



From Inclusion to Belonging:

Persons with Disabilities & Parish Life

Sr. Kathleen Schipani, IHM
Office for Persons with Disabilities
Archdiocese of Philadelphia




A little about me...



National Catholic
Partnership on Disability
Allianza Nacional Católica
Sobre la Discapacidad

what shapes my understanding of disability

- Early work at Don Guanella Village
- Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- Special Education / Catechetical Ministry
- Learned ASL and work with Deaf Catholic Community
- Director of Office for Persons with Disabilities & Deaf Apostolate
- National and International Partnerships 



The Church of St. Francis Xavier

what shapes my understanding of disability

Mission Statement: *The Church of St. Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic parish in the Jesuit tradition, **strives to be a prophetic, welcoming community, and an inclusive witness to the presence of Christ Jesus in our midst.** Mindful of our utter reliance on God, and need for God's grace, we rejoice together in our celebration of the sacraments and proclamation of the Gospel. As a people of hope, we commit ourselves through prayerful and creative discernment to respond to God in our time by: being a respectful community where seekers and their questions are welcomed, where injustice is challenged, where the poor, the alienated and the marginalized find a home, and where people are refreshed, reconciled and renewed.*

Creating a culture of BELONGING

The Church of St. Francis Xavier

what shapes my understanding of disability

ABILITY XAVIER

ALL ARE WELCOME at the Church of St. Francis Xavier!

The spirit of inclusion expressed in this commitment extends far beyond disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, family status or any other label that may tempt division.

Our Goals...

- To increase awareness and active inclusion of persons with disabilities at Xavier
- To bring the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities to parish leadership
- To celebrate the presence of persons with disabilities in our parish community

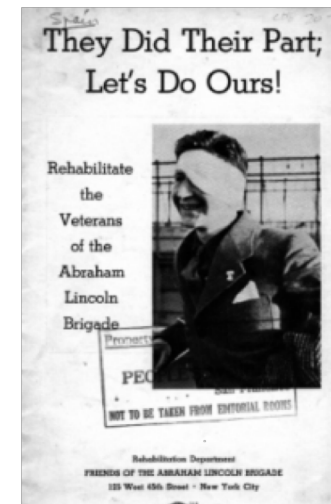
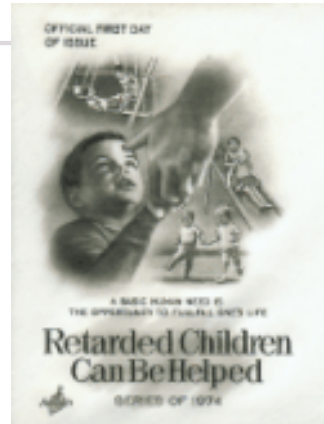
Ability Xavier advocates for persons with disabilities and sponsors events about disability.

Is it time for welcome to move to an experience of BELONGING?

Our Cultural Context *related to disabilities*



Historical Perspective



“No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall solely on the basis of his handicap, be excluded from the participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” 1973 FL

Theological and Anthropological Perspective

- Temptation to a false idolatry of strength, control, comfort and perfectly functioning bodies.
- Idolatry of autonomy and physical perfection can seep into our understanding of human good, happiness and what it means to be Christian.

THUS
the ordinary
vulnerability, frailty,
and dependencies of
our bodies
are not accepted as
part of what it means
to be a human
being.

A Catholic Theological and Anthropological Perspective

- Human beings have a spiritual and corporeal unity
- Affirmation of the goodness of the human body

The vulnerability and dependency of our bodies is consistent with our specific place in the good order of God's creation.

IMAGO DEI – Made in God's Image

- We make our world and our language in our own image.



Principles of Accommodating and Universal Design

What would our world look like if...

The Heart of Jesus Mission



Jesus encounters people with disabilities

- Call him here...What do you want me to do for you?
- He took him aside in private.
- What is your name?
- Friend, your sins are forgiven.

*"...spread a culture of encounter, solidarity and hospitality
towards persons with disabilities"*

Pope Francis

The Words of Jesus

He is born blind...so that
the works of God might
be made visible
through him. John 9:3



**Individuals with disabilities give glory to God.
Their belonging in our community is integral to the
beauty and fullness of our community.**



Disability can be defined as

“the normal and anticipated outcome of the risks, strains and stresses of the living process itself.”

