

# TIMELY TOPICS

## OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

### People to Celebrate

**A**s we observe **Black History Month** in February, so we celebrate both **Women’s History Month** and **Developmental Disabilities Month** in March.

Each of these remembrances are important to us, especially as Catholic Christians who believe that we are all sisters and brothers, children of the one God who loves us into life.

#### How the celebrations came to be

Like Black History Month, Women’s History Month is a relatively recent observance.

- ☞ Both grew out of the gradual awareness that a considerable segment of humanity had for too long been written out of most history books.
- ☞ Both began with the efforts of a few individuals determined to right historical injustices.
- ☞ Both received official status first as a week’s observance, later as a full month.

Negro History Week was first celebrated in 1926, during the second week of February

**Black History Month** as we know it today was first observed in 1976, by order of Congress for the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of our country.

National Women’s History Week was first observed in 1981, in the week coinciding with March 8, International Women’s Day.

**Women’s History Month** as observed today was first celebrated in 1987 and has been renewed by proclamation every year since.

The first **National Developmental Disabilities Month** was declared by Congress in March, 1987, and has been observed regularly since then, by annual proclamation.

In Ohio, it was first designated as MRDD Awareness or “Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Awareness”. As of last year, that has been changed to **DD Awareness**, or “Developmental Disabilities Awareness.”

#### Value and Dignity of all

At the heart of all three of these observances is our Christian belief that:

- ☞ **every single person has value and dignity; and that**
- ☞ **by virtue of our baptism we are called to uphold that dignity in each person.**

In the Rite of Baptism, during the anointing with the Chrism, the priest prays that:

“As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as members of his body . . .”

#### Called to be a prophet

By our baptism, we are called to a **prophetic** role in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ.

A prophet is not one who foretells the future, but one who:

- ☞ Sees a situation that is unjust, or sinful
- ☞ Calls this wrong to the attention of the people
- ☞ Reminds them of what is right, of what is God’s way
- ☞ Challenges the people to re/turn to the ways of God.

A **prophet** is what each of us is called, by Baptism, to be whenever anyone is being treated unjustly, is being marginalized or excluded in any way.

As persons charged with the proclaiming and teaching of God’s word, and called to be prophets of the Word, we look to these three observances as an opportunity to share that word with our learners.✂

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## “Have Life to the Full” In Service

**Provide:** Bible; paper and pencils for each person

Begin with a proclamation of the Word from John 10: 10b (Jerusalem Bible translation)

**“I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full.”**

**Think** for a minute about what it means to “have life to the full,” or, as it appears in some translations, to “have it in abundance.”

**Jot down** any words that come to mind (or draw an image, if you prefer).

**Discuss:** (*five minutes maximum*)

Who are some of the groups of people that, for whatever reason, are denied a full life by our society/ culture?

What has been your experience of someone being excluded or disregarded?

What is God’s answer to such a situation?

**Consider:** (*four minutes maximum*)

What efforts might you and your learners undertake (or perhaps have already undertaken) to respond to the situation?

**Close** with the reading from Ephesians 2: 9-10 (Jerusalem Bible translation)

**We are God’s work of art,  
created in Christ Jesus for the good works  
which God has already designated to make up our way of life.**

## Ideas for every age

✧ **Use *In-Service***, above, with high school, RCIA or adult faith formation groups.

✧ **Research persons with disabilities** who nonetheless have achieved great things, e.g.,

Helen Keller, both blind and deaf;

Beethoven, who continued to compose music after losing his hearing;

Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein, both of whom were labeled “failures” in school because of learning disabilities;

Franklin D. Roosevelt, who continued as president after his legs were paralyzed by polio, etc.

✧ **Do a presentation** on the person’s life (*use stories, artwork, drama . . .*)

What can we learn from each of them?

What do their lives reveal about God’s gifts?

✧ **Assign the sermons/chapters** of *Strength to Love* by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. to individuals or small groups (depending on size of main group).

**After reading** (and discussing among themselves), ask them to express the core idea of their chapter to the rest of the group.

Write their own “sermon” or homily and present it orally.

Prepare a poster or montage or other visual art piece.

Make a short video.

Present a mime.

Use a song or hymn that is appropriate, etc.

✧ **Research the significant women** listed on the next page and why their lives are important. As above, report using a variety of modes of expression.

