

INDEPENDENT PARTICIPATION in the CELEBRATION of 1st EUCHARIST*



Ben's Story, His Family's Story

Be(com)ing Part of a Faith Community

- Since goal is belonging to a community, mother wanted Ben in class with other children
- Sent info home to all parents about autism
- Praised kids in class who were nice to him
- The degree of independence will vary – kids are different
- Practice, practice, practice (extensive notes from rehearsal previous year)
- School can help: attending, walking in line, shaking hands, waiting
- Teach at home: discrimination between bread and Eucharist
- Teach at home: reception from the cup

* Notes from Ben's mom, Mary Beth Walsh, Ph.D., Ass. Professor of Pastoral Theology, & member of *PRAISE* Executive Advisory Board.

TEACHING ATTENDING MASS

Participation in the Eucharist as part of the community is central to our identity as Catholics

Teaching “Attending Mass” becomes the beginning curriculum.

- Assess skills, look for prerequisite skills
- Consider your reinforcers carefully
- Different techniques for different children (backward chaining, or shaping)



KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE



- Using strategies of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Ben is taught to discriminate between the Host and regular bread.
- At times Ben is asked to point out "Jesus," and at other times, "bread."
- With each correct answer Ben, earns tokens that will be exchanged for the "reinforcer" he is working for.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS w/ PERSONS w/ DISABILITIES

- 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. ...Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations ...**
- By reason of their baptism ...equal in dignity in the sight of God. (1)
- Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments ... ask at appropriate times... properly disposed... [and] not prohibited by law... (2)

** (Opening paragraph taken from Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, November 1978, revised 1989. Quoted in Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 1995)*

GUIDELINES, cont.

- *Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation, according to their capacity... at least one fully accessible community be available in a given area. (3)*
- ...encourage ... to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry... (5)
- ..beyond mere physical accommodation to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. (6)

BAPTISM

- 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. (9)
- Promise of parents and godparents at baptism –parents who have children with special needs will need your help to fulfill their promise
- Promise of the community to the child in baptism: “The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at baptism” (Catechism 1255) - the parish will need your help to fulfill their promise to the special needs family

EUCHARIST

- ... The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the entire Christian life. (19)
- ...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...not ready ... great care is to be taken in explaining the reasons... Cases of *doubt should be resolved in favor of the right* of the baptized person to receive the sacrament... (20)

RECONCILIATION

- ...having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words... (23)

CONFIRMATION

- ... Persons who because of developmental or mental disabilities may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian to receive the sacrament of confirmation at the appropriate time. (16)

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

These guidelines are presented to all who are involved in pastoral ministry with persons with disabilities..." to promote accessibility of mind and heart, so that all persons with disabilities may be welcomed at worship and at every level of service as full members of the Body of Christ."

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)

PASTORAL STATEMENT, cont.

- 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." (9, 7)
- Right to life. . . (9)
- Support of rights to achieve fullest measure of personal development he or she is capable of. (10)

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.*

- ...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.

*pp. 206-209

***Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, no. 1.

NDC, cont

- "*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.

(Guidelines w/in NDC)

NDC, cont

- 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)

DOCUMENT REFERENCES

- Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, 1978, rev. 1989, "Pastoral Statement."
- Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 1995, "Guidelines."
- Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities: A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1998, "Welcome and Justice."
- National Directory for Catechesis, 2005, "NDC."