Mary Jane Owen, NCPD 2000

Thus, a necessary engagement within the ordinary pastoral life of the Church.

Categories of Disabilities – IDEA/ADA/LIFE

13 categories are:

- Intellectual Disability (ID formally MR)
- Hearing loss
- Speech/language disability
- Visual impairment / Blind
- Behavioral / Mental Disability
 - Orthopedic impairment
 - Autism
 - Traumatic brain injury
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Deafness
- Deaf-blindness
- Multiple disabilities

DISABILITIES

Physical
Sensory
Mental Illness
Intellectual
Neurological

...at birth or acquired

...mild to severe

...impacts communication or not

Individuals with Disabilities

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)

AUTISM

1 in 88 or 1 % of the children

ASD- Asperger's Syndrome part of the Spectrum

Intellectual Disability

Formally called MR.

1.5 %-2.5%

Roughly 1 in 50

Traumatic Brain Injury

Ages 0-4 and 15-19 most at risk

In the fall of 2011, nearly 26,000 school-aged children – Special Ed for TBI

Psychiatric Disability Mental Illness Behavioral Health

1 in 5 Children ages 9 to 17

1 in 4 adults (26%)

1 in 17 (6%) Serious Disorder

Ecclesial Perspective



- ❑ ***Pastoral Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities, 1978, 1989***
- ❑ ***Welcome and Justice for People with Disabilities, 1998***
- ❑ ***National Directory for Catechesis 2005***
- ❑ ***Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, 1995, 2017***

Welcome and Justice for People with Disabilities

1. We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd.
There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities.
2. Each person is created in God's image, yet there are variations in individual abilities. Positive recognition of these differences discourages discrimination and enhances the unity of the Body of Christ.
3. Our defense of life and rejection of the culture of death requires that we acknowledge the dignity and positive contributions of our brothers and sisters with disabilities. We unequivocally oppose negative attitudes toward disability which often lead to abortion, medical rationing, and euthanasia.
4. Defense of the right to life implies the defense of all other rights that enable the individual with the disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, and in health care, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities, and services.
5. **Parish liturgical celebrations and catechetical programs should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active and conscious participation, according to their capacity.**

Welcome and Justice for People with Disabilities

6. Since the parish is the door to participation in the Christian experience, it is the responsibility of both pastors and laity to assure that those doors are always open. *Costs must never be the controlling consideration limiting the welcome offered to those among us with disabilities, since provision of access to religious functions is a pastoral duty.*
7. We must recognize and appreciate the contribution persons with disabilities can make to the Church's spiritual life, and encourage them to do the Lord's work in the world according to their God-given talents and capacity.
8. We welcome qualified individuals with disabilities to ordination, to consecrated life, and to full-time, professional service in the Church.
9. Often families are not prepared for the birth of a child with a disability or the development of impairments. Our pastoral response is to become informed about disabilities and to offer ongoing support to the family and welcome to the child.
10. Evangelization efforts are most effective when promoted by diocesan staff and parish committees that include persons with disabilities. Where no such evangelization efforts exist, we urge that they be developed.

Evangelization is Access.... No access.... No Evangelization

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKx2Ux4RBnU>



Individuals with Disabilities

- Ourselves, our parents, grandparents, sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters.
- Language we use
 - *Always person first.*
<http://rtcil.org/products/media/guidelines>
 - *Why is handicapped not used?*

Rosa's Law and the Language of Bullying

Signed into U.S. law in 2010, Rosa's Law replaces the term *mental retardation* with the phrase *intellectual disability* in federal health, education and labor statutes. The law was named for nine-year-old Rosa Marcellino, whose brother Nick explained the change this way: "What you call people is how you treat them. If we change the words, maybe it will be the start of a new attitude towards people with disabilities."*



Most states have also changed their laws to use more respectful language in statutes and the names of state agencies.

The disability community supports a national campaign called "Spread the word to end the word," which raises the public's awareness about ending use of "the R word." This movement is also part of the battle against bullying, which often begins with demeaning and destructive words.

*From "Remarks by the President at the Signing of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/08/remarks-president-signing-21st-century-communications-and-video-accessib>, accessed 12/7/12.

