



ACE

# Toolkit for Inclusion

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Students in the Remick Leadership Program 9

Pat Heffernan

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## INTRODUCTION

The following is a collection of articles and writings concerning the issue of educating children with disabilities in the Catholic schools.

The writings range from a discussion of basic Catholic principles regarding respect and value of persons with disabilities, and then directly addresses the particular issues involved in educating children with disabilities in the Catholic school classroom.

The collection also includes The University of Notre Dame's Vision for Special Needs Education and an outline of the Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities.

The concept of accepting the responsibility and challenge of educating students with disabilities in Catholic schools is fairly new, and this collection of writings will assist the Catholic educator by providing access to a number of resources in a single source.

All documents are word-searchable for easy access to specific information.



## THE BISHOPS' CALL FOR INCLUSION

### Quotes from *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*<sup>1</sup>

**Par. 1** We call upon people of good will to reexamine their attitudes toward their brothers and sisters with disabilities and promote their well-being, acting with the sense of justice and the compassion that the Lord so clearly desires. Further, realizing the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church, we wish to address the need for their integration into the Christian community and their fuller participation in its life.

**Par. 14** At the very least, we must undertake forms of evangelization that speak to the particular needs of individuals with disabilities, make those liturgical adaptations which promote their active participation and provide helps and services that reflect our loving concern.

**Par. 17** When we think of people with disabilities in relation to ministry, we tend automatically to think of doing something for them. We do not reflect that they can do something for us and with us...they have the same duty as all members of the community to do the Lord's work in the world, according to their God-given talents and capacities.

**Par. 33** People with disabilities are not looking for pity. They seek to serve the community and to enjoy their full baptismal rights as members of the Church. Our interaction with them can and should be an affirmation of our faith. There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that follows a single shepherd.

### Quotes from *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*<sup>2</sup>

**Par. 1** By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling.

**Par. 2** Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1978, with language updated in 1989.

<sup>2</sup> *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.

**Par. 3** Parish sacramental celebrations should be accessible to persons with disabilities and open to their full, active, and conscious participation, according to their capacity.

**Par. 5** In accord with canon 777, no. 4, pastors are responsible to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities...Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities...Dioceses are encouraged to establish appropriate support services for pastors, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities.

### **Quotes from *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*<sup>3</sup>**

**Par. 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.

**Par. 4** Defense of the right to life implies the defense of all other rights which 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.

### **Quotes from *National Directory for Catechesis: Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities*<sup>4</sup>**

**Par. 49** Persons with disabilities...are integral members of the Christian community.

All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. Their involvement enriches every aspect of Church life.

They [persons with disabilities] are not just the recipients of catechesis—they are also its agents.

All persons with disabilities or special needs should be welcomed in the Church. Every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.

Some persons with disabilities live in isolating conditions that make it difficult for them to participate in catechetical experiences. “Since provision of access to religious functions

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<sup>3</sup> *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis: Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities (no. 49)*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

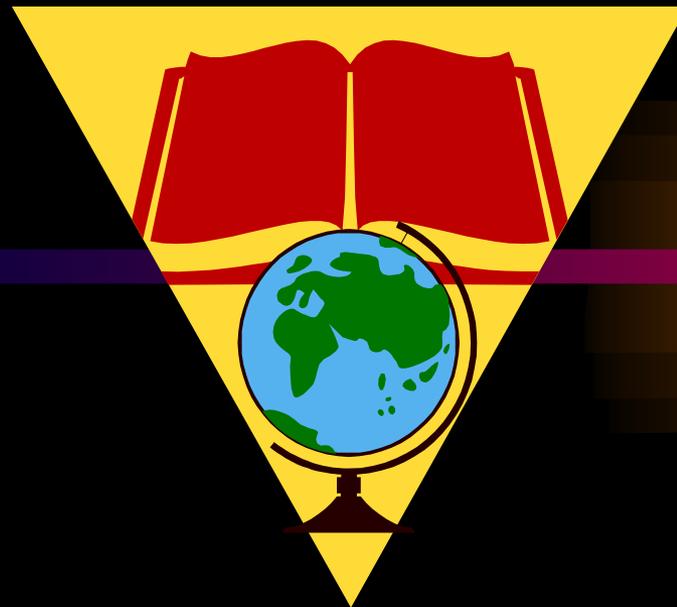
is a pastoral duty,” parishes should make that much more effort to include those who may feel excluded.

The Church’s pastoral response in such situations is to learn about the disability, offer support to the family, and welcome the child.

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# Archdiocese of Louisville



**Holy Family Church**

**August 13, 1999**

# *The Biblical Basis of Inclusion*



# A Vision of Church

## A Vision of Community



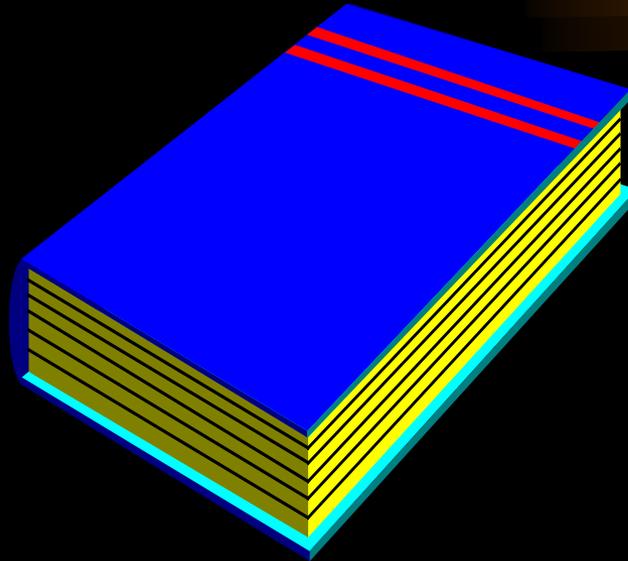
# Catholic Identity



# Grandma' Coffee



# The Scriptures



# *Suffering as Inaccessibility*



# Biblical Examples

- **Creation - Genesis**
- **The Covenant**
- **Exodus & Passover Meal**
- **Last Supper**
- **Life of Jesus**



# The Gospels

- **Mark 7:31-35**
- **Mark 5:25-33**
- **Matthew 9:27-31**
- **Matthew 8:1-4**
- **Matthew 5:1-12**
- **Matthew 18:13-15**
- **Matthew 13:10-14**
- **Luke 7:11-17**
- **Luke 19:1-16**
- **Luke 10:25-28**

# Gospel Stories

- Mark 2:1-12

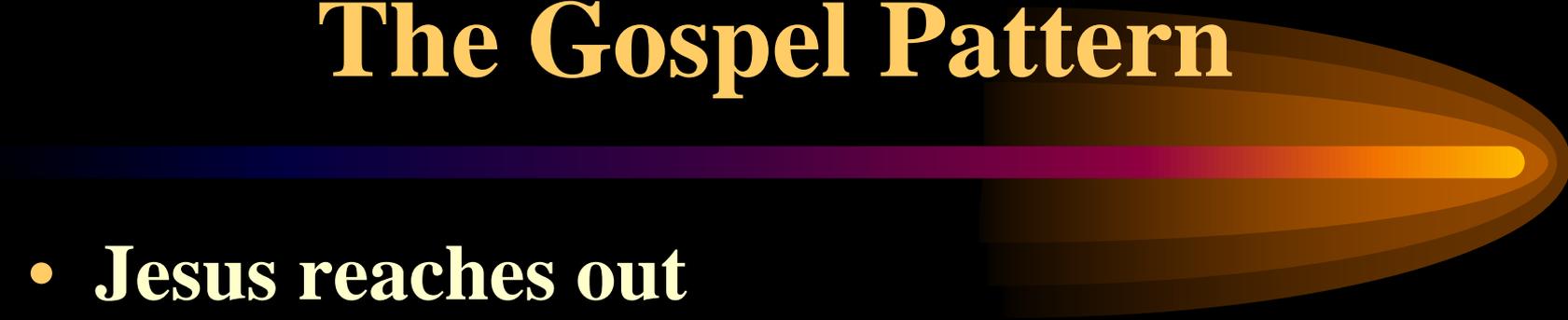
- Luke 5:17-26



# Other Examples

- **Mark 1:40-45**      **The Leper**
- **Mark 5:1-20**      **Gerasene Demoniac**
- **Luke 13:10-17**      **Women bent double**

# The Gospel Pattern



- **Jesus reaches out**
- **The sick & disabled demand access**
- **Leaders often stand in the way**

# Jesus the God of the Marginalized



## **What's the Alternative to Catholic Schools for Our Children with Disabilities?**

**Assertion: Children with Special Needs Should Go To Public Schools Because They Have Trained Teachers and Services to Help Them Succeed.**

### **Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010**

All States require teachers to be licensed; traditional licensing requires the completion of a special education teacher-training program and at least a bachelor's degree, although some States require a master's degree.

Excellent job prospects are expected due to rising enrollments of special education students and reported shortages of qualified teachers.

Employment is expected to increase [faster than the average](#) (20% or more) for all occupations. Job prospects should be [excellent](#) because **many districts report problems finding adequate numbers of licensed special education teachers.**

In addition to job openings resulting from growth, a large number of openings will result from the need to **replace special education teachers who switch to teaching**

**general education**, change careers altogether, or retire. At the same time, many school districts report difficulty finding sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. As a result, special education teachers should have excellent job prospects.

**Teacher shortages in special education are less a function of how many teachers are produced than of how many are lost each year through turnover and early attrition. This “revolving door” problem inflates the demand side of the equation and keeps school districts in a perpetual state of intense hiring pressure. (*Policy Matters* . American Association of State Colleges & Universities, 2005)**

### Turnover Rates

**Boe, Cook, Sunderland (2007)**

<b>Switch/transfer to general education</b>	<b>8.27%</b>
<b>Exit to non-teaching positions</b>	<b>6.74%</b>
<b>Move or migrate to other special Education positions</b>	<b>7.85%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22.85%</b>

**U.S. Department of Education survey (March, 2010) reported every state in the union had shortage areas in Special Education.**

**How do public school districts address shortage of special education teachers?**

- **Employ uncertified/substitute teachers**
- **Raise caseloads**
- **Increase paraprofessionals**  
**(Fall & Billingsley, 2007)**

Occupational Title	Employment 2008	Employment 2018
Special Education Teacher	473,000	554,900
Grades P-5	226,000	270,300
Middle School 6-8	100,300	118,400
High School 9-12	146,700	166,200

In response to the demand for special education teachers to fill vacant positions, **many States award emergency and alternative licenses.** These licenses help college graduates and those changing careers into teaching make a faster transition. Although requirements vary from State to State, they may be less rigorous to earn an alternative license than for a regular license. States offer emergency licenses when they have a shortage of licensed special education teachers and are unable to fill the positions.

In 1996, **50,000** Special Education “Teachers” taught on emergency licenses with little or no training. (Council for Exceptional Children).

<b>In Indiana:</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
<b>Total # of Emergency Licenses</b>	<b>2,506</b>	<b>1,812</b>
<b>Total # of Special Ed. Licenses</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>713</b>
<b>% of Emer. Licenses for Sp.Ed.</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>39%</b>

# Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities

## *A Framework of Access and Inclusion*

### **A Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops**

**T**wenty years ago we issued a statement calling for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the life of the Church and community. In 1982 the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, now the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, was established to promote this ministry. In 1995 we strengthened our commitment with passage of the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*.

This moral framework is based upon Catholic documents and serves as a guide for contemplation and action. We hope that the reaffirmation of the following principles will assist the faithful in bringing the principles of justice and inclusion to the many new and evolving challenges confronted by persons with disabilities today.

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.

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.

We join the Holy Father in calling for actions which "ensure that the power of salvation may be shared by all" (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 16). Furthermore, we encourage all Catholics to study the original U.S. bishops and Vatican documents from which these principles were drawn.

For consultation and assistance contact:

**National Catholic  
Partnership on Disability**

415 Michigan Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20017-4501  
(202) 529-2933 telephone  
(202) 529-4678 fax (202) 529-2934 tty  
e-mail: [ncpd@ncpd.org](mailto:ncpd@ncpd.org)



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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND VISIT TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION HEADQUARTERS

**MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING DISABILITIES**

***WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Saint Joseph Seminary, Yonkers, New York Saturday, 19 April 2008*

*Your Eminence, Bishop Walsh, Dear Friends,*

I am very happy to have this opportunity to spend a brief moment with you. I thank Cardinal Egan for his welcome and especially thank your representatives for their kind words and for the gift of the drawing. Know that it is a special joy for me to be with you. Please give my greetings to your parents and family members, and your teachers and caregivers.

God has blessed you with life, and with differing talents and gifts. Through these you are able to serve him and society in various ways. While some people's contributions seem great and others' more modest, the witness value of our efforts is always a sign of hope for everyone.

Sometimes it is challenging to find a reason for what appears only as a difficulty to be

overcome or even pain to be endured. Yet our faith helps us to break open the horizon beyond our own selves in order to see life as God does. God's unconditional love, which bathes every human individual, points to a meaning and purpose for all human life. Through his Cross, Jesus in fact draws us into his saving love (cf. *Jn* 12:32) and in so doing shows us the way ahead - the way of hope which transfigures us all, so that we too, become bearers of that hope and charity for others.

Dear friends, I encourage you all to pray every day for our world. There are so many intentions and people you can pray for, including those who have yet to come to know Jesus. And please do continue to pray for me. As you know I have just had another birthday. Time passes!

Thank you all again, including the Cathedral of Saint Patrick Young Singers and the members of the Archdiocesan Deaf Choir. As a sign of strength and peace and with great affection in our Lord, I impart to you and your families, teachers and caregivers my Apostolic Blessing.

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We are a single flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities. (Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, USCCB)

Costs must never be the controlling consideration limiting the welcome offered to those among us with disabilities (Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, USCCB)

Defense of the “right to life” . . . implies the defense of other rights which enable the individual with a 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, etc. (NCEA Position Statement on Inclusion)

*You are not a God who excludes. You are the God of all. Only you are Our Father and all your children are brothers and sisters. Give us a wise heart so that inclusive love triumphs. Do not allow your children to fear one other, hate one another, and hurt one another. Don't allow us to have fear towards people who are different.*

Cardinal Roger Mahony

“He [the person with disabilities] is not only one to whom we give; he must be helped to become also one who gives to the best of his abilities. An important and decisive point in formation will be reached when he has become fully aware of his dignity and value and he realises that something is expected of him and that he can and should contribute to the progress and good of his family and of the community” (Holy See, *To all who work for the disabled*, 3-4-1981) **We currently have 72% unemployment among adults with disabilities in the US.**

*“Every baptised person, by virtue of baptism itself, has the right to receive from the Church a teaching and formation which permits them to attain a true Christian life”.* (CT 14).

To make known the “mystery of faith” (CT 14) is the duty of every member of the ecclesial community. “Catechesis for all the baptised is an urgent task for the Christian community” (CEI Italian Bishops’ Conference: RdC 123)

Persons with disabilities must also be considered active participants for the realisation of the project of salvation entrusted by the Lord to the Church. (Committee for Jubilee, 2000)

*“Every time you did this to the least of my brothers you did it to me” (Mt 25,40).*

*“Every Christian community considers those who suffer from some physical or mental handicap or other form of disability, particularly when they are minors, persons dearly loved by the Lord. (DGpC 1997).* The position of persons with disabilities as “dearly loved” stimulates the Church to do more to help them live the “mystery of faith, offering catechesis suited to the needs and capacity of each individual, in order to lead them to an authentic, living and joyful experience of God within their own community, to achieve holiness. The final goal of catechesis is holiness. (Committee for Jubilee, 2000)

Every year between 92 and 94% of babies identified as having Down Syndrome in utero are aborted. This is what secular culture thinks of people with disabilities. What implications does this have for secular schools?

**A Reflection Statement on Inclusion**  
**Promulgated by the Department of Elementary Schools**  
**National Catholic Educational Association**  
**April 5, 1999**

In their pastoral statement, "To Teach As Jesus Did" (1972) , the national conference of Catholic nations states that this document, " will serve as a useful purpose if it provides a catalyst for efforts to deal realistically with problems of polarization and the confusion now confronting the educational ministry. In the years ahead, American Catholics should continue to articulate and implement their commitments to the educational ministry in ways suited to their times and circumstances." (p.2)

The national congress on Catholic schools for the 21st century (1991) encouraged all Catholic school educators to open their minds and hearts and doors to an increasingly diverse world. Certainly part of this diversity is made up of children who have been gifted by God with special needs. Since the bishops promulgated their statement, "To Teach As Jesus Did," Catholic schools have embraced the challenge to develop programs for children and youth with special learning needs. Most often, this was accomplished through resource rooms and pull out programs. Now, Catholic schools are challenged once again to respond to social and ecological changes. The onset of the philosophy of inclusion has changed the manner in which teachers educate children with special needs.

The Department of elementary schools, supports the concept of appropriate inclusion. Appropriate inclusion recognizes and affirms the unique learning style Students with varying exceptionalities. It is within this context that children with special needs are welcomed into the Catholic school community. Catholic elementary schools recognize their responsibility to provide a learning environment that fosters growth and considers the individual needs of the children. To the extent possible, Catholic elementary schools will serve children with special needs In general education classes.

The Department of elementary schools recognizes that inclusion is a process. It involves the ability to communicate with a group of learners with diverse needs. Inclusion is not a program or a placement. Inclusion as a philosophy of teaching that relies on the abilities of educators to promote an environment that respects and reverences the rights of all students to learn in regular education classrooms In Catholic schools.

Inclusion of fosters collaboration - general and special education teachers, with parents working together for the common good of all students, especially those with varying exceptionalities. Inclusion implies preparedness continuing education and ongoing communications are all its hallmarks.

The Department of elementary schools recognizes that appropriate inclusion can work effectively for a large number of students with disabilities and learning difficulties while enriching the classroom experience for all students. The Department of elementary schools acknowledges that promoting appropriate inclusion without providing the resources needed to make it work effectively for students and teachers, offers a false promise of improved opportunities for the students with special needs and ensures a strong possibility for disruptions in the learning environment. For inclusion to achieve its full potential in the classroom, a primary requisite is that the entire school community commit themselves to ongoing staff development that will foster a greater understanding and respect for children with special needs.