## SIGNIFICANT WOMEN

Clara Barton  
Rosa Bonheur  
Margaret Bourke-White  
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini  
Rachel Carson  
Shirley Chisholm  
Dorothy Day  
Henriette Delisle  
St. Katherine Drexel  
St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

Anne Frank  
Jane Goodall  
Fannie Lou Hamer  
Mary Harris (Mother) Jones  
Barbara Jordan  
Helen Keller  
Harper Lee  
Edmonia Lewis  
Clare Booth Luce  
Christa McAuliffe

Mary McLeod Bethune  
Maria Montessori  
Anne Morrow Lindbergh  
Rosa Parks  
Sacajawea  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton  
Annie Sullivan  
Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha  
Sojourner Truth  
Babe Didrickson Zaharias

## WOMEN'S HISTORY RESOURCES

### ONLINE

[http://womenshistory.about.com/od/womenshistorymonth/a/whm\\_history.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/womenshistorymonth/a/whm_history.htm)

Historical background, numerous links, primarily for jr. high through adult learners

[www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/curr058.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr058.shtml)

Curriculum-related activities, history, biographies, for variety of ages

[www.infoplease.com/spot/womenshistory1.html](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womenshistory1.html)

Wide range of related links: History & Timelines; Special Features; Especially for Kids; Prize Winners & Honorees; "Fun Stuff" Quizzes, and more.

**\*\*N.B.** The link on "Health & Reproductive Issues" contains material that should be viewed through the lens of Church teachings.

### BOOKS

Cruz, Joan Carroll. Saintly Women of Modern Times. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2004

Miller, Richard W. ed. Women and the Shaping of Catholicism. Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Press, 2009

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

In the past we provided correlations of the information covered in Timely Topics to the RGCS. We will resume this along with a correlation with the National Certification Standards, in the hope that this will help leaders to see the formational function of this material.

### **Religion Graded Course of Study**

Standard IV-A: Every person is loved by God first and is made in the image and likeness of God

Standard IV-B: One responds to the love of God by growing in relationship to God, others, self and all creation

Standard IV-C: The inherent dignity of each person

Standard IV-D: Discipleship as living out one's baptismal call

### **National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers**

Standard One: *Personal and Spiritual Maturity*

**PCL 1.9; PCL 1.10**

Standard Two: *Identity*

**PCL 2.6; PCL 2.8**

Standard Three: *Catholic Theology*

**PCL 3.11**

Standard Four: *Pastoral Praxis*

**PCL 4.11; PCL 4.12; PCL 4.16**

Standard Five: *Professional Practice*

**PCL 5.15**

## Resources

### USCCB STATEMENTS

- USCCB. [U.S. Catholic Bishops Documents on People with Disabilities \(1978, 1995, 1998\)](#). Washington, DC: National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities/United States Catholic Conference
- USCCB. [Brothers and Sisters to Us: U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day](#). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1979
- The Black Bishops of the United States. [What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter for Evangelization](#). Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984
- Committee on Women in Society and in the Church. [From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church](#). Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998

### BLACK HISTORY

#### ONLINE

[www.cnn.com/2010/US/studentnews/01/29/black.history.discussion.activity/index/html](http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/studentnews/01/29/black.history.discussion.activity/index/html)

Discussion and activities for learners in middle school through adulthood.

<http://blog.shmoop.com/2010/02/01/black-history-month-2010/>

English and Social Studies Guides with links to history, poetry, literature, music and biographies

<http://holidays.kaboose.com/what-is-black-history-month.html>

Elementary school materials and activities

#### BOOKS

- Brown, Camille Lewis. [African Saints, African Stories: 40 Holy Men and Women](#). Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008
- Brown, Joseph, SJ and Fernand Cheri, OFM. [Sweet, Sweet Spirit: Prayer Services from the Black Catholic Church](#). Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006
- Davis, Cyprian, OSB. [The History of Black Catholics in the United States](#). New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 2004
- Grigsby, Daryl. [In Their Footsteps: Inspirational Reflections on Black History for Every Day of the Year](#). Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications, 2007
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. [Strength to Love](#). Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982
- \_\_\_\_\_. [Why We Can't Wait](#). New York & Toronto: Signet Books/New American Library, 1964 (esp. chapter 5, "Letter from Birmingham Jail")

### RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

#### ONLINE

[www.publicimagesnetwork.org/index.html](http://www.publicimagesnetwork.org/index.html)

Special events statewide and nationally by organizations dedicated to serving people with disabilities

<http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/>

Resources and ways to be involved in inclusion initiatives in Ohio

[www.ncpd.org/](http://www.ncpd.org/)

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD), working for the full inclusion of all persons in the Church and in society; resources, monthly e-newsletter, Catholic perspective on disability issues

[www.nafim.org/index.php](http://www.nafim.org/index.php)

National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry (NAfIM), nonprofit organization of persons with/without disabilities working and praying together to realize justice for all persons in parish, social and civic life

#### BOOKS

- Browne, Elizabeth J. [The Disabled Disciple: Ministering in a Church without Barriers](#). Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Press, 1997
- Law, Eric H. F. [Inclusion: Making Room for Grace](#). St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000
- Shapiro, Joseph P. [No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging A New Civil Rights Movement](#). New York, NY: Random House, 1993
- Webb-Mitchell, Brett. [God Plays Piano, Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children](#). New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1993