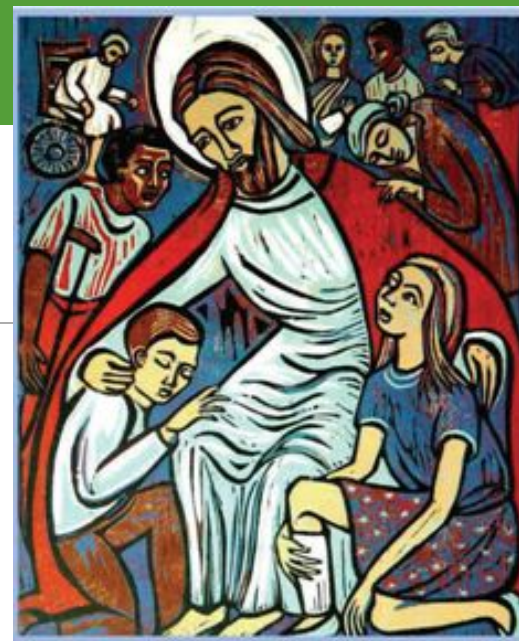




Theological, Canonical and Pastoral Engagement with Persons with Disabilities



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A little about me...



National Catholic
Partnership on Disability
Alianza 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





Our Cultural Context *related to disabilities*





Theological and Anthropological Perspective

In the Image of God..

Creatures made in God's image.





“...when disabled persons are mentally impaired or when their sensory or intellectual capacity is damaged, they are **fully human beings and possess the sacred and inalienable rights that belong to every creature.** Indeed human beings, independently of the conditions in which they live or of what they are able to express, have a unique dignity and special value from the very beginning of their life until the moment of natural death.”

(Pope John Paul II, January 5, 2004)

Theological and Anthropological Perspective

“We believe that each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

(Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, April 24, 2005)

"A person with disabilities, in order to build himself or herself up, needs not only to exist but also to belong to a community," he said. "I **pray that each person may feel the paternal gaze of God, who affirms their full dignity and the unconditional value of their life.**"

(Pope Francis, Dec. 3, 2019)



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

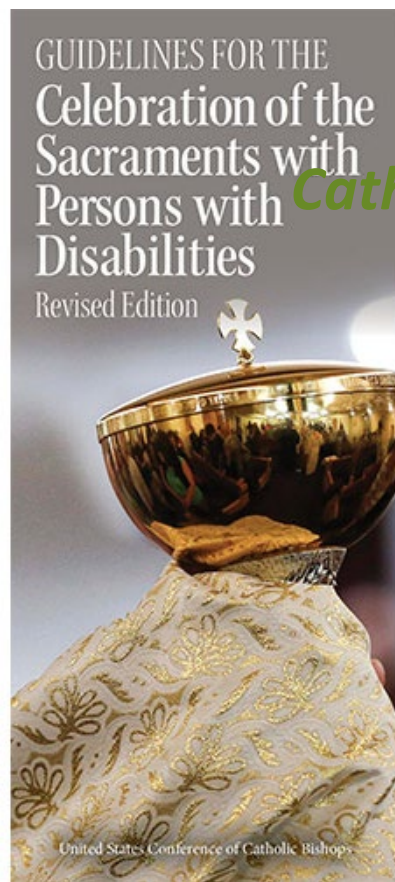


A Catholic Theological and Anthropological Perspective

- 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.