# The University of Notre Dame's Vision for Special Needs Education



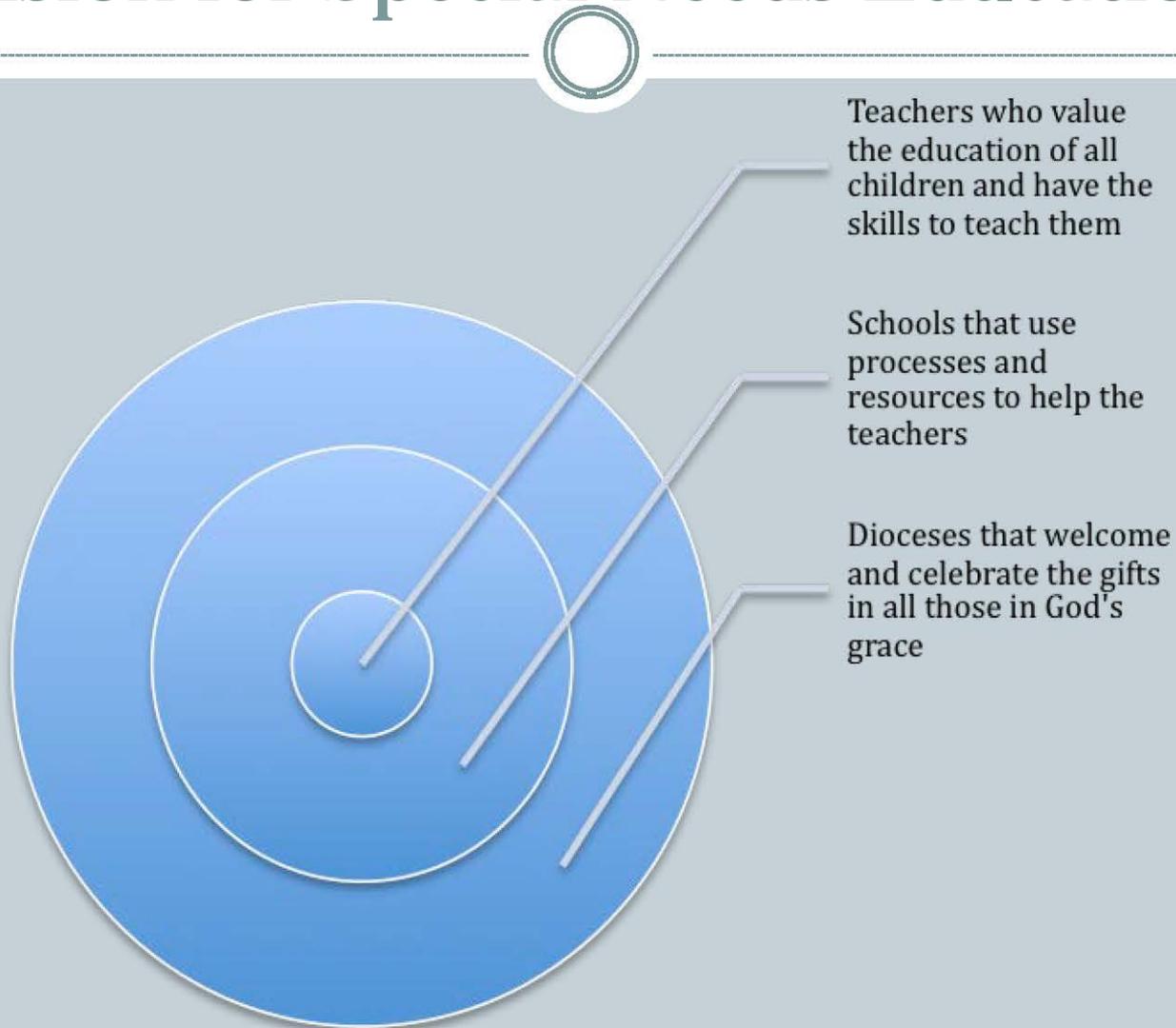
**JOYCE V. JOHNSTONE, Ph.D.**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME**  
**ALLIANCE FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

# Vision for Special Needs Education



**Based on the Dignity of all Individuals,  
Catholic Schools will be prepared to  
educate the children of God regardless  
of special needs in learning, behavior,  
language acquisition, or social-  
economic status.**

# Vision for Special Needs Education





# Toolkit for Inclusion



**SCRIPTURE**  
**SONGS**  
**CHURCH DOCUMENTS**  
**ART**  
**MOVIES**  
**BOOKS**  
**PRAYERS**  
**WEBSITES**  
**CATECHETICAL RESOURCES**  
**AUDIO-VISUAL**  
**RESEARCH ON THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF INCLUSION**

# Toolkit for Inclusion: **Scripture**

## Themes

- Creation
- The Covenant
- Exodus
- Passover Meal
- Life of Jesus
- Last Supper

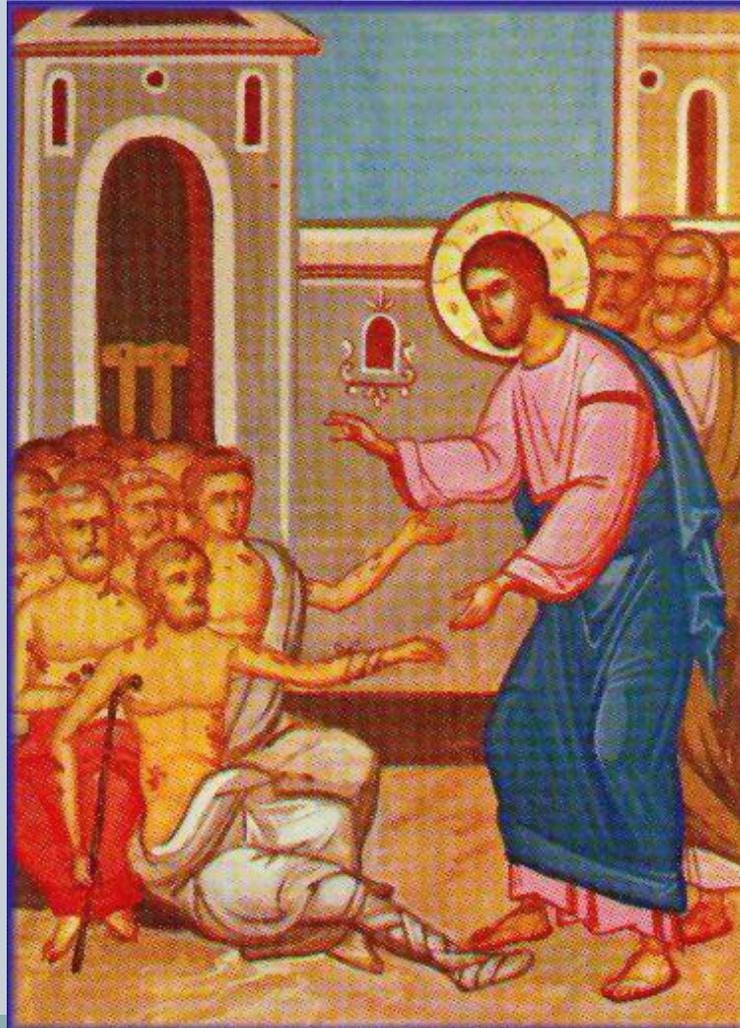
## Verses

### •Mark

- 2:1-12
- 5:25-33
- 7:31-35

### •Luke

- 5:17-26
- 7:11-17
- 10:25-28
- 19:1-16



### •Matthew

- 5:1-12
- 8:1-4
- 9:27-31
- 13:10-14
- 18:13-15

### •I Corinthians

- 1:26
- 12:12, 20, 22-23

### •II Corinthians

- 12:10



# Toolkit for Inclusion: Documents



- *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities* (November 16, 1978)
- *Celebrate and Challenge: Commemoration Statement of the Board of Directors of the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities* (1988)
- *National Conference of Catholic Bishops Resolution Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the “Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on Handicapped People”* (November 15, 1988)





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Documents



- *Let the Children Come to Me: Embracing Students with Special Needs in our Catholic Schools and Parish Religious Education Programs* (revised 2008)
  - USCCB Department of Education
- *Opening Doors of Welcome and Justice to Parishioners with Disabilities: A Parish Resource Guide* (2003)
  - National Catholic Partnership on Disability
- *National Directory for Catechesis: Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities (no. 49)* (2005)
  - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* (June 6, 1995)
  - National Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities: A Framework of Access and Inclusion* (November 1998)
  - Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Bishops
- *Homily of Pope John Paul II from the Jubilee of the Disabled* (December 3, 2000)
- *Preparation Documents for the Jubilee of the Disabled (Parts One - Five)*



# Toolkit for Inclusion: Documents



• *Celebrate and Challenge: Commemoration Statement of the Board of Directors of the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities (1988)*

• “An appropriate ministry will depend on vision and professional planning on the part of diocesan administrators, Catholic school and religious education administrators, and a diocesan office for persons with disabilities that is adequately staffed and funded.”





# Toolkit for Inclusion: **Songs**



- “All Are Welcome”
- “We Are Many Parts”
- “Gather Us In”
  - Marty Haugen
- “Sing A New Church”
  - Nettleton
  - Text by Sr. Delores Dufner
- “In Christ There Is No East or West”
  - African American hymn
- “God is Here! We Are His People”
  - Abbot’s Leigh
  - Text by Fred Pratt Green





# Toolkit for Inclusion: **Books**



- *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*  
Thomas E. Reynolds
- *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability: Disabling Society, Enabling Theology*  
Stanley Hauerwas, John Swinton (editor)
- *Receiving The Gift Of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, And Ethics*  
Hans S. Reinders
- *Reflections on Inclusive Education*  
Patrick Mackan
- *Religion and Disability: Essays in Scripture, Theology, and Ethics*  
Marilyn Bishop (editor)



# Toolkit for Inclusion: **Articles**



- Barron, Rev. Robert and Senior, Rev. Donald C.P. “Opening Hearts, Minds and Doors: Embodying the Inclusive and Vulnerable Love of God.” National Federation of Priests’ Councils. 1999.
- Benton, Jancice LaLonde and Owen, Mary Jane. “Opening Doors to People with Disabilities, Volume I: Pastoral Manual.” National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities.
- Harrington, Mary Therese. “A Place for All: Mental Retardation, Catechesis, and Liturgy.” The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN. 1992.
- Nuzzi, Ronald J. “Worship & People with Disabilities” CHURCH magazine. 1999.
- Owen, Mary Jane. “Frayed at the Edges: The Intertwined Threads of Life and Disability.”



# Toolkit for Inclusion: Audio-Visual



National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) Webinars

<http://www.ncpd.org/Webinars.htm>

*Mental Illness*

October 10, 2007

*Catechesis with Children/Youth having Disability ~ Part 1*

March 12, 2008

*Catechesis with Children/Youth with Disabilities ~ Part II: Applying the Vision*

May 6, 2008

*The Bishop's Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities at 30: Bright Past, Bold Future*

August 13, 2008

*Come to the Table: Nurturing the Sacramental Life of People with Mental Illnesses*

October 6th, 2008





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Catechetical Resources (Print)



Network of Inclusion Catholic Educators (NICE)

University of Dayton

[http://ipi.udayton.edu/nice\\_books.html](http://ipi.udayton.edu/nice_books.html)

- **Sacraments: Gifts for All Eucharist Resource Binder**
- **All About Mass Student Edition**
- **Who Is Jesus? Student Edition**
- **Sacraments: Gifts for All Reconciliation Resource Binder**
- **Sacraments: Gifts for All Reconciliation Student Edition**
- **Sacraments: Gifts for All Confirmation Resource Binder**
- **Sacraments: Gifts for All Confirmation Student Edition**

RCL-Benziger

[www.rclbenziger.com](http://www.rclbenziger.com)

- **Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Program to Improve Catholic Religious Education for Children and Adults with Mental Retardation**
- **My Church: A young girl shares her Catholic Deaf Community**
- **Created in God's Image: A Photo-essay on Faith, Family, and Friendship**
- **Seeing Through God's Eyes**
- **Just Like Me**
- **We Go To Mass (geared for children with autism)**





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Catechetical Resources (Print)



Labosh Publishing

[www.laboshpublishing.com](http://www.laboshpublishing.com)

•**The Child with Autism Learns the Faith: Bible Lessons From the Garden of Eden to the Parting of the Red Sea**

Cardinal Stritch University Bookstore

<http://www.csu.bkstr.com>

•**Journey with Jesus: Call to Love**

by Sr. Sheila Haskett, O.S.F

•**Seasons of Grace: Sacramental Preparation for Mentally Handicapped Teens and Adults** by Brigid O'Donnell.

•**Journey with Jesus Gospel Study:**

**A Curriculum Guide for Adult Special Religious Education** by Sr. M. Sheila Haskett, O.S.F., Ph.D. & Sr. M. Coletta Dunn, O.S.F., Ph.D.





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Catechetical Resources (Print)



- **Catechists for All Children** by Dr. Joseph White and Ana Arista White, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2002.  
[www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)
- **Awakening Spiritual Dimensions: Prayer Services with Persons with Severe Disabilities** by Fr. William Gillum, OFM Cap. [www.AuthorHouse.com](http://www.AuthorHouse.com)
- **disAbility Awareness: Activities for Children, Teens and Families (Catholic Edition)** by Joann E. Davis. [Joannedavis22@hotmail.com](mailto:Joannedavis22@hotmail.com)
- **Opening Doors to People with Disabilities: The Resource File, Books A & B** by Janice L. Benton and Mary Jane Owen, ed, 1997 [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org)
- **Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities** by Barbara J. Newman [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)
- **Sacramental Preparation Confirmation; Individualizing Lesson Plans** by Mary Pat Carter with Marilyn E. Bishop.
- **Resources for Christian Educators:** Collected by the Committee on Disabilities of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 2002
- **Special Religious Education; Pathways to Welcome and Inclusion: Special Religious Education Articles** by Grace T. Harding, M.A., M.S.Ed.,
- **Catechesis for Persons with Disabilities: A Blueprint for Action:** NCDD. 1982
- **Good Answers to Tough Questions About Physical Disabilities** by Joy Berry.
- **Inclusion Strategies for Students with Learning and Behavior Problems; Perspectives, Experiences, and Best Practices** edited by Paul Zions, 1997.
- **Curriculum Considerations in Inclusive Classrooms; Facilitating Learning for All Students** by Stainback & Stainback, 1992.
- “Using Visual Tools to Support Student Learning.” **Disability Solutions**, March/April 2003 Volume 5, Issue 4:
- **Visual Strategies;** PA Training and Technical Assistance Network, PA Dept. of Ed.



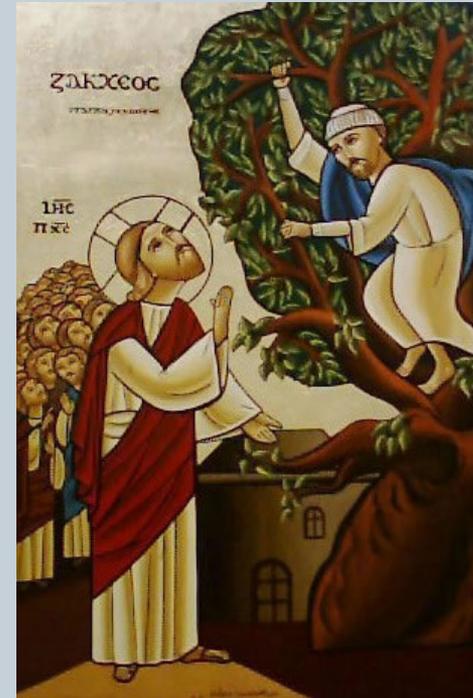
# Toolkit for Inclusion: Videos



Network of Inclusive Catholic Educators

[http://ipi.udayton.edu/nice\\_dvd.html](http://ipi.udayton.edu/nice_dvd.html)

- *ADD/ADHD: Memorizing Made Easy*
- *Baptism -- A Promise to Disabled People*
- *Biblical Perspectives on Community*
- *Building the School Team*
- *Circle of Friends*
- *Creative Management of Classroom Behavior*
- *Disability Dollars*
- *Improving Achievement*
- *The Inclusive Catholic Community*
- *The Inclusive Classroom*
- *Recognize-Respond to Learning Disabilities in the Catholic School*
- *Scripture Based Inclusion*
- *Welcome One, Welcome All*





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Videos



National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD)

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

• *My First Eucharist*

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Program  
to Improve Catholic Religious Education  
for Children and Adults with  
Mental Retardation

• *Teaching Religion to Students with Mental Retardation  
Sacraments and People with Mental Retardation*





# Toolkit for Inclusion: Websites



National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

<http://www.ncpd.org/>

National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry

<http://www.nafim.org/index.php>

Network for Inclusive Catholic Educators

<http://ipi.udayton.edu/nice.htm>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Adults with Cognitive Disabilities/Mental Retardation: Approaches to Adult Faith Formation)

<http://www.usccb.org/laity/faithformation.shtml>

Exceptional Catholic MN Inc.

<http://www.exceptionalcatholicmn.com/>

Creative Teaching

[www.creativeteaching.net](http://www.creativeteaching.net)

Diocese of Pittsburgh (First implemented the Rose Kennedy curriculum)

<http://www.diopitt.org/education/opmrre.htm>





# Strategic Intervention Teams (SIT)



- Purposes of the team:
  - 1) to provide a forum for teachers to develop intervention strategies for students exhibiting learning or behavior difficulties;
  - 2) to provide resource for determining appropriate interventions for students in the regular classroom setting;
  - 3) to decrease the number of inappropriate referrals for testing and/or special education placement.



# Strategic Intervention Teams (SIT)



## ● Process:

SIT training provides professional development and on-going assistance to schools serving children with learning and behavioral problems by helping the teachers develop the process, protocol, and strategies for teacher-led intervention teams, and supplying the materials and strategies to help teachers evaluate and enhance their own teaching strategies.





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



Stakeholder Group	Type of Communication	Expressed Need
ACE graduates	Presentation to group of 50	100%
High School Principals	Email: 23 respondents	48%
Elementary Principals	Email: 52 respondents	83%
ACE teachers	Email: 48 respondents; 87 sent	98%





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Purposes of the proposed program:

- To provide Catholic schoolteachers with the knowledge, skills, and understandings for teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities in an inclusionary classroom;
- Recognizing the growing numbers of children with mild to moderate disabilities in Catholic schools across the country, to provide these schools with a low-cost option for having their teachers trained to adequately serve these children.



# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Processes of the proposed program:

- Candidates secure a teaching placement in a Catholic school which ensures they will have students with mild to moderate disabilities in their classroom;
- Candidates then spend 2 weeks of intensive coursework during the summer at Notre Dame where they are welcomed and integrated into the ACE community of learners;
- Candidates then teach in the pre-approved settings for a minimum of two semesters during which time they complete practicum requirements and internet coursework. Most candidates will wish to complete these requirements in two semesters, but they would have the option of taking three credits each semester and completing them in four semesters.



# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Course Sequence

Summer	Fall	Spring
Foundations (2 cr.) Wellness (2 cr.) Collaboration (2 cr.)	Effective Practices LD (3 cr.) Inclusionary Practices MD (2 cr.) Inclusionary Practicum (1 cr.)	Diag. & Mgmt. of Bhvr. (3 cr.) Psycho-Educ. Assessment (2 cr.) Assessment Practicum (1 cr.)





