

# TIMELY TOPICS



DIocese OF COLUMBUS, OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

## April Autism Awareness Month

**D**uring this Easter Season, when we as a Church recall the incredible gift of Christ’s Death and Resurrection, we are constantly reminded that the Gospel message is for all people.

As such, it is fitting that April is declared **National Autism Awareness Month**, and has been set aside as a special opportunity for educating the public about autism and issues affecting persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As autism diagnoses continue to grow, the understanding of how to adapt catechesis to this population must expand as well. Here are a few important statistics:

- ☞ One in every 110 children in America is diagnosed with ASD
- ☞ Within that one in every 110 children, one in every 94 are boys
- ☞ 13 million families, and growing, live with ASD today

There are also a significant number of adults with living ASD many of whom were never formally diagnosed.

The NHS Information Centre in England released the first ever report on adults living with ASD in September 2008. This report found that:

- ☞ Nearly one in every 100 adults has some level of ASD
- ☞ Men have a 1.8% higher chance of diagnosis than women
- ☞ Single adults are more likely to have this condition
- ☞ Adult diagnosis is difficult because diagnosis is made based on observed behavior, and most adults with ASD live alone

### Some signs that a person may be autistic:

- ☞ Lack of or delay in spoken language
- ☞ Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
- ☞ Little or no eye contact
- ☞ Lack of interest in peer relationships
- ☞ Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
- ☞ Persistent fixation on parts of objects

Autism is treatable. Those diagnosed as children do not "outgrow" autism, but studies show that early diagnosis and intervention can lead to significantly improved outcomes.

Most persons on the ASD scale are either visual or kinesthetic learners.

Our faith reminds us that *all* persons are to be included in the life of the church. Thus it is important for catechists and teachers to be aware of learners – adults as well as children and youth -- who may be living with autism, and to learn more about how to better share the Good News to them.

**Our parishes should be places of welcome, understanding, accommodation and support.**✧

### Show your Support

You can show your support for people with autism by wearing the **Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon** this month – as a pin on your shirt, a magnet on your car, a badge on your blog, or even on your Facebook profile picture – and help to educate people on the potential of persons with autism.



- ☞ The puzzle pattern reflects the mystery and complexity of the autism spectrum.
- ☞ The different colors and shapes represent the diversity of the people and families living with the condition.
- ☞ The brightness of the ribbon signals hope—hope that through increased awareness of autism, and through early intervention and appropriate treatments, people with autism will lead fuller, more complete lives.

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## Make a Difference

There are several important bills moving through Congress that will have important effects on persons with autism

- ☞ *Keeping All Students Safe Act*: safer educational settings
- ☞ *Autism Treatment Acceleration Act*: better autism services
- ☞ *Achieving a Better Life Experience Act*: greater financial independence
- ☞ *Toxic Substances Control Act Reform*: better protection against toxic chemicals to be introduced soon

**For further information about this legislation and to take action to support it, visit [www.vote4autism.org](http://www.vote4autism.org).**

## Correlation to Certification Standards & the Graded Course of Study

We continue to provide a correlation of the 'Timely Topics' themes to the GCS and the National Certification Standards.

### National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

**Standard I**, Personal and Spiritual Maturity: 1.3, 1.6, 1.10PCL, 1.11PCL\*

**Standard II**, Lay Ecclesial Ministry Identity: 2.1, 2.4, 2.6PCL

**Standard III**, Catholic Theology:

- 3.1 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of revelation as embodied in Scripture, tradition, and creation
- 3.4.2 Utilizing pastoral and liturgical skills to design and, when appropriate, lead community prayer
- 3.6 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of pastoral ministry by:
  - 3.6.1 Articulating pastoral responses that invite the community into discipleship and witness according to the pastoral needs of people
- 3.8 Know and integrate a theology of Catholic spirituality into prayer and ministerial practice
- 3.17PCL Interpret life in the light of theology

**Standard IV**, Pastoral Praxis: 4.1 (4.1.1, **4.1.3**, 4.1.4, 4.1.6), 4.2, 4.6; 4.10PCL, **4.12PCL**

**Standard V**, Professional Practice: 5.1, 5.5, 5.6, 5.11PCL, 5.10PCL

*\*PCL indicates competencies specific to Parish Catechetical Leaders*

### Religion Graded Course of Study

**Standard II-G**, Illustrate a basic understanding of Catholic dogma and doctrine

**Standard III-A**, Identify prayer as being actively open to God through all forms of communication

**Standard III-E**, Identify the sacraments as God's active participation in our lives

**Standard IV-A**, Express that every person is loved by God first and is made in the image and likeness of God

## Resources

Visit our website: <http://www.cdeducation.org/dre/5leadership/cls/clsarchive.htm> for handouts and resources

Autism Society of America <http://www.autism-society.org>

Autism Society of Ohio <http://www.autismohio.org/>

National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry <http://www.nafim.org/>

*Autism Spectrum Disorders in adults living in households throughout England - report from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2007:* <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/asdpsychiatricmorbidity07>