



THE BISHOPS' CALL FOR INCLUSION

Quotes from *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*¹

Par. 1 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.

Par. 14 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 promote their active participation and provide helps and services that reflect our loving concern.

Par. 17 When we think of people with disabilities in relation to ministry, we tend automatically to think of doing something for them. We do not reflect that they can do something for us and with us...they have the same duty as all members of the community to do the Lord's work in the world, according to their God-given talents and capacities.

Par. 33 People with disabilities are not looking for pity. They seek to serve the community and to enjoy their full baptismal rights as members of the Church. Our interaction with them can and should be an affirmation of our faith. There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that follows a single shepherd.

Quotes from *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*²

Par. 1 By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.

Par. 2 Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

¹ *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1978, with language updated in 1989.

² *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.

Par. 3 Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation, according to their capacity.

Par. 5 In accord with canon 777, no. 4, pastors are responsible to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities...Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities...Dioceses are encouraged to establish appropriate support services for pastors, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities.

Quotes from *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*³

Par. 3 Our defense of life and rejection of the culture of death requires that we acknowledge the dignity and positive contributions of our brothers and sisters with disabilities. We unequivocally oppose negative attitudes toward disability which often lead to abortion, medical rationing, and euthanasia.

Par. 4 Defense of the right to life implies the defense of all other rights which enable the individual with the disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, and in health care, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities and services.

Quotes from *National Directory for Catechesis: Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities*⁴

Par. 49 Persons with disabilities...are integral members of the Christian community.

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. Their involvement enriches every aspect of Church life.

They [persons with disabilities] are not just the recipients of catechesis—they are also its agents.

All persons with disabilities or special needs should be welcomed in the Church. Every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.

Some persons with disabilities live in isolating conditions that make it difficult for them to participate in catechetical experiences. “Since provision of access to religious functions

³ *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999.

⁴ *National Directory for Catechesis: Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities (no. 49)*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

is a pastoral duty,” parishes should make that much more effort to include those who may feel excluded.

The Church’s pastoral response in such situations is to learn about the disability, offer support to the family, and welcome the child.

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