There are 3 Types of Barriers to Inclusion/Belonging:

- Structural/Architectural
- Communicative

Attitudinal

- This is the least expensive barrier, but the hardest to deal sometimes.
- FEELING AWKWARD
- Disability Etiquette Papers
- Ten Things not to say to Deaf People or...



Created by God in God's image, equal in dignity and having the same divine calling.



GIVE SOME SPECIAL ATTENTION TO:

- **Pre Natal Diagnosis - A PLANE FOR PASTORAL CARE**
- **Persons with significant IDD or Profound Neurological Disabilities - ENGAGEMENT AND CARE FOR CARE GIVERS**

Seeking Out

Widening the Welcome



Every parish should seek out its parishioners with cognitive, emotional, and physical disabilities, support them with love and concern, and ensure that they have ready access to a catechetical program suited to their needs and abilities. (NDC 61:B,1, 2nd paragraph)

What are ways of seeking out?

The Parish prepares...

What are some ways your parish may need to prepare and plan?

■ Effectiveness



If the participation of persons with disabilities and their families is to be real and meaningful, the parish must prepare itself to receive them (1978 Pastoral Statement #19)

Making Meetings and Events Accessible

Key - From Inclusion to Belonging

Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

- Pastoral inconsistencies
 - From Revision Preface:
 - Misunderstand nature of disability *
 - Church law – how apply?
 - Fear, unfamiliarity
 - Real or perceived limitations of available resources
- People denied the sacraments
- Uncertainty on how to respond pastorally

Key - From Inclusion to Belonging

Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

1995 ORIGINAL VERSION, #6

The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodation to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. Pastoral ministers are encouraged to develop specific programs aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord.

2017 REVISION, #7

The creation...persons with disabilities. All members of the faith community have a role to play in the invitation, welcome, and inclusion of people with disabilities. Pastoral ministers are encouraged to foster attitudes and a parish culture, and to develop informational materials, aimed at forming a community of believers...table of the Lord.

Key - From Inclusion to Belonging

Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

2017 Revision, new paragraph #6

Having received the sacraments, which “contribute in the greatest way to establish, strengthen, and manifest ecclesiastical communion,” persons with disabilities, **like all other parishioners**, should be encouraged to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry that are available and for which they are **qualified**....Like others, Catholics with disabilities are **not only recipients** of the Gospel, but are **also called** to proclaim it and to be witnesses to its truth.



Agents of Evangelization /Agents of the Gospel

From Inclusion to Belonging

Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities



<http://catholicphilly.com/2015/09/news/local-news/delco-parish-hosts-monthly-mass-for-persons-with-disabilities/>



1995 ORIGINAL VERSION, #3

Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible...While full accessibility may not always be possible for every parish, it is desirable that at least one fully accessible community be available in a given area. Parishes may, in fact, decide to collaborate in the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

2017 REVISION, #3

Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible...Full accessibility should be the goal for every parish, and these adaptations are to be an ordinary part of the liturgical life of the parish.

Key - From Inclusion to Belonging

Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

Pastoral Implications

- Supporting Individuals and Families
- Consider how to respond to the birth of a child with a disability
- Know who the families are who are caring for individuals with significant IDD or neurological disabilities
- Awareness and Etiquette
- Relationship with Individuals with Disabilities and their Families
- Set goals to create access and inclusion that leads to belonging



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.

(1978 USCCB Pastoral Statement #23)

From Inclusion to Belonging

- To the extent that we are welcomed and loved, **included in community** and accompanied to look to the future with trust, the true path of life is developed and we experience lasting happiness.



“...There can be no lack in communities of the words and, above all, the gestures to encounter and welcome people with disabilities”

Pope Francis 10.21.17

Resources

- **NCPD** National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities – www.ncpd.org
 - **NCOD** National Catholic Office for the Deaf - www.ncod.org
 - **NAfIM** National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry - www.nafim.org
 - **NICE** Network of Inclusive Catholic Educators – www.ipi.udayton.edu

 - **NAMI** National Alliance on Mental Illness - www.nami.org
- **Local Resources**
 - Diocesan Disabilities Resources
 - State and Local Associations and Agencies
 - Parents/Guardians
 - Professionals in your parish and area