Some Background



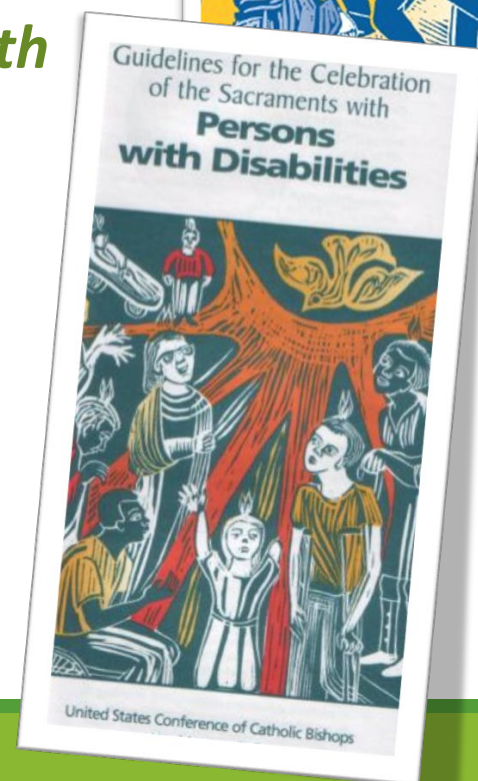
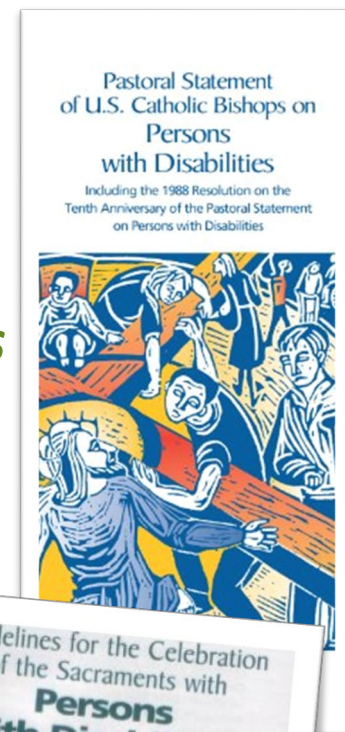
Pastoral Statement of the US Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities

November 1978

Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

October 1995

Revised June 2017



www.usccb.org/committees/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities

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Guidelines for the Celebration of

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DIVINE WORSHIP


Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

 @USCCB

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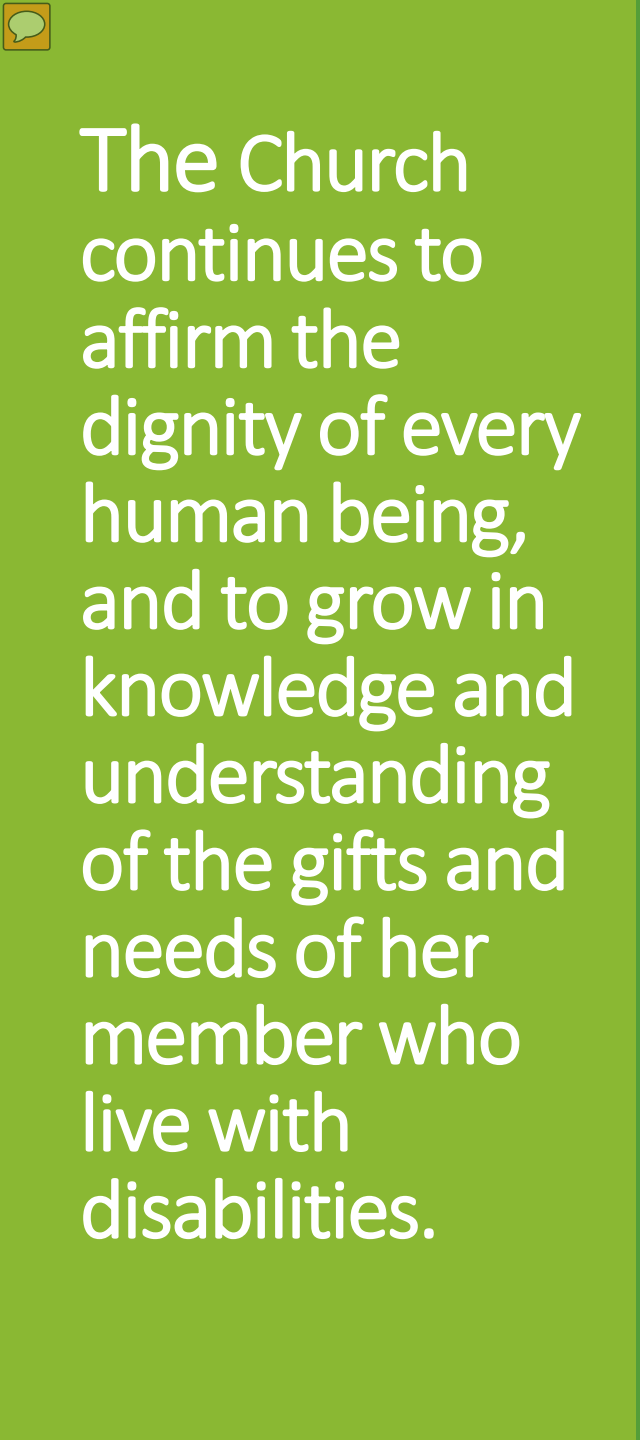
Home > Divine Worship > Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities Spanish Version(Español)

