

NCPD Board: Statement on Spiritual Development and Participation of Persons with Disabilities

The National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) facilitates the mandates of the 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*. The bishops recognize that:

For most Catholics the community of believers is embodied in the local parish. The parish is the door to participation for individuals with disabilities, and it is the responsibility of the pastor and lay leaders to make sure this door is always open. (Paragraph 18, 1978)

NCPD recognizes that meaningful participation for all persons in the parish ecclesiastical community includes a sense of welcome and belonging, a recognition of their interests and gifts, physical access, and participation in the sacramental and liturgical life of their faith communities.

Furthermore, meaningful participation of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities in their faith communities includes opportunities for ongoing spiritual development and growth beyond sacramental preparation. These opportunities can be, but are not limited to: participation in parish and liturgical ministries, religious education programs, retreats; access to spiritual direction, and active membership in small faith sharing communities. Furthermore, NCPD strongly supports the 1995 U.S. Bishops' *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* in its recommendation that "parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of ministry." (Paragraph 5, 1995)

NCPD is committed to provide referrals and encouragement to faith communities who are seeking to embrace the Pastoral Statement's call to "realize the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church.... and the need for their integration into the Christian community and their fuller participation in its life." (Paragraph 1, 1978)

Approved by NCPD Board of Directors

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