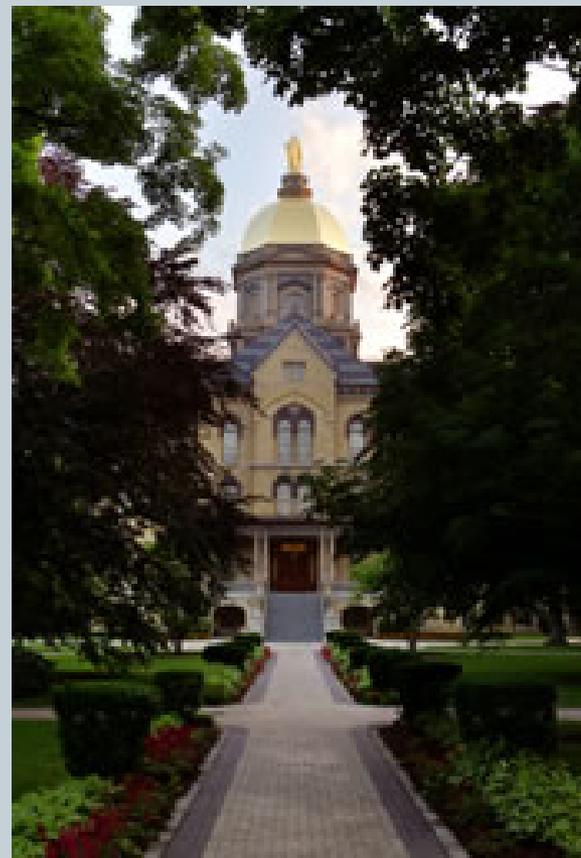
# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Candidate Assessment

### *Standard I: Foundations*

- An analysis of the state plan for the implementation of IDEA with particular emphasis on provisions related to non-public schools [assessed in Foundations Course]
- An analysis of appropriate culturally responsive practice for his/her school [assessed in Foundations Course]
- A description of appropriate services from least restrictive to most restrictive, and the relationship of these services to “response to intervention” practices [assessed in Foundations Course]





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Candidate Assessment

### *Standard II: Development and Characteristics of Learners*

- A comparison between normal developmental characteristics and those of a child with an exceptionality (chosen by the participant reflecting a child in his/her classroom) at the developmental level of the candidate's license [assessed in Inclusionary Practices Course]
- A rationale for and list of particular strategies or learning experiences, based on the developmental level of the students in the candidate's classroom, for students in the autism spectrum, learning disabilities, mild mental disabilities, moderate mental disabilities, orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injuries, and other health impairments [assessed in Inclusionary Practices Course]
- A classroom strengths assessment for social and emotional wellness [assessed in Wellness Course]





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## **Candidate Assessment**

### *Standard III: Individual Learning Differences*

- A case study of a student detailing family and educational background, strengths and challenges in the learning environment, pre-referral strategies attempted, informal and formal assessments given, adaptations required, an IEP developed for the child, and a reflection of the effectiveness of the process and strategies for the child [assessed in Inclusionary Practicum]

### *Standard IV: Instructional Strategies*

- Unit plan for the class showing differentiation in resources, instruction, and/or assessment and a rationale for the choices based on the students in the class [assessed in Effective Practices for LD course]





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities

## **Candidate Assessment**

### *Standard V: Learning Environments and Social Interactions*

- Analysis of a video that shows modifications of a learning environment to promote student growth [assessed in Wellness course]
- Development of a plan for the candidate's classroom based on the content of his/her classroom [assessed in Wellness course]

### *Standard VI: Communication*

- Description of the language arts skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) found in the candidate's classroom [assessed in Effective Practices for LD course]
- For two children in the classroom, develop a plan for language arts intervention strategies [assessed in Effective Practices for LD course]





# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities

## Candidate Assessment

### *Standard VII: Instructional Planning*

- Using the unit plan developed for Standard IV, give rationale for and show appropriate individualization for particular students in at least three lessons [assessed in Inclusionary Practicum]

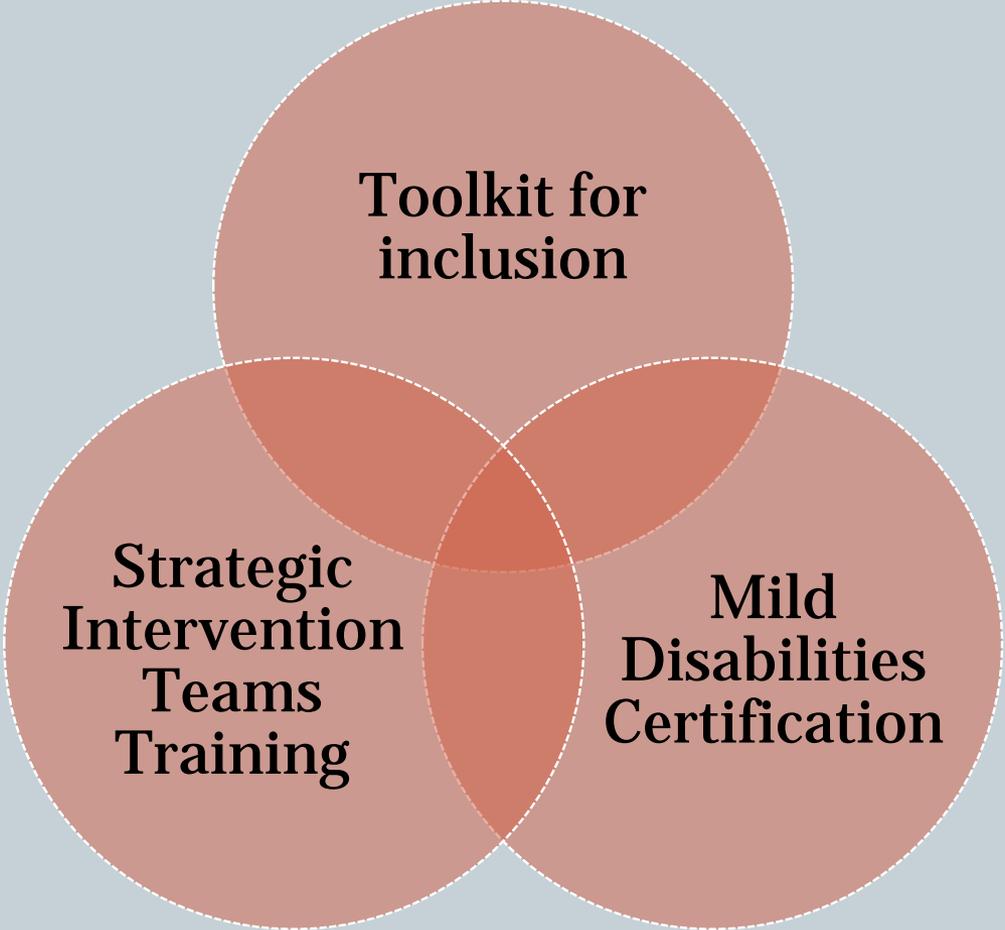
### *Standard VIII: Assessment*

- Obtain and analyze an IEP; write an IEP (or service plan) based on a scenario [assessed in Assessment Course]
- Complete a case study of a child demonstrating formal and informal assessment, the use of RTI strategies, and evaluation of external factors that may contribute to the success of the student [assessed in Assessment Course]





# Strategy for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

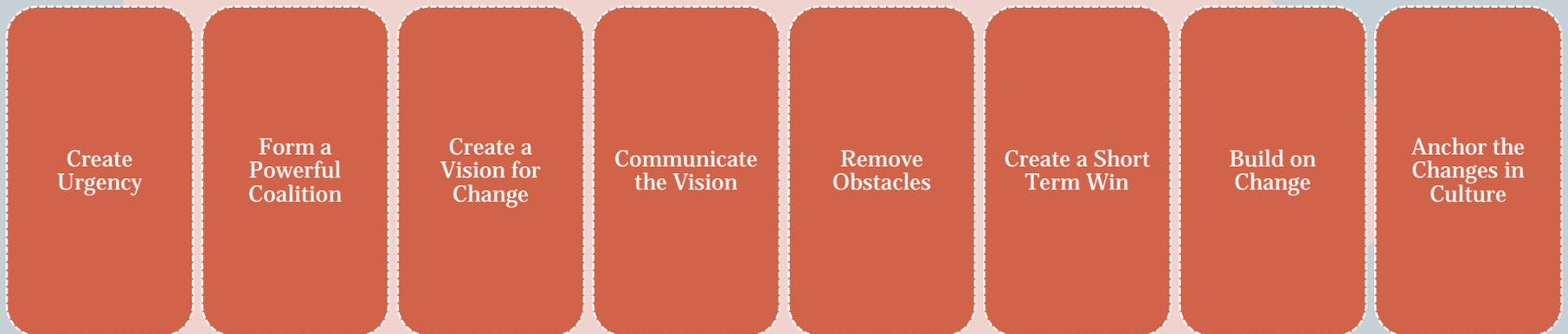




# Certification Program for Teaching Children with Mild Disabilities



## Kotter's 8-Step Change Model



**John P. Kotter's**  
*A Sense of Urgency*  
**2008**

ISBN: 978-1-4221-7971-0

#### Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."

Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?"

Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth." He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

#### Mark 25-34

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it.

The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

#### Mark 31-35

Again he left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!") And (immediately) the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly.

#### Luke 5:17-26

One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set (him) in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven." Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks

blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts?"

Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, "We have seen incredible things today."

Luke 7:11-17

Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!"

The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people." This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

Luke 10:25-28

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

Luke 19:1-10

He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over."<sup>2</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Matthew 5:1-12

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will

be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 8:1-4

When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

Matthew 9:27-31

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed (him), crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Matthew 18:12-14

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.

**I Corinthians 1:26-29**

Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God.

I Corinthians 12:12

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

I Corinthians 12:22-24

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this.

**II Corinthians 12:10**

Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

## **The Social and Spiritual Inclusion of People with Learning Disabilities: a Liberating Challenge?**

Lisa Curtice, Nuffield Centre for Community Care Studies, Gregory Building, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ Tel. 0141 330 4194 and Associate Staff Member, Craighead Institute, 26 Rose Street, Glasgow G3 6RE, Scotland Tel. 0141 332 2733 email [thecraigheadinstitute@compuserve.com](mailto:thecraigheadinstitute@compuserve.com)

### **Article -**

The Social and Spiritual Inclusion of People with Learning Disabilities: a Liberating Challenge? This paper outlines three theological stances, rooted in the perspective of social justice, that can form the basis of a pastoral praxis which responds to the circumstances of people with learning disabilities. Listening and responding to the marginalisation of people with learning disabilities challenges the church to greater wholeness in community and provides a basis for mutual care grounded in interdependence.

### **Solidarity**

Liberation theology provides a paradigm for challenging the oppressions experienced by people with learning disabilities through a transformative process of struggle. It suggests a stance of 'critical solidarity' in which we first acknowledge the marginalisation experienced by people with learning disabilities as God's particular concern, then stand alongside them in their fight for social justice, helping to transform the structural injustices which they face and supporting them to find their own liberating voices. These oppressions include their political and social exclusion and their experience of control by medical and social care systems.

There is a long history of labelling of people with learning disabilities that makes definitions a sensitive issue. The website of the Foundation for Learning Disabilities provides the following explanation: 'People with learning disabilities find it harder to learn, but they can do so with help from other people. People usually have a learning disability from birth or sometimes from early childhood. People with learning disabilities are not all the same. They have different needs, come from all kinds of families and have varied lives. Some people have severe learning disabilities and will need a lot of day-to-day support. Others have mild or moderate learning disabilities and can live with much less help from other people. Some people prefer to say learning difficulties instead of learning disabilities.'

Often denied the status of adults, people with learning disabilities have been excluded from recognition as sexual beings, as potential parents, as householders or tenants and as people able to make an active contribution to society. They have experienced abuse and exclusion from basic services, such as health care. Even within newer models of community support it has not always been possible to promote the inclusion of people

living in community houses in the wider community and to ensure that the most disabled persons achieve equivalent benefits from being in the community.

Moreover, the segregation of people with learning disabilities in special schools, long-stay hospitals, sheltered workshops, day centres and by specialised transport schemes, has meant that the general public is not used to mixing with people with learning disabilities, a situation which can create fear and misunderstanding. The lives of people with learning disabilities have often remained 'hidden', just as their voices have been 'stilled'. Societally we have more experience in trying to protect people with learning disabilities than in 'giving them wings'.

Over the last twenty years, major shifts have occurred in thinking and social policy about the role of people with learning disabilities. 'Normalisation' theory argued that stigma could only be overcome if people were able to live 'an ordinary life' in the community and to adopt socially valued roles and this was a major influence on policies to close segregated institutions. Language and goals have now moved beyond integration. Whereas integration does not seek to change societal norms, the ideas and practice of social inclusion – that people with learning disabilities have rights to be participants in the community and not merely residents in it – challenge the rest of society to change. This perspective sits within the social model of disability which locates the oppressions faced by disabled people in the barriers which exclude them and rejects the 'medical model' where the barrier is identified as the individual's impairment. National policy now expresses a clear expectation that people with learning disabilities should become full citizens and, that the achievement of this requires both access to opportunities (lifelong learning, employment, housing etc) and also changes in public attitudes.

Engagement with people with learning disabilities as spiritual beings and their inclusion in faith communities will only have integrity therefore if both their claims to social justice and their rights to have their own experiences heard shape the form of that inclusion. Someone with a learning disability may be living on £15 a week because their benefit is being used to fund their housing and support costs. They may be trapped on benefits because their need for support makes it impossible for them to afford to take a job. So when people of faith encounter other people of faith who happen to have a learning disability they have a responsibility to be alert to the problems of poverty, exclusion and disempowerment which they may be facing in their lives.

The lives of people with learning disabilities are diminished by structural injustices. They are socially marginalised through segregation and limited access to employment opportunities and, therefore, income. As a result their quality of life is significantly poorer than many others in the community. Only four per cent of adults with learning disabilities in Scotland are in employment. They may lack choice over many important aspects of their lives such as where they live and whom they live with. If they have moved out of hospital or a larger group home into supported accommodation or their own tenancy they may be learning to cope with new

freedoms after a lifetime of having their routines controlled by others. Faith communities can raise awareness of the changes to employment practice and welfare benefit regulations that are needed if people with learning disabilities are ever to gain access to the open employment market and attain access to an income sufficient to participate in society. They can raise these issues as urgent matters of social justice that are of concern not just to people with learning disabilities but to voters, employers and others with influence. They can help to change public attitudes in the workplace and in groups to which they belong.

It would be wrong to conclude that people with learning disabilities should be seen as passive victims. People with learning disabilities can speak for themselves and there is a growing self advocacy movement, exemplified by groups such as People First. Tenants of Key Housing have become involved in self advocacy work, including working to open up opportunities in the community through the Count Me In initiative. People in faith communities can get to know people with learning disabilities and, through knowing them support them to have their voices heard. Anti-poverty work provides a model of how personal encounter can lead to transformative change. Bob Holman, a policy analyst who lives alongside the poor in Glasgow, has enabled them to write their stories and have them published, as a powerful act to promote social justice. Donnison suggests that helping people to get their voices heard in policy debates is an important step:

‘When people tell their own stories they begin to gain some control over the use made of their pain and are less likely to be treated as case studies in someone else’s news story or research report’.

Communication does not have to be a barrier if people are prepared to give an individual the time that he/she needs and to let that person take the lead. Some individuals may want access to an independent advocate to support them over time in the choices they want to make. Training as a citizen advocate is one path of engagement that a member of faith community might want to consider if they feel they want to put themselves at the service of another on a long-term basis. This can offer the person with a learning disability the reliable and sustained commitment of another individual.

## **Reconciliation**

The second stance is that of reconciliation and this suggests the need for a political theology that confronts the barriers which the church itself presents to the liberation of people with learning disabilities. Moltmann argues that the greatest limitation in the development of liberation theology has been the failure of the church to transform itself in response. There is a painful religious legacy of equating disability with ‘sin’ and conversion with ‘cure’ which has to be acknowledged before reconciliation is possible. The problem goes beyond exclusionary practices to cultural beliefs about the nature of God. Michael Horsburgh has reflected on the problems which perfectionism, in the Judeo-Christian tradition has created for the acceptance of disabled people. Challenging ablist practice within the church and in religious thinking is a

transformative stance. Nancy Eiseland, in *The Disabled God* has developed a 'liberatory theology' of disability. She proposes an emancipatory project of shared liberation by listening to the voices of people with disabilities, challenging oppressive structures and beliefs and developing new images and practices. Suffering and disability, in the image of the Christ, crucified and resurrected with the marks of his pain still visible, become a vehicle for integrating disability into the heart of religious experience, reinventing our image of God as 'disabled' and challenging the worship of perfection as an image of the divine.

There are many reasons why the spirituality of people with learning disabilities has been ignored. Communication barriers may limit the extent to which carers and others attempt to explore people's emotional and faith lives. The assumption that spiritual understanding is denied to people with cognitive impairment should be challenged. People who have tried to understand the perceptual worlds of those who are non-verbal or have profound impairments argue that all people are active agents within their own meanings. However, it will be impossible for faith communities to reach out to people with disabilities (of any kind) unless they confront the fundamental legacy of exclusion that has marginalised and even condemned disabled people in much religious thinking and practice. As Christopher Newell writes: 'I vividly remember several experiences of people, including priests, thrusting their way into my life offering a healing ministry which I had not sought and which was entirely inappropriate to my situation and churchmanship... Many of my friends with disabilities have also had experiences of their wholeness and legitimacy being questioned by people within the Church, in the name of "healing".'

People with learning disabilities may have already experienced rejection by churches or religious people. Fear and ignorance may have made them objects of pity or they may have been treated as children or as without the 'capacity for faith'. All such attitudes deny the humanity and the spiritual lives of people with learning disabilities. Churches can take steps to make themselves more accessible. Signing, the use of symbol to illustrate the Word and large print books will help many members of the congregation to participate more fully. But they will not lead to greater inclusion unless there is also a willingness to change the attitudes that cause pain and exclusion, such as associating disability with sin or believing that differences between people should be 'cured' out of existence. When, on the other hand, people are welcomed unconditionally within a celebration of the whole of creation and the uniqueness of each individual, then there is a space in which to develop an inclusive approach. This may mean that certain congregational and worship practices change. For example, people may come to accept sounds, where they were used to silence or choose no longer to sing hymns that associate visual or hearing impairments with darkness and ignorance. But, made as the response of a loving community to the needs of its members, such changes can be gifted enrichments of the church's common life.

A desire for justice also informs the stance of reconciliation, for it seeks to overcome theological, political and cultural barriers to people's rights to their full spiritual identity and so to restore right relationship between the church and those it has

marginalised. The transformation in perspective is well illustrated by a reconceptualisation of the healing miracles. A declaration on 'The Accessible Church' from the Massachusetts Council of Churches redefines healing from cure of the individual to their restoration to a valued social role:

'Healing is not so much about having something fixed or corrected as it is about becoming whole and being restored to one's rightful place in the community'. And in this process, that community itself is healed also.

