Purpose of Inclusive Family Masses

The purpose of Inclusive Family Masses is not to suggest a separate Church for people with developmental disabilities. However, very often families living with developmental disabilities do not feel welcome attending their local parish liturgy. They have either been told directly that their son or daughter does not belong, or they have experienced the quiet stares which speak volumes of inhospitality. As Catholics we profess that the Mass is the source which fuels the life of the Church and all her people, as well as the summit toward which we journey. So these families stay away from the very thing which we believe will strengthen us for the road and provide a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

People and families living with developmental disabilities take great comfort in having the opportunity to celebrate God's presence in their lives, without worrying about feeling embarrassed or being stared at by fellow worshipers for the "different" or "distracting" behaviors of themselves, their son or daughter, sister, or brother. Experience of liturgies such as these has already given confidence to some families to attend their local parish’s regular Mass.

The establishment of Inclusive Family Masses at different parishes is an outgrowth of the successful experience of "Masses for differently-abled people," that is offered by Church of the Nativity in Midland Park once a month from October through June. The first addition to this series was held Sunday, Feb. 24, 1:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 300 Central Ave., Mountainside. This is a cooperative effort of Our Lady of Lourdes with its New Energies Cluster parish St. James the Apostle in Springfield, and takes place the last Sunday of each month. St. John the Evangelist, 29 North Washington Avenue, Bergenfield is the third addition, and takes place the first Sunday of each month. St. Augustin in Union City hosts a Mass in en Español on the second Saturday of the month at 5:00.
Mass Structure
1. The Inclusive Family Mass follows the guidelines for the Mass, except there is one reading followed by the Gospel of the day. The Children’s Lectionary is used for these.

2. Music is kept simple and volume on the quiet side as many people with autism spectrum disorders are sensitive to sound. However, also know that many people with autism spectrum disorders respond very well to music. So, we seek to balance the differing needs.
   a. Initially at one parish, music was led acapella, as there were not any music ministers. Slowly, the music ministry has developed.

3. Music in the Mass (some ideas, but feel free to establish your own traditions based on your community):
   a. Gathering Song
   b. Responsorial (based on suggested Psalm for the day, though can be a different version deemed more appropriate or accessible)
   c. Alleluia/Gospel Acclamation

   one suggestion:
   **Halle, Halle, Halle**
   Hal – le, hal – le, hal – le – lu – u – jah!
   Hal – le, hal – le, hal – le – lu – u – jah!
   Hal – le, hal – le, hal – le – lu – u – jah!
   Halle – lu -jah! Hal – le – lu – jah!

   Repeat.

   This is sung along with the American Sign Language motions for alleluia. It has become quite popular, even with a young girl who is very sensitive to sound.
   d. Communion Song
   e. Sending Song

4. Profession of Faith form has not been standardized. The Nicene Creed as well as the Renewal of Baptismal Promises has been used.

5. Our Father – sung with body movements in echo format. It has been sung acapella, as we have not had music ministers until recently. Words on next page. See following document.

6. Remember, what is most important is that the families feel welcome. If you don’t have a music minister, don’t worry. If you aren’t able to pray the version of the Our Father listed here, don’t worry. Feel free to make your own contributions based on the needs of your families and parish. Your hospitality is what the families will notice most.
The Lord's Prayer (simplified)
In Bodily Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven  
    hal - low - ed be your name.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done,  
on earth, as it is in heaven.

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1 Adapted from "The Lord's Prayer" for motion choir by Paul Bosch & Helen Eickmann, First printed in CIRCLE, May 1974.
Please give us, all that we need, and lead us not,

away from you. Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be your name.