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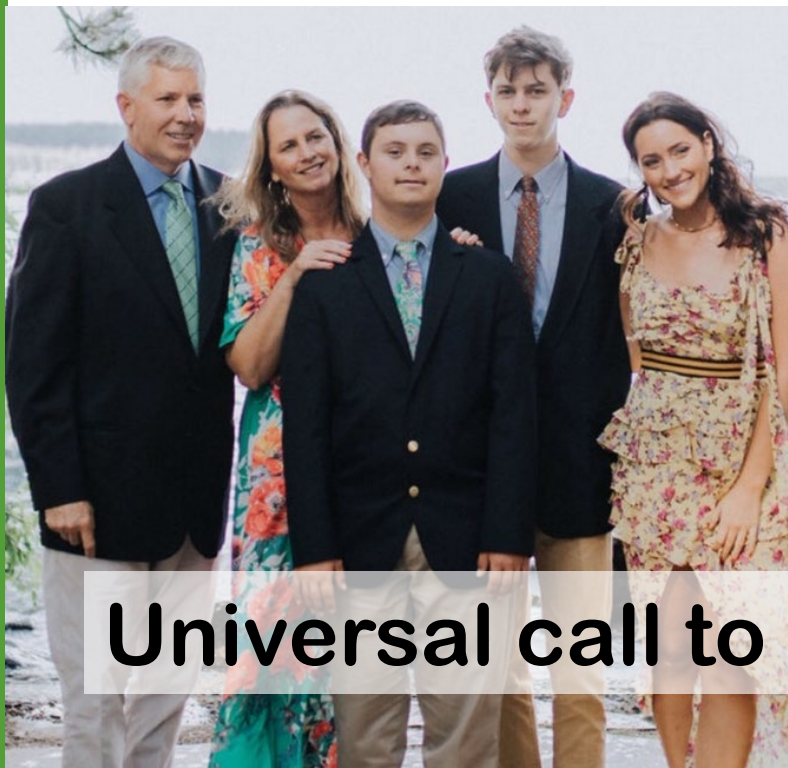
PDF Version 

Revised Edition — Approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on June 15, 2017.

The Church continues to affirm the dignity of every human being, and to grow in knowledge and understanding of the gifts and needs of her members who live with disabilities. Likewise, the Church recognizes that every parish community includes members with disabilities, and earnestly desires their active participation. All members of the Body of Christ are uniquely called by God by virtue of their Baptism. In light of this call, the Church seeks to support all in their




The Church continues to affirm the dignity of every human being, and to grow in knowledge and understanding of the gifts and needs of her member who live with disabilities.



Universal call to holiness



The grace of the Sacraments



It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together.

To exclude members of a the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of the community.

PS #23



Preface:

Why the need for the Guidelines?

- Pastoral inconsistencies
 - Misunderstand nature of disability
 - Application of Church law
 - Fear, misunderstanding and unfamiliarity
 - Real or perceived limitations of available resources
- People denied (no access to) the sacraments
- Uncertainty on how to respond pastorally





General Principals



1. The equal dignity and the universal call to holiness
2. Catholics with disabilities have the right to participate in the sacraments
3. Full access should be the goal of each parish and an **ordinary** part of liturgical life.
4. The local parish is the center of the Christian experience for most Catholics.





General Principals

5. Pastors are responsible to provide evangelization, catechetical formation etc.
6. Participation in all levels of pastoral ministry – use their gift
7. Attitudes and a parish culture of inclusion of all God's people
8. Difficult situations may be encountered; and establishment of appropriate policies which respect the rights of individuals to have recourse.





General Principles

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.



General Principles

1995 VERSION, #5

...Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry (e.g., as care ministers, catechists, etc.)

