



Year of Faith: Support for Special Needs

In academic circles, March is observed as **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Awareness month** and April as **Autism Awareness month**.

Similarly our Catholic tradition has a strong emphasis on reaching out to those with mental and physical disabilities. As we continue going deeper in the Year of Faith we would like to highlight the **Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities** issued in November of 1978, which said

“Just as the Church must do all in its power to help ensure people with disabilities a secure place in the human community, so it must reach out to welcome gratefully those who seek to participate in the ecclesial community. The central meaning of Jesus' ministry is bound up with the fact that He sought the company of people who, for one reason or another, were forced to live on the fringe of society. (cf. Mk. 7:37) These He made the special object of His attention, declaring that the last would be first and that the humble would be exalted in His Father's kingdom. (cf. Mt. 20: 16, 23:12) The Church finds its true identity when it fully integrates itself with these *marginal* people, including those who suffer from physical and psychological disabilities.” Paragraph 12

Resources for reaching out to those with mental and physical disabilities abound.

At the end of February, the Office of Religious Education and Catechesis hosted a motivating speaker, **Kathy Mears**, NCEA, to equip diocesan catechists in schools and parish programs with some basic skills for assisting those with special needs. Click here for a copy of her **audio presentation** and **PowerPoint**.

Another great resource is the **NCPD or National Catholic Partnership on Disability**. NCPD was established in 1982 to implement the **1978 Bishops' Statement**. The Diocese of Columbus is an official partner with NCPD and, as such, all catechists/teachers in the diocese are members and eligible for discounts on materials and other services.

We encourage you to take advantage of the many free resources provided by NCPD and its affiliates. In particular:

- ⊗ **Webinars** since October of 2007 NCPD has offered informational webinars on topics including: mental illness, catechesis, suicide, working with individuals suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, etc. The webinars and resources are stored on the website for viewing at your convenience.
- ⊗ Resources for **specific ministries** (autism, deaf/hard of hearing, intellectual and developmental disabilities etc.) and **ministry in general** (liturgical, accessible design, etc.)
- ⊗ Two free Newsletters—
 - ⊗ **Mental Illness** newsletter with research, programs happening in the country and resources available.
 - ⊗ **NCPD E-NEWS** highlights local, national and international happenings as well as news from the ministry field.
- ⊗ **Policies** from local, national and international Catholic levels as well as from other agencies.
- ⊗ **Spanish language** section with many of the resources and statements translated into Spanish.

We encourage you to take advantage of these great resources and the many books and DVDs that we have available on our **New On-line Searchable Media database**, or contact Sue Reihing or Martha Choroco at 614-221-4633.