People with learning disabilities, in fact, lack opportunities for social connectedness and spiritual self expression. Despite care in the community, many still only count family members and staff paid to support them among their social networks. Churches are sites of interconnectedness or 'social capital'. Members of faith communities may be able to introduce an individual with learning disabilities to the group that shares their particular interest, acting as a bridge between the individual and the social setting in which they might meet others with whom they have something in common. This is one way to help restore them to their rightful place in the wider community.

### **Mutuality**

The third strand to the potential for theological response is the theology of wholeness. It is based in the core religious value that we are all dependent and that strength and freedom come from awareness of our own vulnerability. The theology of wholeness offers a paradigm for our interdependence upon each other and upon God. It models both community and church as inclusive sites for exchange between all people and therefore provides a resource to counter the tendency to extrude the 'other' as beyond our concern, our responsibility or even our street. Moltmann notes the need to tackle the 'shortfall of solidarity' in contemporary first world culture in which older, sick and disabled persons are not perceived as our responsibility. The theology of wholeness challenges the church to greater community by a deep longing for the participation of those who have been excluded. It provokes the desire for us to know people different from ourselves and collectively to repair the absence of those we have up to now excluded through our own fear of weakness and of difference. Their absence and exclusion becomes our loss and our pain. A stance of interdependence means that we cannot be community or church unless the stranger has a valued place within it. It says that the body is incomplete without you and your unique gifts (I Cor.12:12-27) and therefore I long to have you here and cannot be at peace while you are still outside.

This third stance therefore provides the basis of a restatement of a Christian ethic in which people with disabilities can be received as gifted members who complete the wholeness of the community. It grounds our response as a community and helps us to become the kind of neighbours who challenge our communities to become communities that can celebrate diversity. Newlands has seen this challenge as fundamental to current discussions of community: 'How to maintain respect for the stranger, for the otherness of the other, without imposing uniformity, while strengthening mutuality in community, is rightly in the forefronts of contemporary debate...'. Like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 35-38) we are called to rediscover our

common sense of humanity by responding to the other. It will be necessary to accept diversity as a basis both for citizenship and within community if we are to ensure the full inclusion of people with learning disabilities. A stance of mutuality also opens up common ground between the understandings of theology and contemporary social care theory.

The purpose and ethic of social care is being rethought, from care for, to mutual relationship with and from protection to enabling the development of full potential. Reindal argues that 'interdependence' provides a better way than 'independence' to theorise social relationships in order to take on board the reciprocity and mutuality of human relations. Kittay argues that we need to take dependence centrally into the ethic of care and accept interdependence as the basis of a just concept and practice of care. This stance is underpinned by theorising of welfare and citizenship as concepts that embrace emancipation and diversity. For Sevenhuijsen, such an ethic of care needs to be integrated into our view of democratic citizenship in order that 'everybody would be guaranteed equal access to the giving and receiving of care.'

Current social care thinking therefore views support services as processes that should enable the individual to take up their rightful place in the community. 'Charity' in which others, such as for example a faith community, sought to 'help' people with learning disabilities as objects of pity or as dependent people in need solely of care and protection would be seen as regressive and unhelpful. Rather our stance becomes not that of servicing the needs of people with learning disabilities from a position of strength, but acknowledging that people who need support have a right to autonomy and that, conversely, people without apparent support needs can gain from others.

One consequence of their exclusion from valued social roles within community networks is that people with learning disabilities are cut off from opportunities themselves to give to others, a situation having both social and spiritual implications. In a recent study in Scotland, which used a holistic tool developed at the University of Toronto to assess the quality of life of people with learning disabilities, people with learning disabilities reported that they had few opportunities to help other people. This was taken as one indicator of their opportunity to exercise a spiritual life. We deny people with learning disabilities not only their rights, but also their responsibilities as friends, neighbours and citizens.

Accepting people with learning disabilities as valued members of faith communities is not about 'helping' them but about accepting that all people have contributions to make to the common faith life and that we have responsibilities to support each other in our growth as spiritual beings. Congregations need to ask themselves how people with learning disabilities can bring their gifts into the church community, for example by showing others how to make the church more accessible. The social and spiritual resources of the church can be used to offer people with learning disabilities the opportunity to care as well as be cared for.

## **Conclusion**

These three stances of solidarity, of reconciliation and of mutuality provide a liberating path for the church's engagement with people with learning disabilities. A just theology that is inclusive of people with disabilities will therefore challenge, in solidarity with them, the structural injustices that exclude people with disabilities from social and political life. It will also encourage us to welcome the dynamic implications of inclusion for our understanding of our own community and of our relationship with God.

Thanks to Linda L. Treloar for comments on the paper.

An earlier version of part of this paper was given at the Association for Moral Education Conference, 2000, On the Making of Moral Citizens? University of Glasgow, 7-10 July 2000

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Special Education in Catholic Schools: Reconciling Mission and Practice

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December 2008

## Special Education in Catholic Schools: Reconciling Mission and Practice

### ***Introduction:***

Catholicism strongly encourages service to all people, in all places, and in all the ways that they may need help. In the early 1980s, the National Catholic Office of Persons with Disabilities was established, and the Church tried to focus on creating programs in Catholic schools to serve a wider variety of student needs. After Vatican II, the Church presented a Declaration of Education to their schools around the world, demanding a “new, more humane environment, characterized by freedom and charity” (Bello, 2006, p. 1). This was part of the Catholic Church’s attempt to become more involved in the reality of the world’s experiences. This attempt to modernize the policies of the Church and make the Church more accessible to a wider range of people was one way to incorporate the faith into the more practical aspects of daily life. One way the church could connect with its people in a practical way was the Catholic school system. Although the Church called attention to this issue twenty years ago, “no framework has evolved within the Catholic system of education that could direct and unify the efforts of individual schools, parishes, or dioceses in establishing effective, inclusive practices and programs for students with disabilities” (Bello, 2006, p. 2).

### ***Literature Review***

#### *History of Catholic Education:*

In the early 1600s, Franciscans in America expressed their desire to “teach children Christian doctrine, reading, and writing” and they started the first American

Catholic School. Throughout a lot of America's early history, Catholics were a major minority and Catholic schools were few, but by 1852, the First Plenary Council of Baltimore urged every Catholic parish in the nation to establish a school. In the past 100 years, changing demographics have affected the makeup of American Catholic schools. School buildings in very urban areas usually do not have enough of a Catholic population to fill them, and there are so many potential Catholic school students in suburban areas that there are often waiting lists to get into the schools.

On the website of the National Catholic Educational System, the historical overview ends with the following two sentences: "Through it all, Catholic schools were there -- for their families, community, nation and church. Nearly 400 years after that first known Catholic school opened in Florida, they continue to be a gift to the church and a gift to the nation." Have Catholic schools always been there for Catholic families and communities? What about members of the community who have disabilities or special learning needs that Catholic schools "simply don't have the resources" for? Catholic schools may be a *gift* to the nation, but the Catholic mission clearly states that they have a *responsibility* to serve all people who come through their doors.

#### *Mission of Catholic Schools:*

The mission of Catholic schools is to serve all of God's children, no matter their intellectual or developmental disabilities. Catholic special education in two dioceses will be surveyed in this paper: the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. The mission statement of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend states: "Each school will teach the teachings of the Catholic Church and ensure academic

success for all students” (<http://www.diocesefwsb.org/cso/index.shtml>). The Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. presents this mission statement: “The Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington, rooted in the Gospel values and the teaching mission of the Catholic Church are learning communities of faith and service, dedicated to educational equality and excellence for all students” (<http://www.adw.org/education>). Both of these mission statements emphasize incorporation of the teachings of the Church as well as the insurance of academic success for *all* students.

Even though the mission of Catholic schools may be to serve all children, it does mean that they are all equipped for the level of service that some children’s needs demand. The prevalence of learning disabilities in America affects 2.7 million children, and 3.3 million children have special healthcare needs. Learning disabilities represent an important comorbidity among children with special healthcare needs. (Altarac, 2007). Nationally, scholars tend to find that the prevalence of learning disabilities among school children is somewhere between eight and fifteen percent. Nearly five percent of all public school children in America are identified with a learning disability, and currently, there are 185,000 disabled children in Catholic schools in America. These numbers can be debated, however, because of the potential debate about the term ‘learning disability.’ This subject continues to be surrounded by heated arguments about the definition of the disorder, ways to diagnose, and treatment practices. Learning disability remains one of the least understood and most debated conditions that affect children.”(Lyon, 1996).

This issue is important for any parent with a special needs child who wishes to send him or her to a religious school, but also wants them to get the best education possible. It is also relevant to any parent with a child in a Catholic school, even if their

child does not have special needs, because the issue is whether or not they will be in the same school as a child with a disability, and how this will contribute to their Catholic, values-centered education.

### *Reasoning*

There are a few universal reasons that Catholic schools do not admit all students with special needs. I would argue that most Catholic schools that turn away special needs children have convinced themselves that they are unable to serve them, it is not that they do not care about the child. However, schools have simply sat back and accepted a few reasons that they continue to repeat when asked why they don't take certain children. The foremost reason is *funding*: for professional development, hiring new specially certified teachers, expanding resource classrooms, and making sure older buildings are handicapped accessible. Catholic schools are only sustained by tuition and parish funds so, to quote Father Kempinger of the South Bend schools, they are "always looking for money." However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) regulations state that government funds are allotted to "ensure the equitable participation of parentally-placed private school children" and that "a services plan must be developed and implemented for each private school child with a disability." (US Dept of Education, Office of Special Education Programs). Despite the IDEA regulations, there is still some kind of gap between these allotted funds and the actual Catholic schools. In a 2002 study titled "Catholic school children with disabilities," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops found that "Catholic school children are less likely to be diagnosed with a disability by a public school evaluator than through a private evaluation...In the

absence of IDEA services, Catholic school teachers, counselors, and administrators utilize innovative strategies for accommodating students with disabilities.”

While it may be more complicated and a longer process for Catholic schools to get funds for their special needs students, this should be a hassle that they are more than willing to go through. It may be difficult to get equitable funding, but that does not make it impossible. One alternative strategy to gain funds for private special education is through nonprofit organizations that give grants to Catholic schools. Francesca Pellegrino started one such organization in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. Her son has mild cerebral palsy and could not attend a local Catholic school, so she and a group of other parents started the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, which had raised up to \$120,000 as of 2006. This kind of monetary assistance would be extremely beneficial for Catholic schools, especially because they can use the money to fit their individual needs. Pellegrino stated in an interview with the Washington Post, “This is seed money. We’re not prescribing any particular model. We’re leaving it up to the schools.” (Washington Post, 2008).

Another innovative strategy to increase the amount of special education in Catholic schools comes from the University of Notre Dame’s Institute for Educational Initiatives (IEI) office of the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) outreach program. Starting in 2003-04, the ACE Educational Outreach initiated a project to train teachers in under-resourced Catholic schools to develop Strategic Intervention Teams (SIT). Each school was visited twice for professional development sessions and a listserv was established to share information across schools. Schools were granted funds to order the specific resources that their children needed, and to further professional development.

After five years and 30 schools, ACE, understanding that grant money could not continuously fund this important outreach, accepted a two year contract in 2007 with the diocese of Worcester, MA to train teams from six schools and provide follow-up activities. (Johnstone, et. al. 2008). This kind of program is based on the Theology of Inclusion, and works to provide real hands-on training and strategy, rather than just money, so that these Catholic schools can one day provide these special education services independently.

*Defining Terms:*

Because there tends to be dispute among scholars and educators as to what constitutes special educational needs and special educational services in schools, it is important to make these terms clear before proceeding. The Federal government defines a learning disability in the classroom as something separate from mental retardation or visual or hearing disabilities. Instead, their definition of learning disability is the presence of a discrepancy between a child's academic achievement and his or her apparent capacity to learn and achieve. This definition of learning disability does not really cover all kinds of special needs that a child may have in the classroom, but the following definition of special education programs looks at the situation more broadly. "Special education services are defined as specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of the child with the disability, including instruction in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions or other settings. 'Related services' refers to transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other

supportive services as required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education” (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002, p. 10).

*Mission and Practice:*

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) practically demands that Catholic schools be all-inclusive and accept and serve all types of children with all types of needs and all kinds of backgrounds. CST affirms the dignity and rights of all people, and so schools that serve children who live in poverty, belong to a minority group, or have special educational needs apply CST into their daily practices and programs. However, in his article “The Grammar of Catholic Schooling,” Martin Scanlan would argue that “the private nature of Catholic schools drives selective admissions practices that frequently marginalize these same students.” (2008, p. 25). Scanlan makes a compelling argument that Catholic Schools are called to serve all students, especially those who need extra care, like children with special needs. When they cannot serve them, the fault is placed on outside forces, and when they do serve children with special needs, it is seen as something exceptional, not something to be expected. This issue is repeatedly addressed in the Catholic school community as an issue of resources and inability, not an issue of a lack of action and determination.

Scanlan argues that Catholic schools take it for granted that they do not always have the same amount of funding as public schools, and they repeatedly portray themselves as ill-equipped and under funded. “What impedes Catholic educators from serving students with disabilities are the unquestioned structures that have become inextricably associated with these students, such as relying on federal and state funding to

support service delivery and depending on pullout programming and public school personnel.” (2008, p. 37). Scanlan writes that these kinds of attitudes lead most Catholic schools to presume again and again that they simply do not possess the ability, and in a lot of cases, the responsibility, to serve children with disabilities.

*Research Question:*

Currently, not all Catholic schools are serving their special needs students in the same way, and some may not even have students with disabilities at all. While there are a growing number of Catholic schools offering services to students with special needs, there are still Catholic schools that “close their doors” to this population (Bello, 2006, p.2). Clearly, a tension exists between the resources (e.g. teacher training, money) and the calling of Catholic schools to serve all children. This disparity in services leads to the question: *how do Catholic schools reconcile their Catholic mission with the programs that they have in place, specifically with regards to special education?*

***Methods:***

*Measures:*

I have conducted a series of face-to-face interviews with Catholic school administrators in South Bend, Indiana and phone interviews with Catholic school administrators in Washington, D.C. These interviews generally last between fifteen and twenty minutes, with the interviewee speaking the vast majority of the time.

*Participants:*

I interviewed Father Steve Kempinger, CSC, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of South Bend/Fort Wayne. This diocese consists of four high schools and forty elementary schools. There are over 13,000 students and 900 teachers in the diocese. In this diocese, I have interviewed Suzanne Wiwi, the principal of St. Joseph Elementary School.

St. Joseph Elementary School is located near downtown South Bend, Indiana. South Bend has about 108, 000 residents and about 43,000 households, 30% of which have children under the age of eighteen living in them. The median income for a family is about \$40,000. 56% of South Bend residents are white, 35% are African American, and about 9% Hispanic. (2000 Census).

I also will be interviewing Doreen Engler, the Director of Special Education for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. The Archdiocese of Washington serves nearly 30,000 students in the District of Columbia and five counties in Maryland. There are 21 schools in Washington and 77 in Maryland. I have interviewed Patricia McGann, the principal of Our Lady of Lourdes elementary school.

Our Lady of Lourdes is located in Bethesda, Maryland, a suburb of Washington. About 55,000 people live in Bethesda, and there are 24,000 households, 28% of which have children under 18 living in them. The median income for a family is about \$130,000. The city is about 85% white, 12% African American, and 3% Hispanic. (2000 Census).

*Procedures:*

In the interviews, I ask a set series of questions that remain constant throughout all of my interviews. I first ask the subject to tell me a little bit about the history of their involvement in Catholic schools. Then I ask them about how they have experienced and understood the mission of Catholic schools. I will go on to ask them if they have had any experience with or knowledge of special education in Catholic schools. If they have special education in their schools, I will ask them how their programs were originally developed, what challenges and limitations they face, and what their plans are for the future. Lastly, I will ask them if they feel that a conflict exists between the mission of Catholic schools that they have discussed and the extent of special education that they are familiar with.

*Results*

*Experience in Education*

Because they are all administrators, each of the people that I interviewed had a fairly substantial history of their involvement in the Catholic school system. All of them attended Catholic schools at some point in their life. Mrs. Wiwi even attended the very school that she is now the principal at, and has never belonged to a different parish. Mrs. McGann attended Catholic schools through graduate school, sent her children to Catholic schools, was an administrator at a Catholic high school, and now serves on the Board of Education for the Archdiocese of Washington. Father Kempinger attended the University of Notre Dame, went into the seminary, and taught in Catholic school until he was appointed the Superintendent of the South Bend- Fort Wayne schools. Mrs. Engel taught

in Catholic schools, was the principal of a school for children with disabilities, serves as Assistant Superintendent, and now serves as the Director of Special Education for the Archdiocese. All interviewees expressed a deep connection with and affection for Catholic schools. Mrs. Wiwi even used the word “ownership” when describing her connection to St. Joseph parish.

### *Understanding of the Mission*

Mrs. Wiwi described the mission of Catholic schools as a way to educate children and support what their parents are already doing at home with regards to religious education. She aims to create an environment that consists of a high quality education but also integrates the faith. Mrs. McGann described the mission of Catholic schools as: “to provide the opportunity for all children to receive and excellent, accessible, affordable Catholic education.” She noted that during her time teaching in a high school with the Sisters of the Holy Cross that they taught her about the way a school can be enriched by accepting diverse learners. She emphasized that of the most important values of Catholic schools is that they work to educate the whole person, and that they teach acceptance, not merely tolerance.

Father Kempinger highlighted the importance of passing along the faith and supplementing parents’ teachings. Mrs. Engel first discussed the history of the Catholic school mission, which was a way for immigrant families to ensure that their children could learn the faith in a Protestant country. She mentioned that Catholic schools today can be an option for inner city families whose only other choices are low quality public schools. Mrs. Engel mentioned that today, 90% of private schools in America are

Catholic, and “Catholic schools represent the best hope in our country for retaining the opportunity for children to learn about God in an academic setting.” Additionally, catholic schools often provide a stabilizing force in the lives of many children who have problems at home.

### *Experience with Special Education*

In her school, Mrs. Wiwi has a full time LD teacher and more than 20 children with specifically diagnosed learning disabilities, but she suspects there are quite a few more children who haven’t been diagnosed yet. She noted that in the many years she has been at St. Joseph, there have been quite a few important changes made so that the school can better serve its children. Mrs. McGann first explained her personal experience with Catholic schools, explaining that she has found that they have historically not included students with special needs. One of her sons has significant disabilities and could not attend the Catholic school that her other children went to. At Our Lady of Lourdes, they have students with autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, and Tourette’s Syndrome. They have a full-time special educator on staff who works with the children in their classrooms and individually.