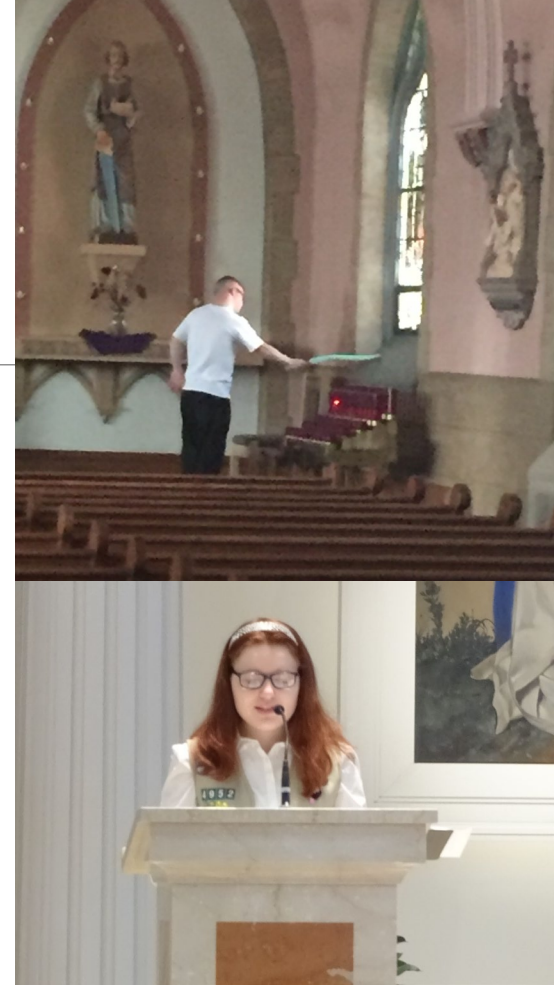
2017 REVISION, #5

...adapted for some parishioners with disabilities, though, as much as possible, persons with disabilities should be **integrated** into the **ordinary programs**. They should **not be segregated for specialized catechesis** unless their disabilities make it impossible for them to participate in the basic catechetical program. **Even in those cases, participation in parish life is encouraged in all ways possible.**

General Principles

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.



Baptism



- The Church, made present in the local community, has an important role to play in the Baptism of all of its members. Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the baptized have **the right to the love and help of the community.** (10)
- **Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring Baptism. Persons who lack the use of reason are to be baptized provided at least one parent or guardian consents to it.** (11)

Baptism

2017 REVISION, #11



- Parents who receive a prenatal diagnosis of a life-threatening condition should receive the support they need to assure that their child will be baptized “without delay.” Indeed, priests, deacons, and other pastoral ministers should **provide spiritual and emotional support to families who have received any difficult prenatal diagnosis and offer on-going support before and after the birth of a child, with special concern in the event of the death of a child.**

SUPPORT MINISTRIES:

- **BE NOT AFRAID (NATIONAL)**
- **LILY’S GIFT (ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA)**

Baptism

1995 VERSION, #12

If the person to be baptized is of catechetical age, the Rite of Christian Initiation may be adapted according to need.



2017 REVISION, #13

- **...Adults and children of catechetical age with disabilities should be welcomed into all stages and rites of the initiation process.**
- If the catechumen is of catechetical age, the rites may be adapted according to need. In these cases, catechesis for persons with disabilities must be **adapted in content and method to their particular situations.**
- **Like others, adults and children of catechetical age with disabilities should normally receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist in a single celebration.**

Confirmation

- Parents, those who care for persons with disabilities, **and shepherds of souls—especially pastors**—are to see to it that the faithful who have been baptized **receive the formation needed for the Sacrament of Confirmation and approach it at the appropriate time.** (16)



- Persons who because of intellectual or developmental disabilities may never attain the use of reason **can receive** the Sacrament of Confirmation and **should be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents.** It is important that they receive the pastoral guidance needed, along with the welcome and embrace of the whole community of faith. (18)



Confirmation

Revision 2017

- To the degree possible, those with disabilities should be included along with others during the preparation and celebration of the sacrament. **At times, pastoral need may necessitate an accommodated setting and a simpler manner. (18)**
- “When those with disabilities who are already baptized Christians desire to become Catholic, they should participate in the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church, which normally includes the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.” (20)

Eucharist



- The criterion for reception of Holy Communion is the same for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities as for all persons, namely, 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. (22)

Previously in #20 same language.

