guidance navigating system of services.</p>
<p>Autism New Jersey 609-588-8200</p>	<p>www.autismnj.org/ Provides education and public policy initiatives and recognizes the autism community's many contributions to society.</p>
<p>Autism Family Services of New Jersey 800-336-5843</p>	<p>autismfamilyservicesnj.org Under the above organization focused on supporting a better quality of life for individuals with autism and their families.</p>
<p>Alzheimer's New Jersey 888-280-6055</p>	<p>www.alznj.org <u>Education, guidance and referral information about Alzheimer's disease and dementia.</u></p>
<p>Bergen County Special Services (BCSS) CAPE Resource Center 201 343-6000 x4067</p>	<p>https://bcss.bergen.org/index.php/cape-center-home Provides resources for the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and career needs of students through learning environments in the schools, homes, and communities.</p>
<p>Caregivers of New Jersey 877-265-6360</p>	<p>njcaregivers.org Also under Autism Family Services of NJ, focused on advocacy, support coordination and training for caregivers.</p>
<p>Community Access Unlimited 908-354-3040 Has different locations in Union County, though people from other counties may participate in a number of their programs.</p>	<p>www.caunj.org Provides community access through effective and comprehensive support services for individuals with disabilities, at-risk youth and people with housing needs.</p>
<p>The Family Resource Network 800-336-5843</p>	<p>www.familyresourcenetwork.org Umbrella organization supporting families and individuals who live with a variety of disabilities and chronic illnesses.</p>
<p>Family Support Center of New Jersey 732-262-4373</p>	<p>www.fscnj.org Also part of above group, provides training and support programs for families.</p>

<p>Epilepsy Services of New Jersey 800-376-2345</p>	<p>www.epilepsyservicesnj.org Information and resources dedicated to help improve quality of life for people affected by epilepsy and their loved ones.</p>
<p>Family Support Organization of Essex County 973-395-1441</p>	<p>www.fsoec.org Serves families with children who have emotional, behavioral, mental health, substance use, intellectual and developmental disabilities through advocacy, peer support and education.</p>
<p>Family Support Organization of Bergen County 201-796-6209</p>	<p>www.fsobergen.org/ Family-run organization that provides education, support, and direct family-to-family peer support to family members of children with emotional and/or behavioral challenges.</p>
<p>Family Partners of Hudson County 201-915-5140</p>	<p>www.familypartnershc.org Family-run organization committed to providing effective and customized support to families, caregivers, and providers of children who require emotional, mental, and behavioral supports.</p>
<p>Family Support Organization of Union County 908-755-0090</p>	<p>www.fso-union.org/ A system partner within New Jersey's Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS). Provides help to children with complex emotional, mental health, or behavioral issues by focusing on family strengths and utilization of community resources.</p>
<p>The Arc of New Jersey 732-246-2525</p>	<p>www.arcnj.org/ Serves children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Community-based services are available statewide through local chapters. Bergen County https://www.arcbp.com/ Essex County https://arcessex.org/ Hudson County http://www.archudson.org/ Union County https://arcunion.org/</p>
<p>Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey (CPNJ) 973-763-9900</p>	<p>www.cpnj.org/ Provides services across the lifespan so that individuals and families establish and follow a carefully crafted life plan that may include public school or in-home therapy, private schooling, adult day care, assistive technology.</p>
<p>National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) 800-950-NAMI</p>	<p>www.nami.org/ The nation's largest grassroots mental health organization of more than 500 local affiliates that work to raise awareness and provide education and support in communities.</p>
<p>National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) 800-221-4602</p>	<p>www.ndss.org/ The leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome, their families, caregivers, and professionals. NDSS has local affiliates that provide an array of benefits.</p>

National Faith-	Based Organizations
Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, USCCB, Rev. 2017	Guidelines in English Guidelines in Spanish
National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) 202-529-2933 ncpd@ncpd.org	www.ncpd.org A number of references for catechetical and pastoral considerations.
Catholic Charities of Archdiocese of Newark (CCAN) 800-227-7413	www.ccannj.com/ Provides social service, behavioral health, and education programs in the four counties of the Archdiocese of Newark.
National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) 215-877-2660	www.ncbcenter.org Parent and pastoral resources and phone consultations.
Be Not Afraid (BNA)	www.benotafraid.net BNA follows ethical teaching of the Catholic Church and serves parents of all faith traditions. It is a ministry of accompaniment through peer support which other services are built on.
Collaborative on Faith & Disabilities Is part of the network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) and affiliated faculty and staff, seminaries and Divinity Schools, individuals and partnering organizations.	www.faithanddisability.org Excellent reference for latest in research, education & service related to disability, religion, & inclusive supports.
Pastoral Support for People	Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH)
Pastoral Ministry with the Deaf Fr. Bismarck Chau Rev.Bismarck.Chau@rcan.org 973-497-4009 Video Phone: 973-685-5574	www.rcan.org/offices-and-ministries/ministry-deaf/welcome Pastoral resources and references for individuals who are Deaf or HOH.
National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD) Info@ncod.org	www.ncod.org Pastoral resources and references for individuals who are Deaf or HOH.