Father Kempinger mentioned that at a few schools in Fort Wayne they have good programs for students with “ADD to mild forms of autism” and a couple of schools in Fort Wayne and South Bend have resource room teachers who are certified in special education. Mrs. Engel has been working in the special education field for the past 25 years, and has traveled around the country to learn about other dioceses’ programs. She discussed the excitement surrounding upcoming programs, especially at conferences such

as the NCEA's Special Education conference. Mrs. Engel also discussed the services available at various Catholic schools in the Washington area. At least three or four of the high schools and elementary schools in Washington are able to accept children with fairly severe disabilities, and most of them are equipped to accept children with high incidence disabilities, such as ADHD or ADD.

### *Challenges of Special Education*

Mrs. Wiwi noted that one of her biggest challenges has been that her building is very old and not handicapped accessible. She discussed the fact that she feels it has been a personal mission of hers to incorporate special education into her school, but she also explained that her school simply doesn't have the funding to pay for one-on-one care that a severely disabled child would need. As she put it, "since we don't get any money from the state or whatever, we just can't." Mrs. McGann noted similar monetary challenges in her interview, but she explained that the strain of special education on teachers is her biggest challenge. She said "if we base our success on test scores and grades, it can be very difficult to incorporate students with different learning needs in our classrooms...just like we don't accept the standards that society has for most behavior, we cannot just accept the standards that society holds for what measures a good education." She too noted that her building is not fully handicapped-accessible.

Father Kempinger said his biggest challenge has been resources, meaning professional development and money. He explained that the most difficult thing to do as a principal is telling a family that your school is not the right place for their child. He feels that the problem is growing because there seem to be more children with special

needs whose parents want them to get a Catholic education. Father Kempinger also mentioned the new IDEA regulations, noting that the way children get tested for and diagnosed with learning disabilities has become more complicated. Mrs. Engel explained that, when one of her Catholic schools is not the right fit for a child her department works with the family to help them get the services they need from the local public school system, and they also set them up with a local religious education program for public school students. She also mentioned that one of her biggest challenges is that “many Catholic educators that do not know very much about special education feel that having children with disabilities in Catholic schools is simply too expensive, so they never begin.”

*Conflict of Mission and Practice:*

I received a variety of interesting answers to this rather difficult question. Mrs. Wiwi agreed that “yes, depending on the severity of the disability, I think we have a problem. We have to be realistic, we have limits.” She then went on to repeat the current special educational resources that her school offers. Mrs. McGann agreed that, at this point in time, Catholic schools have not lived up to their potential, once again stating that she feels “in order to educate the children who will be the future of our church, we have no choice but to include children of all abilities.” She ended this thought stating that, so far, as a church and an educational system, the Catholic educational community has not fully met its obligation.

Father Kempinger also agreed that a conflict exists between mission and practice. He noted that Church documents state that Catholic schools should take all students, but

that is a constant struggle. He also mentioned the problems with the lack of equity between schools that have good special education programs and those who do not. He explained the whole situation as an “internal struggle that we as a church need to reflect on how we can make it better.”

Mrs. Engel had a bit of a different answer, “ I would not say that a conflict exists. Rather, I would say that the mission of Catholic schools has not been completely fulfilled.” She explained that, while special education programs cost money, it may not be as much as educators think, and a great deal has been accomplished across the country with just a little money and a little goodwill. For her, the real concern is not mission and practice, but that Catholic school administrators must be convinced that this is the case.

### ***Discussion and Implications***

#### *Limitations*

There were a few limitations of this study, the biggest one being the few administrators that were interviewed. Because of time and location constraints, I could not interview as wide of a variety and as large a number of Catholic school administrators. Another limitation might be that I gave these interviews without explaining to the administrators what they would be talking to me about. This may have made their answers more candid, but if they had time beforehand to seriously think about the Catholic mission and the conflicts with special education, their answers may have provided more insight.

## *Discussion*

In summary, all of the administrators interviewed felt that the mission of Catholic schools was to pass along the Catholic faith along with providing a strong academic education. While the general missions discussed were similar, some administrators emphasized different things. Mrs. Engel discussed the mission of Catholic schools as more of a comment on its function in society historically and today. Mrs. McGann used words such as accessible and affordable, and both Mrs. Wiwi and Father Kempinger mentioned supplementing the teachings of a child's parents.

There was a lot of overlap in the answers I received about challenges of special education and I feel that this represents the universality of the problem. Administrators across the country struggle to find funds for their special education programs. Even with the current IDEA regulations that private school children should receive equal funds, many are not doing so. Some administrators aren't even aware of these possibilities. For example, as Mrs. Wiwi stated, "the government doesn't give us any money." All of these administrators also all expressed the desire to serve more children than they can right now, but most of them said that currently, it would be impossible for them to do so. The strain on teachers and need for continued professional development was also stressed by most of these administrators. While I was a little bit surprised at some of the programs that were in place in the schools, such as the full-time LD teacher at St. Joseph School, or the children with Autism at Our Lady of Lourdes, I did not find too many of the administrators discussing any kinds of 'innovative strategies' that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops had suggested that they incorporate in lieu of funding troubles.

A few of the answers had a defensive tone, such as when Mrs. Wiwi was asked about the conflict between mission and practice, she launched into another description of what her school was doing currently with regards to special education. Also, Mrs. Engel's answer that there is not a conflict between the mission and practice of Catholic schools with regards to special education was a bit surprising, especially considering the rest of her answers mentioned the need to raise awareness across the country that special education is very much a real possibility for most Catholic schools.

There was definitely a sense of pride in all of the interviewees' answers when they discussed the progress their schools had made to incorporate special education. These Catholic school administrators find it to be a great accomplishment when they have special education programs. This finding supports Scanlan's claim that most Catholic communities view special education programs as unique and noteworthy, not something to be expected. These programs are wonderful and a fantastic addition to the Catholic school community, however, problems may arise when schools or administrators forget that the Catholic social teaching requires this kind of accessibility, it does not merely suggest it as a bonus.

A few larger conclusions can be drawn from the variety of answers given in the administrators' interviews. First of all, Catholic school administrators possess a good grasp of their mission and the social teachings of the Church. All of the interviewees expressed the desire to serve as many children as possible and to pass on the teachings of the Church to them. Awareness about the demand for special education in Catholic schools does not seem to really be an issue here, as all of the administrators stated that they find it troubling when a Catholic school does not have the resources or

accommodations that a child needs. The real issue is that many Catholic school administrators seem positive that they are completely unable to provide more advanced services for children with more severe special needs. Mrs. Engel made an interesting observation about this, saying that if we could convince administrators and teachers that a little extra work and a little more time could go a long way, then Catholic schools could do even more great things.

### *Implications*

This paper intends to call Catholic schools to action, and to show them that if they fully carry out the mission that they understood, they would be doing even more for their community. With this information, one could ideally develop ways to better equip Catholic schools to serve a diverse population of students in an innovative and effective way.

First of all, Catholic schools should understand how to access federal and state funds to support special education. Schools could also apply for grants from various nonprofits such as the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, based in the Washington, D.C. suburbs.

Workshops with teachers to make them more comfortable having special needs children in their classrooms would help a great deal. Some Catholic Universities have the funding for these kinds of training programs, such as the University of Notre Dame's SIT teams. One key component of the SIT program is communication. Catholic schools are a family, and they would benefit greatly if they stayed in communication with one another about strategies or new ideas for special education. Additional communication between

the administrators of Catholic education on how to gain government funds is also extremely important.

Because the lack of special education in Catholic schools remains an ongoing problem, further research is extremely necessary. Even with its small size, this study showed the problems facing both Catholic school administrators and those parents who want their special needs child to attend Catholic schools. Further studies on innovative solutions to a lack of funding would be beneficial. Additional studies on training general teachers to work with special needs children would be beneficial.

Too many times, Catholic schools respond to the question of special education by asking, "How can we afford to provide it?" I challenge them to instead ask themselves: as a Catholic school, how can you afford not to? If the Catholic faith is truly realized in all Catholic classrooms, administrators and teachers must not accept turning a family away as an option. Catholic schools must rise above monetary worries, find alternative methods, incorporate innovative strategies, and give a little bit of extra time and effort to open their doors to any child who comes knocking.

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God chose Moses to go before Pharaoh, the most powerful leader of the ancient world, to liberate an entire nation that was enslaved. In God's wisdom, he didn't pick the gifted communicator, but instead chose the man who hesitated because of his speech impediment.

*Monday: Lord, for all of our students who struggle to communicate the thoughts in their heads and the feelings in their hearts, help us empower them to find their voices.*

*Tuesday: Lord, when we feel disconnected with our students, when instruction isn't sinking in or we sense that our words aren't making sense, grant us your wisdom to communicate more effectively with those who struggle most.*

God chose Jeremiah to be "a prophet to the nations," but this young man doubted his own ability and readiness for this daunting task. In God's wisdom, he didn't choose a prophet based on age and experience, but instead chose a young man and gave him the courage to recognize his own God-given potential.

*Monday: Lord, for all of our students who doubt themselves and come to school expecting to fail, help us empower them to discover their God-given potential.*

*Tuesday: Lord, when we feel discouraged or ineffective, help us to find the potential that you have placed within us as teachers, and to use the gifts you have given us for the good of your children.*

God chose Peter to be the rock upon which he would build his Church. In God's wisdom, he didn't choose the man who always had the right words and actions, but instead chose one who constantly struggled to react in the right way—the man about whom Jesus would say, "Get behind me, Satan, for you are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Despite Peter's challenges and shortcomings, God formed him into the leader of the Church on earth.

*Monday: Lord, for all of our students who could be leaders, but just can't seem to get it together, help us to be a constant rock-like support for them, providing the structure they need to thrive.*

*Tuesday: Lord, when we feel disorganized, unprofessional, or when everything we try just seems like the wrong thing to do, help us to remember that you never give up on us, and that you have called us to be leaders in education and advocates for the children who need us most.*

God chose Paul to spread the message of Jesus well beyond the boundaries of Judaism. In God's wisdom, he didn't choose the most ardent of Jesus' followers, but instead chose the most passionate persecutor of the early Christians and completely transformed his fervor into committed zeal and love for the Gospel of Christ.

*Monday: Lord, for all of our students who have great gifts but who lack the social skills to share them with others, for the students who are always ending up in trouble, and for the students who carry so much emotion within them that it separates them from the community, help us to see in them what you saw in Paul, and to help them channel their energy in a way that furthers your message.*

*Tuesday: Lord, when we see our students as obstacles to our teaching, and when all we can focus on is the negative, change our hearts so that we may see them as you do.*



Mark 2:1-12  
<http://vitajesu.wordpress.com/2009/11/15/47/>

*Mark 2:1-12*

<sup>1</sup> And when he returned to Caper'na-um after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup> And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. <sup>3</sup> And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup> And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" --he said to the paralytic-- <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." <sup>12</sup> And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

### *An Encounter with Christ*

Scripture can serve as a great source of reflection for inclusion in Catholic schools. In the Gospel of Mark (2:1-12), Jesus is moving from town to town preaching the Word of God. He is teaching as one with authority and frequently heals those whom have come to listen to Him. While Jesus is in Capernaum a paralytic, carried by four of his friends, comes to encounter the Lord.

Many people were gathered in and around the house that Jesus was preaching, which did not allow the paralytic to enter Jesus' presence. One cannot help but wonder why these men were not allowed to bring their friend close to Jesus. Was the crowd so focused on Jesus that they did not notice the paralytic? Did the crowd see the paralytic but selfishly prevent him from getting close to Jesus? The passage does not explicitly address this issue. It does, however, express the great length to which the paralytic's friends went to in order to help their friend encounter Christ. Specifically, it speaks of the tremendous faith the four men had in Jesus. "And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mark 2:5). Thus it was through the intercession and care of these four men that Jesus chose to heal the paralytic.

It is also important to note that Jesus healed the paralytic's soul in forgiving his sins before He healed the paralytic's physical ailment. It was only after the scribes questioned Jesus' actions that he healed the paralytic's disability. Thus the Gospel seems to indicate that there is a hierarchy of needs in man. His primordial need is that of spiritual healing. Secondly, his physical needs must be met.

In Catholic schools our primary concern is to meet the spiritual needs of children. To put our students not only in touch but intimacy and communion with Christ is our goal. The inclusion of all children into a Christ-centered school is a primary concern for Catholic school administrators. This is our reference point for all other forms of inclusion. Inclusion in Catholic schools is rooted in a person, the Person of Christ. When and wherever it is possible we should provide the opportunity for God's children to receive an authentic Catholic education. As this passage demonstrates, disabilities should not prevent children from receiving such a gift.

We have a responsibility to follow the example of the paralytic's friends in exhausting every option so as not to deny a child from encountering Christ in a Catholic school environment. Public schools cannot provide this gift. Catholic schools can. Moreover, this is the primary purpose of the Catholic school. Let us be mindful of this fundamental need for all children, regardless of any disability they may have.

By: SEAN FOSTER, CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, RLP9, 2011



Rublev, A. (1410), Rublev's Trinity [Icon].  
Retrieved from: <http://www.extravagantcreation.wordpress.com>

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.

John 14:1-20 New American Bible.  
Retrieved from: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john14.htm>

***The Holy Trinity: The Foundational Principle of Educational Inclusion***

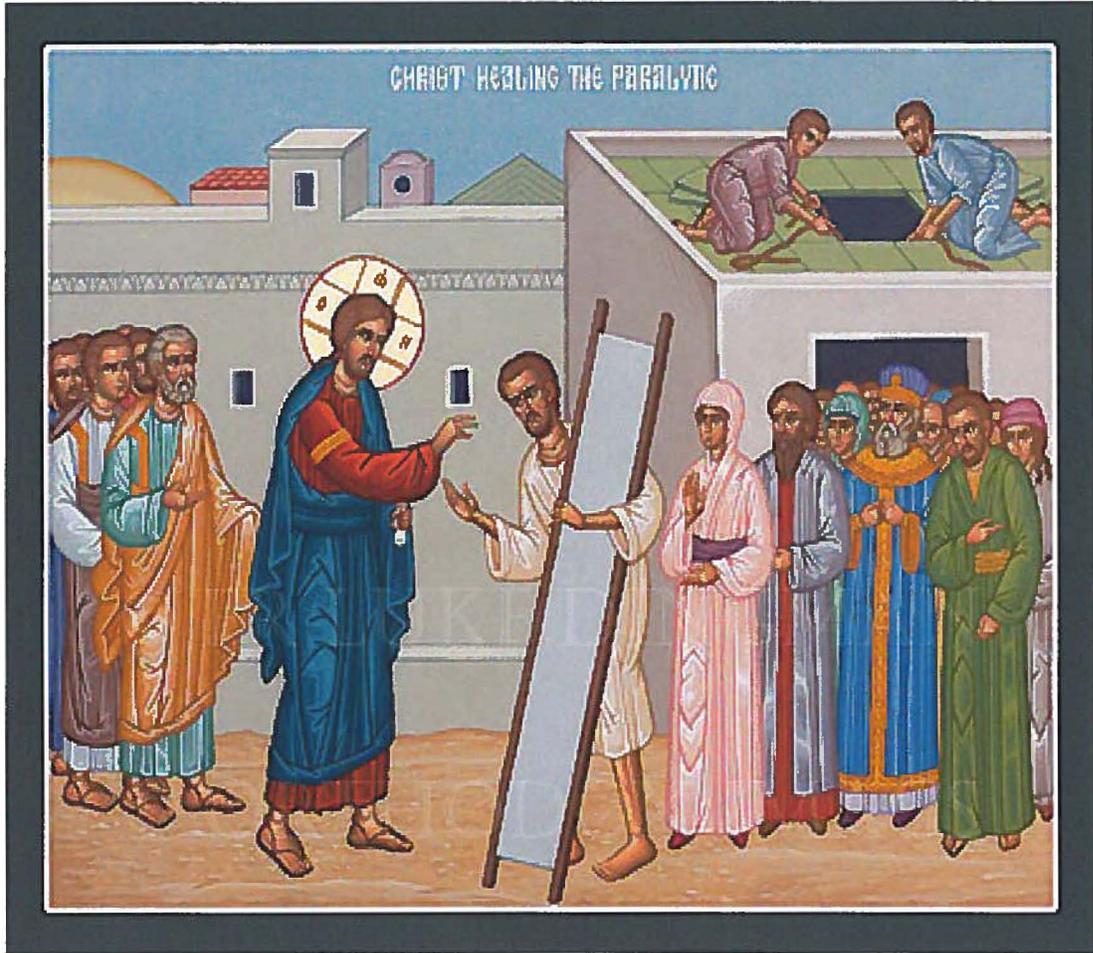
The purpose of the Christian life is to be fully incorporated into the Trinitarian life of God. As an extension of Christ, the mission of the Church is to bring people into the very divine life of God. The Church delights in bringing people from all nations and backgrounds into a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is in this mission that humnity finds its fulfillment. As an essential ministry of the Church, Catholic schools actively participate in the Church's saving mission. The purpose of a Catholic school is not merely to prepare students for college, but more importantly, to prepare students for a life immersed in the communal life of God.

All people are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore are made for union and communion with Him. Each and every human being has a supernatural end in Christ. Thus, Catholic schools have a special mission to help children reach their supernatural end.

It is in light of the dignity of every human being and their eternal destination in the divine life of God that the Catholic school finds inclusion to be an essential element of its day-to-day operations. Catholics schools fail in their participation in the mission of Christ and His Church when they unjustly deprive students with special needs of an opportunity to receive a Catholic education. Christ is present in every child, no matter what learning disability they may have. In a sense, Christ is more perfectly made present to those in Catholic schools when students with special needs are present, because Christ is most profoundly recognized in those who are in need. As Catholic educators, we must seek diligently for new ways to include students with special needs in our schools. We more actively participate in our mission when we reach out to those in need and extend to them the same opportunity to encounter Christ in education.

Andrei Rublev's icon of the Trinity and Jesus' dialogue in chapter 14 of John's Gospel remind us of humanity's supernatural destination to be one with the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Catholic schools help students come to know this truth and equip them with the tools to experience this communion in a incredible way. When we keep the Trinitarian life of God in the forefront of our minds and hearts, we are reminded of the importance of including students with special needs in our educational community and upholding them as valuable members of this community. We not only give these students a Catholic education, but we also give other students a chance to grow in virtue and become stronger servants of Christ. By upholding their place in Catholic education, we grow stronger in our faith, and as a result God graces us with a more profound experience of His communal nature of love.

Rev. William Schmid, RLP 9, 2011



Unknown (20<sup>th</sup> Century), Christ Healing the Paralytic [icon]  
Retrieved from: [http://www.orthodoximages.com/feasts\\_christ.html](http://www.orthodoximages.com/feasts_christ.html)

One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set (him) in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven." Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, "We have seen incredible things today."