Eucharist

- Pastors are encouraged to consult with parents, those who take the place of parents, diocesan personnel involved with disability issues, psychologists, religious educators, and other experts in making their judgment. **(22)**
- If it is determined that a parishioner who is disabled is not ready to receive the sacrament, great care is to be taken in explaining the reasons for this decision. Cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the Catholic to receive the sacrament. The existence of a disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from receiving Holy Communion. **(22)**





Eucharist (new issues in the revision)

Given the paramount significance of the Eucharist in the lives of the faithful, and in light of medical and technological advancements that affect Catholics with disabilities, new questions have arisen regarding the reception of Holy Communion, and circumstances that were once rare have even become relatively common.

Clergy and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are encouraged to become familiar with the needs of their parishioners. In many instances, simple accommodations can be very helpful, and should be embraced by all at the parish level. (23)



- **New issues addressed:**
 - **Feeding tubes (24)**
 - **Gluten intolerance (25)**
 - **Advanced Alzheimers or other age-related dementias (26)**

Eucharist

Feeding Tubes (24)

- The norm of receiving through the mouth remains the same for those who otherwise use a feeding tube for sustenance, and Holy Communion is not to be administered through a feeding tube. For these communicants it will commonly be possible to place one or a few drops of the Precious Blood on the tongue. ...*consult with*
 - ..the full presence of Christ and his sanctifying grace are found in even the smallest piece of the consecrated host or in a mere drop of the consecrated wine. (24)





Eucharist Gluten Intolerance (25)

The following accommodations can be made for those who with Celiac Sprue Disease and other gluten intolerances:

- The opportunity to receive a **small fragment** of a **regular host**.
- Options to receive a **low-gluten host** or to receive under the form of **wine alone**.
- In the event of intolerance to gluten and wine, **mustum** may also be an option, with the approval of the local ordinary.

Clergy and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be aware of the possibility of **cross contamination** in these circumstances



Eucharist

Alzheimers or age-related dementias (26)



- **When baptized Catholics who have been regular communicants develop advanced Alzheimer's or age-related dementias, there is to be a presumption in favor of the individual's ability to distinguish between Holy Communion and regular food.** Holy Communion should continue to be **offered as long as possible**, and ministers are called to carry out their ministry with a special patience.
- If **swallowing** becomes particularly difficult, decisions regarding the continued reception of Holy Communion may have to be faced.
 - This pastoral decision is to be made on a **case-by-case basis**, in consultation with the individual, those in **consultation** with those closest to him or her.



Reconciliation

Only those who have the use of reason are capable of committing mortal sin. Nevertheless, even young children and persons with **intellectual disabilities** often are conscious of committing acts that are sinful to some degree and may experience a sense of guilt and sorrow.

As long as the individual is capable of having a **sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution.**

Those with profound intellectual disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability. (23 of original document, revision 28)



Reconciliation

- As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. (28)
- Those with profound intellectual disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability. (28)



Reconciliation - Those who have minimal verbal communication (29)

- In the case of individuals who are nonverbal or have minimal verbal communication ability, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through some gesture rather than verbally.
- Catholics with significant communication disorders may be permitted to make their confessions using the communication system with which they are most fluent.
- Individuals preparing for the sacrament are to be taught to be as independent as possible in the use of their communication system to allow for the norm of private reception of the sacrament.
- Confessors are encouraged to work with families and individuals to familiarize themselves with various alternative communication options to ensure that all who desire to celebrate this sacrament may do so, provided that the seal of confession is properly safeguarded.





Reconciliation

Catholics who are deaf (30)

- Catholics who are deaf should have the opportunity to confess to a priest able to communicate with them in sign language, if sign language is their primary means of communication. They may also confess Through an approved sign language interpreter of their choice.*
- When neither a priest with signing skills nor a sign language interpreter is available, Catholics who are deaf should be permitted to make their confession in writing **or through the use of an appropriate portable electronic communication device that can be passed back and forth between the penitent and confessor.**
- The written **or digital** materials are to be returned to the penitent and properly destroyed or deleted.