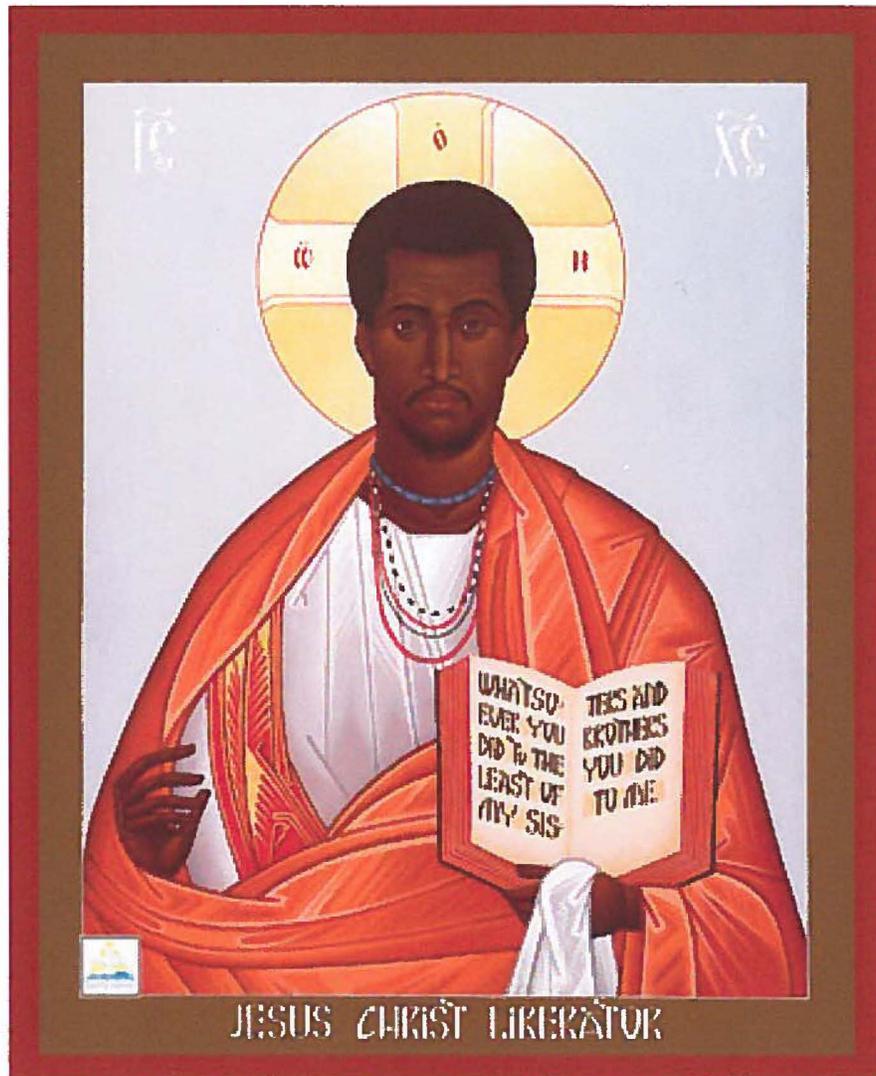
Luke 5:17-26 New American Bible  
Retrieved from: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke5.htm>

### *Seeing their faith, Jesus healed him*

This passage from the Gospel offers us a beautiful reflection and the responsibility that we have for one another, and the obligations that arise out of our faith. There are many stories in the Gospel of Jesus miraculously healing someone of an illness or affliction, but the unique elements of this particular story is how these healing come about. Namely, we hear nothing of the faith of the paralyzed man. We hear nothing about the man's desire to be healed, or his desire to be near Jesus, or his belief that Jesus can heal him. What we hear about are the man's friends. The men in the Gospel know that their friend is in need, and they believe Jesus can fill that need. They bring their friend to Jesus and find they cannot make their way to him. Rather than being deterred by this barrier, they find a way, removing a part of the roof and lowering their friend down to the Lord.

Frequently in the Gospels Jesus performs healings in response to faith, and such is the case here. But it is not the faith of the paralyzed man that Jesus responds to here, but that of his friends. Jesus, seeing that they believed and that they brought their friend to the Lord, first forgave his sins, then healed his afflictions. Reading this Gospel from the perspective of faith, we find that it is impossible for us to hold on to an idea of faith is an exclusively personal relationship with Jesus. Rather, we find in the Word that the communal element of the faith is undeniable and inescapable.

The Church is committed to education as a crucial part of its mission. Because we know of God's love for all his children, we know in faith that that it is our responsibility to include all of God's children in the Church's work of education and, ultimately, the salvation of souls. Some of God's children need our help. For some, there are barriers making education more difficult. For some, it is necessary for us to reach out because of our own faith, to bring those in need to the Lord, knowing that he loves them and wants to heal them, whatever that healing may mean. And so, knowing how important this mission is, we do not let obstacles stand in our way. In love and faith, we strive to find ways to bring all God's children to their Lord Jesus Christ.



By Brother Robert Lentz, OFM <https://www.trinitystores.com/?detail=57&artist=1>  
Trinity Stores. (2011). *Jesus Christ: Liberator*. Retrieved July 4, 2011, from  
<https://www.trinitystores.com/?detail=57&artist=1>.

## Galatians 3:23-29

<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

## *Jesus Christ Liberator: The Foundation of Inclusion*

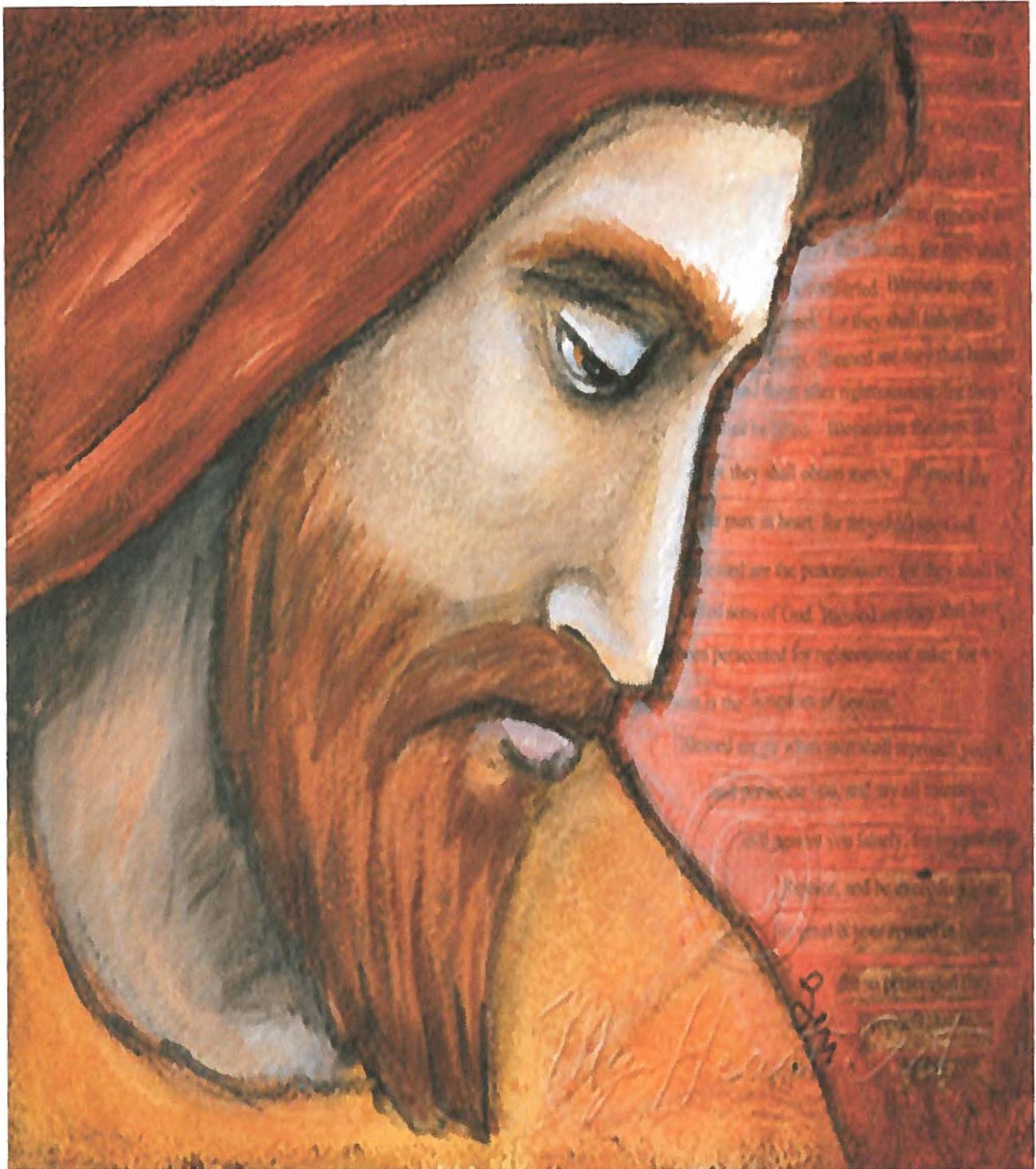
Inclusion inspired by Christ's teachings is the motivation of NativityMiguel Network schools. In particular, NativityMiguel schools focus on the inclusion of students of low socio-economic status and minority ethnicities. The network's inclusion seeks to provide a Catholic, rigorous education that reflects the dignity of all children, no matter a child's socio-economic status or ethnicity. The belief of NativityMiguel schools is that all too often these students do not receive one essential birthright in the United States of America: a quality education that permits young people to grow into positive citizens of a democracy. In this way, the combination of low socio-economic status and minority ethnicity is one of the most dooming sets of characteristics in our country. In more cases than not, socio-economic status coupled with minority ethnicity perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

This reality is alive and thriving in Louisville, Kentucky. When students enter Nativity Academy at St. Boniface as sixth graders, they demonstrate high cognitive ability and significantly lower achievement in reading, language, and math. Most students arrive with a tragic lack of self-confidence masked by feigned adolescent arrogance. People who look like them and live in their neighborhoods work service industry jobs, drop out from high school, go to jail, and/or engage in criminal activity. At Nativity Academy, the adults for whom students grow to love and care the most are Caucasian from middle or upper-middle classes.

Beyond the ethnic and socio-economic distinctions between Nativity students and the adults who live a life students desire, there exists a significant absence of positive, self-reflective images for young people of low socio-economic and minority status. Even religious icons or images that depict humans of darker skin colors do not include phenotypical characteristics reflective of the particular ethnicity.

The image of Jesus Christ Liberator should hang in the classrooms and main offices of every Catholic school that serves students of African descent. Below it should be the segment of St. Paul's letter to the Galatians from chapter three. The image and scripture passage reflect inherent teachings of Christianity: we are no longer under the ancient law of the Old Testament, we are under the law of Christ and His law is that in belonging to Him, we have dignity and thus shed our socially constructed identities. If only the students of Nativity Academy could embrace their inherent human dignity and believe that they are deserving of a life of happiness and love. Perhaps the image of a Christ that looks like them would provide an avenue to this belief. Christ resides in all of us, not just Jew or Greek, male or female, rich or poor, or white or black. Nativity Academy teachers believe this, but unfortunately not all schools and education systems in our country do. The acceptance of this truth is the way to inclusion.

By: Meghan Weyland, Nativity Academy at St. Boniface, RLP 9, 2011



Artist: Geri Centonze  
<http://www.myheartartbygeri.com/2010/10/jesus-beatitudes.html>

Susie Hatcher

“When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,  
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted,  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land,  
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied,  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy,  
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God,  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God,  
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

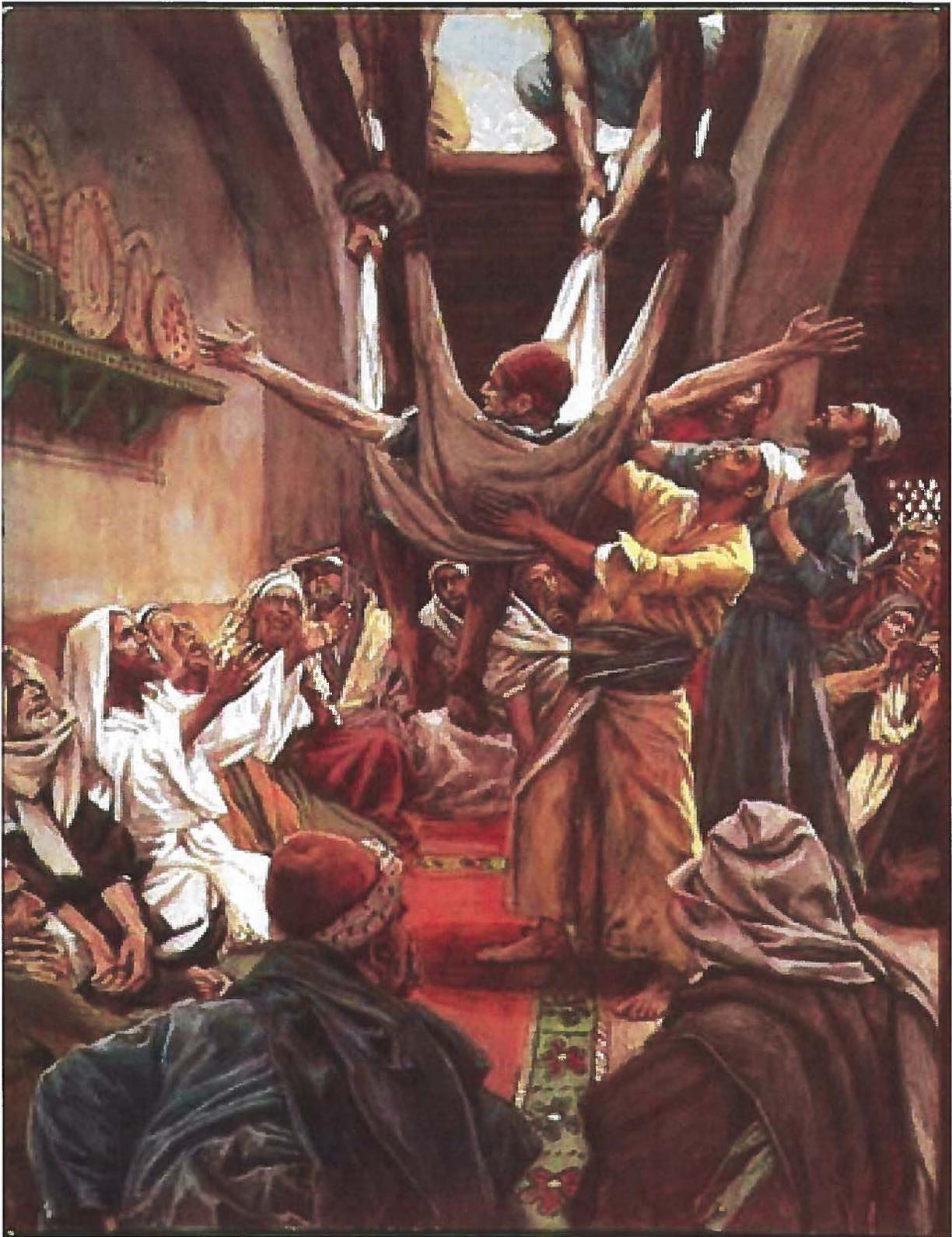
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.’ ”

## **Beatitudes Reflection**

In this passage from the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is showing us how God is an advocate for each human being as an individual. God's desire for justice is strong, beyond our comprehension. He wants all people to be treated fairly and with compassion at all times. We, as brothers and sisters in Christ, are to treat each person we meet with respect regardless of their difference, whether those be permanent differences or temporary differences. If each human being were to follow the Beatitudes way of living, no exclusion would occur in our world as we know it.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can become Christ like and share in the glory of God. In doing so, we will manifest some of the qualities listed in the Beatitudes. In reading some of the particular qualities, one in particular struck me in regards to inclusion. The clean of heart reminds me of people or children with disabilities. Nobody chooses to be born with an ability or disability. Rather, it is something that God gives to us. We must accept it and take it as blessing and grace in our lives. When we recognize these blessings and graces as coming from God, our lives will more meaningful.

God choose to be on the side of those who are weak, forgotten, and mistreated. This is not a mistake on God's part. Yet, we humans tend to neglect or exclude people from our lives on a daily basis. This is a huge mistake on our part and something we need to desperately work to fix. Every human being is a gift from God. God does not make mistakes in His creations. We as humans need to recognize and embrace that fact.



<http://podcast.trinitywestsac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/jesusparalytic.jpg>

### *The Healing of the Paralytic*

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins? Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, “Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Rise, pick up your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth” –he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

Mark 2:1-12 (New American Bible)

### *“With Open Arms”*

There are several phrases in this Gospel reading that resonate with today’s situations, attitudes and decision making related to inclusion. Mark describes how a multitude of people gathered around Jesus because they believed in Him, they wanted to see Him, and they wanted His healing. This description fits well with a depiction of the Church today. We all gather in great numbers, as believers seeking to be in God’s presence and seeking God’s blessings. However, a situation arises: there is no room left and the door is crowded; or putting it such a way that reflects today’s challenges for inclusion: there are barriers or no access. Indeed, this situation can be seen as a representation of our realities in our parishes and Catholic schools. There, we gather around Christ, but people with physical, mental or learning disabilities are perhaps feeling or are being told that there is no room for them. In our case, it does not only mean lack of actual space, but rather the fact that we sometimes create a culture of exclusiveness. We join in and let others join in if we feel comfortable, if we are similar, if we think similarly. We accept people more easily if we do not feel awkward around them, if we can relate easily, or if they do not appear to be so different from the majority. Then, it is socially that we leave no room for those who may appear to be different. That crowded door may not only mean the lack of resources to make our Churches and our Catholic schools more inclusive. It may also mean a lack of mental openness that paralyzes any good effort to try to be more inclusive.

Yet, there was something exemplary of the body of believers gathered at Capernaum. Perhaps they just wanted or needed to see a miracle, but they certainly were trying to bring the paralytic to Christ. Something beautiful about that picture is the extended arms of those men helping the paralytic come down to where Jesus was. The paralytic too has his arms wide open and it evokes a sense of freedom and joy for being able to get close to Jesus. There is Jesus too, ready to receive the paralytic with open arms.

The coming through the roof and maneuvering to get the man down to Jesus could well represent the decision making processes and the accommodations that are necessary to make in our Churches and Catholic schools more inclusive. We have to try to serve our brothers and sisters who have physical, mental or learning disabilities, in manner that is collaborative, persistent and at all cost. The scene shows us that with willingness and ingenuity it is possible. Perhaps we, at our Churches and Catholic Schools, also need or want to see a miracle, and we will be able to see one as we transform our communities into an inclusive gathering of believers. Maybe one day, our communities will be healed from our prejudices, will have our social paralysis removed, and there will be no more barriers to be gathered to glorify God together. Then, others will also see us and say “We have never seen anything like this.” There will be Jesus too, ready to receive us with open arms.