Reconciliation



...every effort should be made to ensure that penitents who are wheelchair users have access to both face-to-face and private confessionals, with due regard for the right of the priest to insist on confession behind a fixed screen.
(31)



Anointing of the Sick

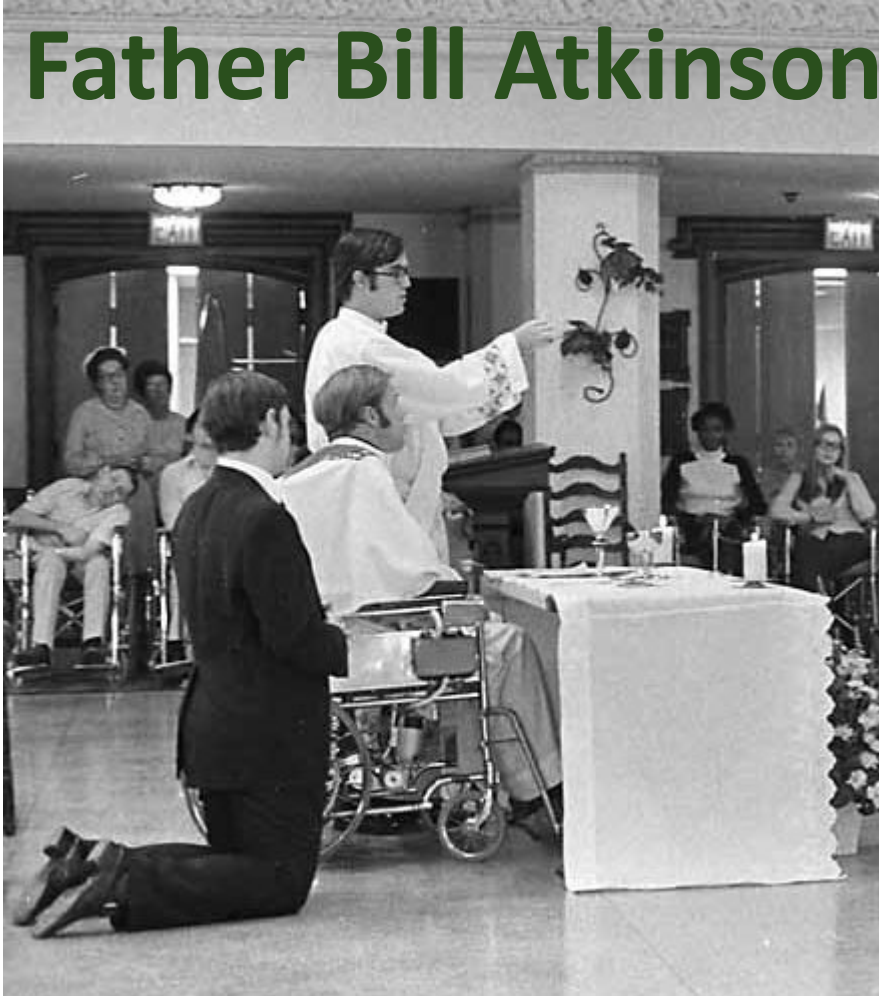
- Since disability does not necessarily indicate an illness, Catholics with disabilities should receive the Anointing of the Sick on the same basis and under the same circumstances as any other member of the Christian faithful. (34) *previously 28*
- ... may be conferred if the recipient has sufficient use of reason to be strengthened by the sacrament or if the sick person has lost the use of reason and would have asked for the sacrament while in control of his or her faculties.
 - If there is **doubt** as to whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, the sacrament is to be **conferred**. (35)
previously 29

Holy Orders

- The existence of a physical disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from Holy Orders. (37)
 - Cases are to be decided on an individual basis...
- ...candidates for ordination must possess the necessary spiritual, physical, **human, moral,** intellectual, emotional, and psychological qualities and abilities to fulfill the ministerial functions of the order they receive. (37)