**FERNANDA BECKER, BISHOP DWENGER HIGH SCHOOL, RPL9,2011**



Anthony Van Gessel <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/dfg/jesu/topic%205.htm>  
Author Unknown. *Sheep and Goats* located in Cathedral of St. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy.

Matthew 25: 31-46

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:31-46 (King James Version)

## Reflection

Matthew 25 is my favorite Gospel reading, and Jesus speaks forcefully in the context of teaching students with special needs. For those of us in Catholic Schools, this Gospel passage is a clear call to serve the less fortunate, for in the less fortunate resides Christ. Indeed, serving our students with special needs is one of the most pressing issues in Catholic Education: “The present challenge facing Roman Catholic elementary and secondary schools is how to meet the needs of growing numbers of parents who wish to provide their children with disabilities with the benefits of a Catholic school education” (Russo, Massucci, Osborne, & Cattaro, 2002, p. 1).

As Christ’s followers, it is essential to follow this mandate. I have always found it interesting that when describing those He will let into heaven, Christ highlights helping our fellow man. We have made a lifelong decision as Catholic educators to assist others through our teaching, and now as Catholic principals, we must make another commitment to prioritize the education of the less fortunate. We must not keep students out of our schools simply because it will take time and effort to serve them, and once we admit them to our schools, we must make sure that we put forth the necessary effort to effectively educate them.

Unfortunately, Catholic schools have largely ignored Christ’s words. Because of the cost of adding programs for a small number of students, many schools decide that they cannot serve children with special needs. While this is a problem in all Catholic schools, it is especially problematic in Catholic High Schools (Durow, 2007). Having worked in two different Catholic high schools, this is troubling to me.

I am aware that serving and accommodating these students is more easily said than done. I teach at a High School of 120 students. Resources are tight, and teachers are overworked. Adding a student with special needs increases the workload and responsibility of the teachers and the administrators, and it may add to the cost of successfully running the school.

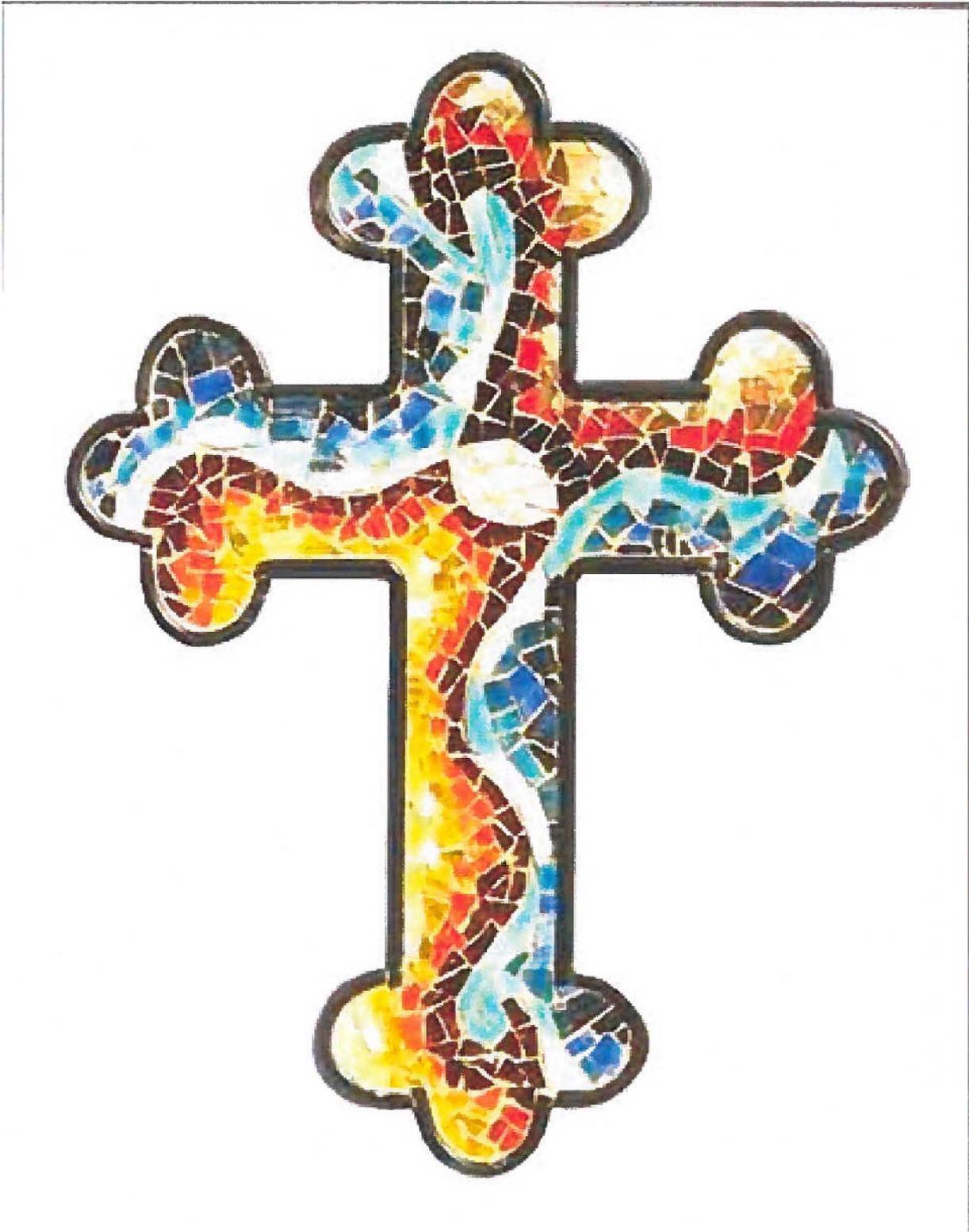
Despite the difficulties, Christ’s words make it clear that we must serve the less fortunate, and in schools we can do this at the classroom level, the school level, and the diocesan level. There are many easy things that we can encourage from our teachers to better provide for these students. Differentiating instruction, offering extra time, using graphic organizers, and utilizing peer tutoring are strategies that cost nothing but are effective (Russo, et. al; 2002). By offering these strategies to a student who needs them, we give him or her chances to achieve, and we follow the words of Jesus in this Gospel passage. In addition to these practices, we must make sure that we are following each child’s IEP because these accommodations have been deemed necessary for the student to succeed.

As principals, we are responsible for enacting change on the school level. We must provide assistive technology, put children in the least restrictive environment, work with parents and public school officials, and emphasize staff development (Russo, et. al; 2002) When we couple these actions with prioritizing children with special needs, we turn our schools into places that serve the least of our brothers.

Lastly, superintendents on the diocesan level have a task in this process as well. Diocesan leaders must help coordinate the use of state, federal, private, and diocesan money to help fund special education initiatives and teacher training. This type of action must take place on the diocesan level because “the development and long-range planning abilities of the typical diocese are stronger than those of individual schools or parishes” (Durow, 2007, p. 488).

In Matthew 25 Jesus demands that we serve others. Catholic schools must heed this call and do all they can to serve children with special needs.

Anthony Van Gessel, John Paul II Catholic High School, RLP 9, 2011



Simmons, Warren. Joyous Greek Mosaic Cross.  
<http://www.tooleyglass.com/gallery/CW0029-metal-mosaic-cross.jpg>

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-27. *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (2011).

## *Many Parts, One Body*

Saint Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians to address divisions within the Church in Corinth. The passage from chapter 12 addresses the divisions that arose regarding who should belong to the Church and the relative importance of its members. In his letter, Saint Paul explains the Church's teaching of inclusion of all people.

Through baptism, all Christians are equal and necessary members of the Church. As Saint Paul explains, individuals are given different gifts through the manifestation of the Spirit. The purpose of these gifts is to do God's work in the world. Saint Paul states, "all these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines" (1 Corinthians 12:11). The gifts that each person receives have been "determined" by God, so they should be recognized as equally important. It is the responsibility of the individual to use their gifts for the common good. Although Saint Paul refers to gifts of the mind and spirit, it can be understood that these may be gifts that manifest themselves in other manners. Is it important to note that Saint Paul focuses only on the gifts of the Spirit, not the limitations of the individuals. It is our responsibility to follow this teaching and see past any limitations to focus on the gifts of the individual. Too often individuals with special needs are classified by their limitations, often ignoring or minimizing their gifts. There needs to be a shift to a focus on the gifts of all individuals as they are manifestations of the Spirit.

To help the reader understand the importance of including and valuing all members of the Church, Saint Paul invokes the symbol of the body. Through baptism, all Christians form one body of the Church. Just as the parts of the body are all equally necessary, all the members of the Church are equally necessary for it to be most effective in its mission. When speaking of the different parts of the body, Saint Paul explains that "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Corinthians 12:22-23). Individuals who are disadvantaged or who have special needs or exceptionalities should be given the most care. Saint Paul's teachings on caring for the least are based on the words and actions of Jesus, who was an incredible advocate for the marginalized. Only when all people are cared for, included, and valued are we truly living the mission of our faith.

The necessity of inclusion and the unique manifestations of the Spirit in each individual are vividly present in the symbolism of the mosaic cross. Just as the Church is made up of individuals with different gifts and purposes, a mosaic is formed by individual pieces with unique qualities. All pieces are necessary to form the whole image. Individually, the pieces may be deemed too small or too sharp or worthless scraps, but when put together, they create a beautiful image. The mosaic is improved by variations in the color, size, shape, and textures of the pieces, just as the Church is enriched by the diversity of the believers.

All members of society, and especially those who have been viewed by their limitations, must be included as equal members of the Church. It is only when the gifts of individuals are recognized and valued that we are able to work toward the common good. Just as a mosaic is not complete without all of its pieces, the Church is not complete without the inclusion of all believers.

BY: KATHLEEN DUFFY, ST. AGNES OF BOHEMIA, RLP 9, 2011



<http://blog.adw.org/2009/05/the-good-shepherd-lays-down-his-life-for-his-sheep/>

## **The Good Shepherd**

“Amen, amen I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came [before me] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.”

**John 10: 1-18**

### *Teachers as Shepherds*

Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep. He leads us and does not let us go astray. He protects us from harm sometimes even carries us.

As Catholic leaders, we are called to be shepherds and follow the example Jesus set for us. Our flock is our faculty and staff, parents, and students. We are called to lead them on their journey with Jesus Christ. We are in a position to share with them the Good News and bring Jesus to their lives if He is missing.

When one of our students or staff go “astray”, we are called to be like Jesus and go after them. Sometimes we will have to carry our flock through difficult times.

Our students with exceptionalities are in our flock. If we don’t tend to their needs and guide them, our work is incomplete. We have been called to be teachers. In the words of Mother Teresa, “God doesn’t choose the qualified, He qualifies to chosen.” God will guide us through helping our students. He will qualify us because we have been chosen to teach His children.

Brittany Riesenber, Christ the King Catholic School, RLP 9, 2011



**Artist:** This image is made available by the generous contribution of Pitts Theology Library

**Source:** [http://edharewood.fatcow.com/Life\\_of\\_Jesus\\_Christ/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Juses%20wash%20his%20disciples%20feet.jpg](http://edharewood.fatcow.com/Life_of_Jesus_Christ/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Juses%20wash%20his%20disciples%20feet.jpg)

## Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

<sup>1</sup> Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. <sup>2</sup> It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. <sup>4</sup> So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, <sup>5</sup> and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

<sup>6</sup> When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

<sup>8</sup> "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter exclaimed "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup> For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

<sup>12</sup> After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? <sup>13</sup> You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. <sup>14</sup> And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth; slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

John 13:1-17

### *To Serve Others as Jesus Did*

Jesus said to Peter, “If I washed your feet, I who am ‘teacher’ and ‘Lord’, then you must do the same” (John 13: 13-14). There is however, another side to this story. Dropping on our knees and washing the other people’s feet calls for humility, it also calls for humility to have our feet washed by the person who is in a higher position than we are. This is true in the educational world when teachers serve their students, when administrators serve their faculty and when administrators require the help of the pastor and parish community. Students need to be humble enough to seek help when challenged with a difficult task, teachers need to be humble when being observed and critiqued in the classroom and administrators need to be humble enough to ask for help rather than stand alone.

Offering our feet to be washed means that we are relying on other people, to help us, to assist us, to guide us and to carry us. But, this is not always the case for us. Teachers attempt to have control in every situation. This is an impossible task, as one must rely on community to succeed. The Catholic school is a perfect example of this community; a community that should be educating its students to serve others and to promote social justice.

Our students should be “washing the feet” of those who are suffering, disenfranchised and lonely. Only through service can our students truly receive a Catholic education. Teachers and administrators need to lead by example, showing our students the true model to live in God’s grace; a model of faith in action through service.

The message that Jesus wants to impart on us is to be humble enough, to let God be God, in our lives, and to acknowledge that we just couldn’t do much on our own without the generosity and love of God. Just as the poor rely on the generosity of others, teachers must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we can be living examples of God’s love for his people.

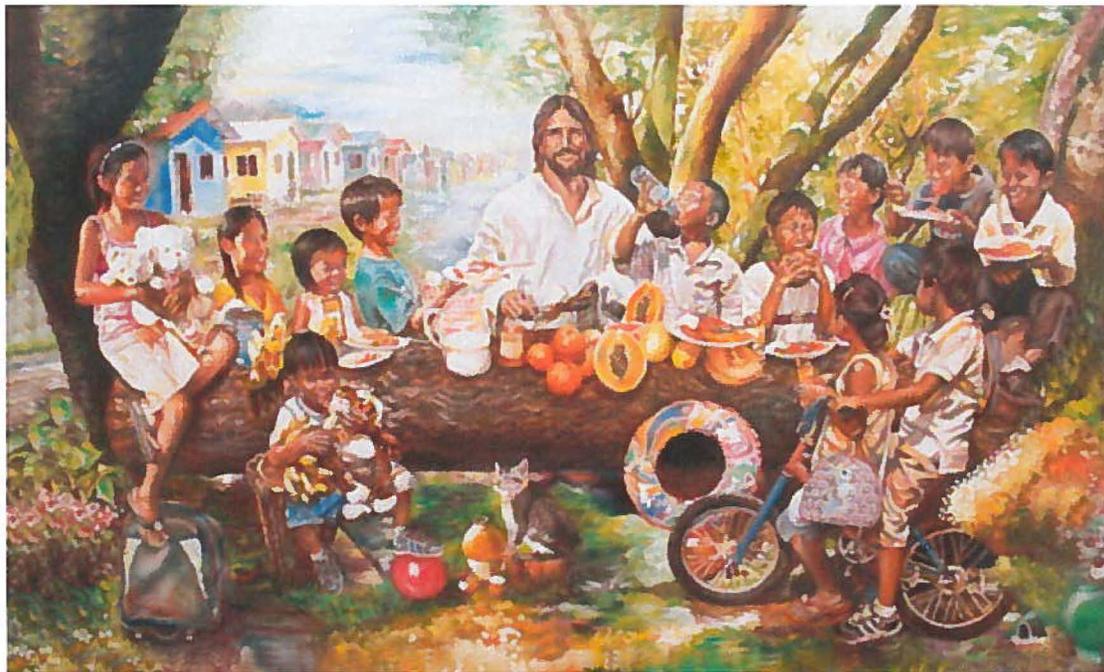
I often wonder what it would have been like to be in the midst of Christ on that Holy Thursday. Knowing that the washing of the feet was a task performed by servants; would I have been uncomfortable when Jesus bent down to wash mine? Sometimes the most difficult tasks in life and in teaching require us to be a little uncomfortable. Whether it is calling a parent when a child misbehaves or fails an exam, seeking the help of a colleague when a lesson just is working in your classroom, or asking someone for forgiveness when you know you have sinned against them. Jesus, in washing the feet of his disciples, showed us how to be a servant of love and generosity, thus we need to emulate him in our daily lives.

Keith Martin  
St. Mary’s College High School  
RLP 9  
2011

***Hapag ng Pag-asa (Table of Hope)***  
Jesus shares his "last supper" with street kids from Manila



***Hapag ng Pag-ibig (Table of Love)***  
Jesus invites the street kids to the great feast



### *The Great Feast*

When Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable.

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher;’ then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Jesus said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

## *All Are Welcome: Hospitality in Catholic Schools*

In many churches throughout the United States, a minister of hospitality will greet people as they arrive for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The sense of welcome and invitation is truly profound, especially as one prepares to worship God together in community. It seems that if we are indeed a *community of disciples* sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in our Catholic schools, the ministry of hospitality to all students should be emphasized and developed as an ordinary part of a school's mission and philosophy of inclusion. In this gospel passage according to Luke, we see Jesus make the connection between welcoming all people and sharing in the great feast that is participation in both the table fellowship and the learning experience.

Thomas Richstatter, OFM, professor of theology at St. Meinrad's Seminary, articulates some basic principles in his article in *America* magazine on "The Ministry of Hospitality" that seem applicable in the Catholic school setting. "Welcoming and hospitality become important whenever we need to do something together... 'Welcome' implies 'I am happy that you have come.' The first impression a visitor receives is extremely important. But hospitality is everybody's ministry" (Richstatter, 2004, p. 12). In Catholic schools, one can practice hospitality in choosing to welcome the exceptional student who looks, thinks, or acts different rather than to marginalize them, try to "fix" the person, or tell them that they have no place in our community. Richstatter continues:

If you wish to invite a guest into your home, you must have space. You have to "make room." To invite others into our hearts and our worship, we must make room for them. The enemy of reverence is not hospitality but arrogance. If we wish to worship in an atmosphere of reverence, we must rid our churches, our congregations and our hearts of any superfluous self-importance, pride and ambition that might be filling up our "guest spaces." We must empty ourselves in order to make room for the other to enter in... Hospitality is not an add-on; for the Christian, it is the bottom line (p. 14).

To be a *community of disciples* that honors human dignity and inclusion in Catholic schools is to be hospitable and welcoming to all who cross our doors, just as we would welcome a guest in our own homes or a guest at our table. The parable of Jesus about the great feast is his great call to inclusion: that the kingdom of God is open to all and that we are called to welcome others in his name and on his behalf. Otherwise we diminish the mission of Catholic schools in the Church, and we neglect the challenge of the Gospel itself.

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Fr. Justin Ross, OFM Conv., St. Francis High School, RLP 9, 2011



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Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:13-14

Matthew 19:13-14 has always been a scriptural passage that has caused me to stop and reflect. When I was young I loved this passage because I remember that it made me feel significant. It was vindicating to a certain degree in that it did not matter if anyone else thought I was too young to be included in a certain activity; Jesus did not feel that way. There is a certain power in being wanted and being included and it provides an individual with a certain level of confidence that is difficult to quantify.