Servant of God, Father Bill Atkinson





Holy Orders

- Diocesan vocations offices and offices for ministry with persons with disabilities should provide counseling, informational resources, and reasonable accommodations for men with disabilities who are discerning a vocation to serve the Church through one of the ordained ministries. (38)
- ...diocesan bishop or major superior is to see to it that the formation of all students in the seminary includes awareness of and experience with persons with disabilities. Formation personnel should consult with persons with disabilities, parents, psychologists, religious educators, and other experts in the adaptation of programs for ministerial formation related to disabilities. (39)
 - Indeed, these Guidelines might even be part of the course of studies in seminaries and in ongoing formation of the clergy. (39)

Holy Orders

Some men with disabilities already serve the Church as bishops, priests, or deacons. Clergy who have or acquire a disability are to have access to resources and accommodations that will aid them in continuing in their ministry. (40)

Revised 2017



Marriage

- Pastors of souls should make the necessary provisions to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in marriage preparation programs. (43)
- **Couples with intellectual or developmental disabilities who believe they are called to the vocation of married life are encouraged to seek counsel by discussing the Sacrament of Matrimony with their families and pastors.**
 - **Valid Consent:** use of reason, free of grave lack of discretion; mental capacity to assume the essential obligations.



Marriage

- A **physical disability**, in and of itself, does **not necessarily constitute an impediment** to marriage...paraplegia does not always imply impotence, nor the permanence of such a condition, and it is not in itself an impediment.
 - In case of doubt with regard to impotence, marriage may **not be impeded**. (44)
- Catholics who are deaf are to be offered the opportunity to express their matrimonial consent in sign language...**Likewise, those who are nonverbal or have minimal verbal communication ability should be offered the opportunity to express their matrimonial consent using the communication system with which they are most fluent.** (45)
- **As people live longer, more will experience loss of mental and physical capabilities, including Alzheimer's and other age-related dementias. The faith community must minister both to the spouse whose body or mind begins to fail and also to the spouse who becomes the caregiver.** (46)





Conclusion

1995 ORIGINAL VERSION, (CLOSING PARAGRAPH)

These guidelines are presented to **all who are involved in pastoral ministry with persons with disabilities**. They reaffirm the determination expressed by the bishops of the United States on the tenth anniversary of the pastoral statement on 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.”

2017 REVISION, CONCLUSION

These guidelines are presented to **all who are involved in liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical ministry**. All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church. When persons with disabilities are embraced and welcomed, and invited to participate fully in all aspects of parish community life, the Body of Christ is more complete. **The Church owes persons with disabilities her best efforts in order to ensure that they are able to hear the Gospel of Christ, receive the sacraments, and grow in their faith in the fullest and richest manner possible.**



Sacramental Access





*Longing for Belonging
One Body in Christ*



Resources

- **NCPD** National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities – www.ncpd.org
- **NCOD** National Catholic Office for the Deaf - www.ncod.org
- **NICE** Network of Inclusive Catholic Educators – www.ipi.udayton.edu
- **NAMI** National Alliance on Mental Illness - www.nami.org

- **Local Resources**

- Archdiocesan Disabilities Resources
- State and Local Associations and Agencies
- Parents/Guardians
- Professionals in your parish and area



Case Studies Analysis and Reporting

15 Minutes

Discuss assigned Case Studies

View Response Chart

Key points Case Studies 1-7

Table 1 Case Studies 1 and 7		
<p><i>(The following text is a placeholder for the content of Case Studies 1 and 7, which is not legible in the image.)</i></p>		
Theological Considerations	Canonical Considerations	Pastoral & Practical Considerations

Case Study

1. Read the Case Study quietly and reflect
2. Discuss with your group the 3 areas of consideration

Wrap Up

A spokes person will **briefly** summarize key considerations for each case study.



The Institute for Human Ecology

Many thanks to Archbishop Joseph Kurtz for his wonderful reflection 11.12.20 on the theological significance of disability in the Body of Christ.

Thanks also to Deacon Steve Kaneb (Catholic U Trustee), J.D. Flynn (CNA), and Dr. Miguel Romero (Salve Regina U) for introducing Archbishop Kurtz and for leading the question and answer period. The video of Archbishop Kurtz's lecture and the discussion following is now available on our website

(<https://ihe.catholic.edu/.../a-theological-engagement-on.../>) and YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqNtnjVuhPA>) .

This event was cosponsored by the Institute for Human Ecology and the National Catholic Partnership on Disability – NCPD.

Close-captioning and ASL interpretation were a part of this event.