As I got older and became a teacher I often found myself coming back to this passage. One of the reasons that I love the profession of teaching so much is because every year is brand new; a clean slate. To see the world from the point of view of students who are learning your subject matter for the first time is an exciting experience. The “ah ha” moments that you regularly see or the times in which you are finally able to provide the right example to help a student understand are well worth the hours that it takes to get there. I learn from my students all the time and I doubt any other profession allows one to experience so many fresh, curious, insightful points of view on a weekly basis. I would never tell a student that his or her ideas were stupid and I would never make a student feel unwelcome in my class. That being said, there are groups of students that are marginalized and less often likely to receive the benefits of a Catholic school education.

In that spirit, I think this passage encapsulates the Gospel mission of inclusion. The obvious relation is that Jesus is including the children and calling them to be with him even as the Apostles are attempting to send them away. However, if one is to extend the text a bit further, there is a message there for modern educators in Catholic schools. In many cases, especially at the high school level, students with special needs are sent away by those who, like the Apostles, feel they are doing the right thing. The Apostles most likely did not send the children away out of malice or because they did not like children, but because they did not want Jesus to be disturbed or put out while he was teaching. If you fast forward to modern day you find educators and administrators guilty of making of the same mistake. Children with special needs are sent away because there is a fear that the Catholic school cannot serve their needs correctly thus leading to a disruption or failure in the educational process, however, including children with special needs is exactly what this Gospel passage calls us to do.

Out of all of the images that I saw reflecting Matthew 19:13-14, I chose this one because it has a certain warmth and genuine nature that the other pictures did not seem to replicate. There is a sense of belonging on everyone’s face. Jesus is welcoming and the children look at home being by his side. I think this is an important message to reflect on as well for educators. All students should feel welcome and at home in the school community. If students feel neglected or unwelcome true learning is less likely to take place and if certain individuals are not welcome at all, one is left to wonder if the school can truly be considered a Catholic school. For educators, this message of this scriptural passage, as well as this artistic rendering, act as a reminder not to make the same mistake the Apostles made. The Gospel calls educators to include all children in the mission of the Church and as leaders in Catholic schools, those in charge should make sure this call is being answered.

By: Matthew Stepnowsky, St. Edward High School, RLP 9 , 2011



<http://www.biblical-art.com/extra/ownpub/children/194.jpg>

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves."

(Jesus) said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves."

But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here."

Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over --twelve wicker baskets full.

Matthew 14:14-20

### *Feeding the Multiples*

In this image of Jesus feeding the multitudes, I appreciated that the artist depicted Jesus reaching out to the young boy. He reached out to the multitudes and fed them—not just with the bread and fish but with the Word. Jesus rejected the idea that the people should go looking for food somewhere else. He knew there was plenty to go around.

Jesus felt pity for the people when he saw the massive crowd. He felt so moved that he went into action and cured many of them. I feel moved, also, when I see students struggling in their classrooms. I want to cure them. My challenge is finding ways to feed them; Jesus challenged his apostles to find a way to feed the crowd. They showed their faith in Jesus when they took the meager offerings to him. I can imagine how astonished they were when they finished distributing the food and seeing the people were satisfied, there was much left over.

We may not think we have much to offer some of our students with special needs. But I believe if we have faith in Jesus and allow him to work through us, we can reach more people than we can imagine possible. When Jesus saw all the people who had come to him, all with expectations and perhaps with different needs, he knew he had to do something for them. He recognized his responsibility and acted on it. We also have those who come to us with expectations and different needs. I think we have the responsibility to do what we can to feed our hungry. Who knows, we may even have something left over.



## **Acts of the Apostles 4:31-35**

As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook,  
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit  
and continued to speak the word of God  
with boldness.

The community of believers was of one heart and mind,  
and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own,  
but they had everything in common.

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,  
and great favor was accorded them all.

There was no needy person among them,  
for those who owned property or houses would sell them,  
bring the proceeds of the sale,  
and put them at the feet of the apostles,  
and they were distributed to each according to need.

## *Life in Community*

*“The community of believers was of one heart and mind...”*

In Psalm 15, the psalmist asks the question, “who will live with God?” The answer: those who do good to their neighbor, who act honestly, who speak truth, who do not spread lies or rumors. In the prologue to the *Rule*, an early guide for monastic communities, Saint Benedict put his own spin on this formula. The path to holiness, he writes, is living well with others.

Contemporary society seems to be at odds with this axiom. Often we prize the type of individualism that leads to selfishness, and the type of competition that leads to aggression. Certainly we want to get along, but getting along is not the same thing as living well. We want our own desires, our own goals, our own visions, and we will get along with others when they all fall into line with what we want. The only inclusion is that of ourselves and our own desires.

The early Church, gathered together and at prayer, is an example of true community. Their path of holiness was marked by demonstrations of true faith, often in the face of hostility and persecution. Their path of holiness was defined by action, as one body with one voice. Their path of holiness was travelled together, all members in step, all members fully included.

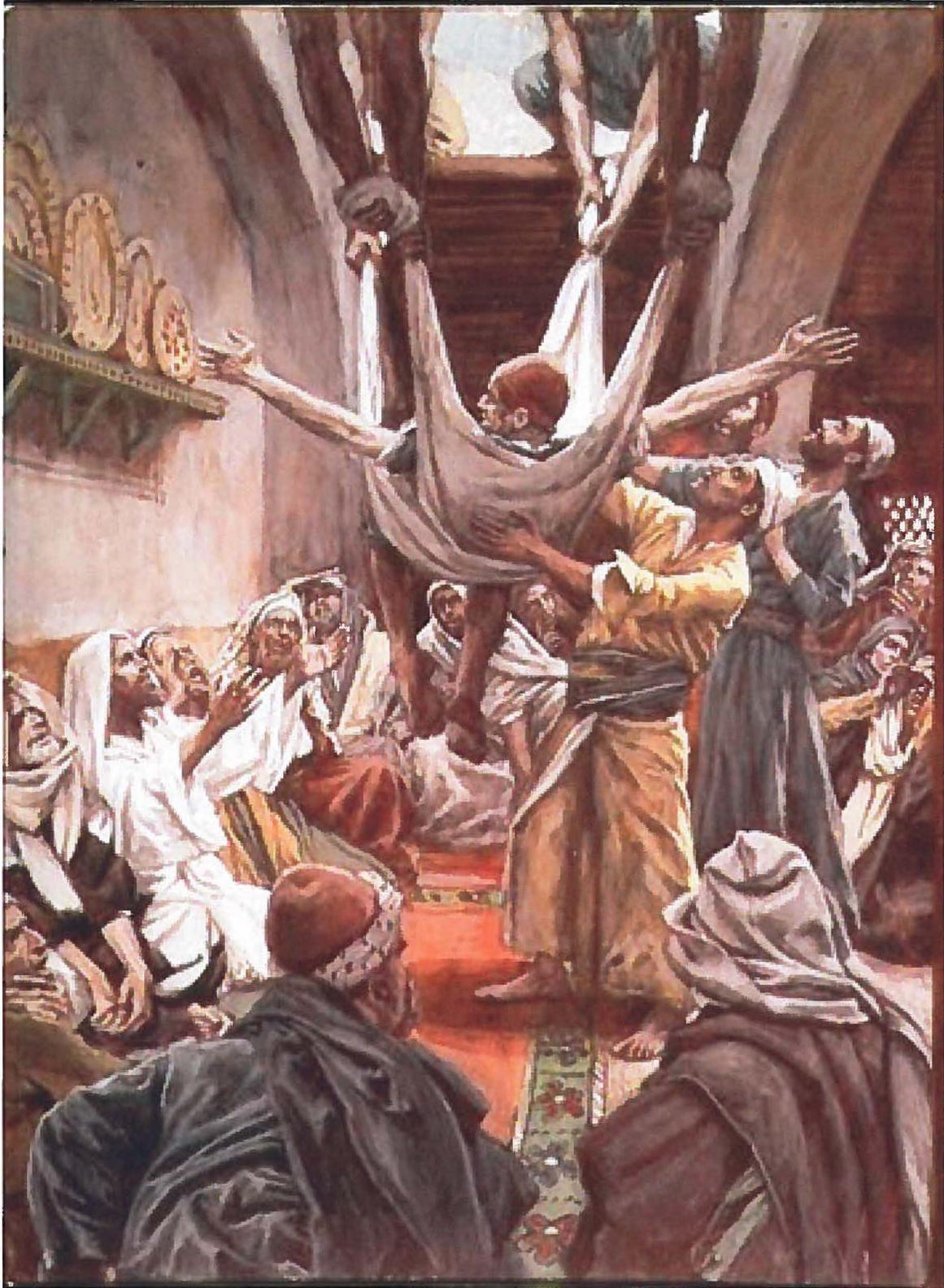
*“There was no needy person among them...”*

Living in community is something that can sound better in practice than it often is in reality. Living with others is difficult. Not simply because there are so many competing thoughts and ideas, but because there is great diversity of need. Each member brings something to the community, gifts and talents in combinations that cannot and will not be found in any other person. But each person also brings a need; an emptiness. Each person needs to be fed and clothed, but each also needs to be loved, each needs to be made to feel welcomed, each needs to be meaningfully employed, each needs to be heard. Each of these things happens differently for each one of us, and often it can seem impossible to fill all of this need.

But the solution to this problem of need is our blessing of talent. The early Church sacrificed individual possessions for the benefit of the community. They sold all they had, fully divested themselves of their valuables, and held all things in common. We are called to do the same. We are called to divest ourselves of our valuables: our talents, our skills, our abilities, our God-given gifts. We are called to lavish these upon those around us, and we are called to receive what others have to offer. Each of us is to give, and each to receive. Each of us is needed.

*“As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook...”*

What happens when we give fully of ourselves, receive fully, and truly live well with one another? Not only do we walk the path toward holiness, but we allow the Holy Spirit to permeate all that we do. We allow ourselves to be the instruments of God’s will, to be the hands and feet and voice of Christ, to be the conduits through which God answers prayer. Foundations are shaken, the earth quakes, the wind roars, and the Spirit of God engulfs all that we do in all-consuming fire of love.



<http://hwministries.net/Heal%20Teach.php>

## Mark 2: 1-12

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. <sup>2</sup> And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup> And they \*came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup> And Jesus seeing their faith \*said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, \*said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He \*said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” <sup>12</sup> And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

### *Do Not Waver*

When they brought the paralytic to Jesus, they did not ask “how could we possibly do that? There is no way in. I am sorry friend, but we cannot help you.” They did not stop at the first roadblock or waiver in their mission to deliver the paralytic. Access to Jesus was limited, they could not go through the door and there was no room inside...They did not waver.

A crowd was gathered outside that prevented them from carrying a full grown man, a man who could not help them in anyway due to his disability, to the one person who could heal and save him...They did not waver.

When they had gained access through a hole in the roof, a hole that they had to create by digging through thick sod and mud, they were not greeted by those admiring their accomplishment, but instead by skeptics and naysayers...They did not waver.

The motives of those carrying that paralytic as well as Jesus' Himself were brought into question...They did not waver.

When they finally reached Jesus, He healed the man they had worked so very hard to deliver. They sought no reward or accolades. Jesus answered the doubtful crowd of hypocrites by taking the more difficult path and choosing to heal the man. Jesus knew that even this act would not quiet the growing criticisms, but...He did not waver.

We, as leaders of Catholic schools and as leaders in Catholic communities can learn much from this. Our paths are not dissimilar to the path of those faithful men in that we will face obstacles, sometimes seemingly insurmountable ones. We will have to call on our faith to get the job done every day during our lives and careers. We will face doubters, many doubters that will question our motives, our intentions, and even our faith. In the face of those challenges we will not waiver. When it seems that there is no way to include all students in our schools, we will find that way. We will be resourceful, even cunning in advocating for those we have been called to serve. We will answer our critics with actions, not words. We will feel alone at times, but we will remember and call on our brothers and sisters who have pledged with us to fight for what is good and right...*We will not waver.*

**Mark Hopkins, St. Mark's Catholic School, RLP 9, 2011**



[www.alldayallnightallball.org/about-special-olympics/](http://www.alldayallnightallball.org/about-special-olympics/)

Special Olympics Indiana  
Tippecanoe County

## Reading

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, "Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed," but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless. To such a person one might say, "You have faith and I have works – is that it?" Show me your faith without works and I will show you the faith that underlies my works!

James 2: 14 – 18

### ***Walking the Walk***

To be Catholic is to be in community. The concept of community is such an intrinsic part of being Catholic that a Catholic person is not fully whole without membership in a community. It is true that the joys in life are amplified because they are shared and the sorrows are reduced because they are born by many, but membership has its responsibilities. A Catholic community, at its best, must be inclusive. Every member is embraced and celebrated for who they are. Every member is supported and helped to grow into becoming the person God meant them to be.

The ideal for a Catholic community is to shun no person. But this ideal isn't always or even often reality. This reading speaks to me because it has become all too easy to not "see" people in our society, all too easy to "walk on by." "It's not my problem". But it is my problem, and yours. We have a sacred obligation to care for one another and to do anything less illustrates the lack of faith in our lives.

I see the answer to the challenge implicit in the reading demonstrated in the photograph. When you attend a Special Olympics, you cannot but help to notice the love for the handicapped children that their adults shower on them; unconditional love from parents, family members, community members and the dedicated volunteers, love that is accepting of who the children are, love that celebrates their triumphs and consoles their losses. It is a resounding and affirming reply to the challenge issued by the reading.

Graham, Notre Dame, RLP 9, 2011



<http://1800sunstar.com/zzC1LUV/zholydays/christmas/jesus-christ-pictures/images-of-jesus-christ-180.jpg>

*Lord,*  
*You welcomed all the children to come unto you.*  
*We are all your children...*  
*The sick*  
*The lonely*  
*The ones who struggle with daily life*  
*The ones who feel left out*  
*The brave*  
*The simple*  
*Help me Lord to embrace all your children*  
*Help me to feel their joy of little things*  
*Help me have their faith in the good of others*  
*To look with anticipation every sunrise*  
*Every flower*  
*Every wave upon the sea*  
*It is in the simple things of life*  
*through the eyes of a child*  
*we see the face of God.*

*By Alesa Smitherman, Little Flower Catholic School, RLP 9, 2011*

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."

Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Mark 10:13-16



Vincent Rodriguez (2009). [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_CISYfrorYVM/SICkoRPIKvI/AAAAAAAAAzs/T3ZHpXuzbOI/s400/Rich\\_Man\\_Poor\\_Woman.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_CISYfrorYVM/SICkoRPIKvI/AAAAAAAAAzs/T3ZHpXuzbOI/s400/Rich_Man_Poor_Woman.jpg)

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

1 John: 3-17

I chose this passage and image because, although in both of these instances the reference is primarily to material goods, they could be reflections of other realities that are evident in human interactions. When I think about disadvantaged and marginalized populations, I think not only of those who have been diagnosed with disorders or those who are living with real disorders that have gone undiagnosed, but also about the inequity in the systems we have created for the accumulation of wealth in the world. All of these systems have within them inherent inequities that discriminate against certain groups, and, generally, the larger population that is able to take advantage of those systems – or just been lucky enough to be born “normal” or white, or relatively wealthy, or raised with two parents and a supportive family...the list goes on – by and large chooses to ignore the “other” rather than helping them. Deciding instead to blame them for their plight. I am reminded here, as I reflect, of the objectivists and the cult of Ayn Rand who espouse the notion that charity is a simple minded and wasteful practice that doesn’t add anything to society because it rewards people for not being successful – never taking into account the reasons for their lack of success! Nevermind that many of these same people espouse the importance of “Christian values” as foundational in America. This thinking seems to have permeated many parts of our social, political, economic, and, yes, educational thinking to such a degree that we often blame the people for their lot instead of looking at the true nature of its cause.

In education, this is embodied in the teacher, administrator, coach, or parent who chalks a student’s inability to perform well in school up to a lack of effort or, worse, stupidity. I recently read an article in response to the film *Waiting for Superman* where a teacher declared that she was not a superhero and could not be expected to differentiate instruction for all learners or even make basic changes in her pedagogy. She thought that the students were simply being coddled too much and that discipline, old school teaching styles, and rigor would solve the problem. Even with all the available research on learning differences and brain functionality, she pointed to the inclusion and differentiated instruction movements as “feel good” education that dumbs down academic rigor for the masses. If education isn’t for the masses, then what is the point of having school available to all in the first place?

If we read the passage above from John and take a broad view of wealth to include the monetary wealth, family, talents, aptitude, and other measures that allow for success it seems obvious that it is our duty to extend a helping hand to those who were not lucky enough to be born into a “wealthy” life. Sitting on a bench and thinking that someone else will help the person next to us, or worse – that the person deserves to be there in the first place – only causes society to regress to barbarism. Avoiding this necessitates helping all those in need in any way we can, only in this way can the future be brighter for us all.

Brendan Keane, Charlotte Catholic High School, RLP9, 2011



Nick Green / Memphis Catholic High School / RLP 9 / 2011  
[http://miatorgau.melbourneitwebsites.com/page/jesus\\_laughing\\_exhibition.html](http://miatorgau.melbourneitwebsites.com/page/jesus_laughing_exhibition.html)  
Soichi Watanabe, *Jesus and Zacchaeus*. Saitama, Japan.

He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.

Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way.

When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."

And he came down quickly and received him with joy.

When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner."

But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over."

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

## Yearning for Acceptance

I chose the story of Zacchaeus because it made me think of many of the students I've taught that simply wanted to be accepted in some way or another.

In the story, Zacchaeus is a tax collector and basically as a result is despised by the others. He is seen as a sinner and an outcast in the community. When Jesus comes to Jericho, Zacchaeus recognizes Jesus to be the Lord and we can see a deep yearning in his heart to know Jesus and see Jesus. Zacchaeus is too short to see over the crowd so he resorts to climbing a tree just to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Of all the people Jesus recognized, he chose Zacchaeus, the least likely of the crowd. The others are surprised and upset that Jesus is going to spend time with this hated man. Zacchaeus is so touched he is willing to do whatever it takes.

Reading this passage, the part that really stood out to me was that while Zacchaeus was not accepted in his own community, Jesus saw the yearning and goodness in him and accepted him for who he really was. As a principal in Catholic schools, we are called to invite all into our community and do everything we can to serve them. So often, students with special needs are viewed as being extremely different and often made to feel like outsiders, like they do not belong with the rest. However, there is this same kind of yearning for acceptance deep within them that comes out in unexpected ways. Zacchaeus climbs a tree, our students may act out or shut down or who knows. The point is, the longing they feel for acceptance and to belong can come out in any way. We, as Catholic school leaders, are called to recognize this longing much like Jesus did. We are called to invite these students into our community with open arms.

The artwork I chose to go with this passage struck me as being quite different. The first thing that struck me was the light shining from Zacchaeus in the tree. Typically the light in religious paintings surround Jesus or saints, but here its shining from the sinner. Jesus is still featured prominently, dressed in all white. Still, it's the light beaming from Zacchaeus and the red light shining from his heart that makes the work pop. To me, it's just another reminder that all of our students, no matter what special aspects of learning and behavior they bring to the table, have God's light shining in them as well.



*Mystical Supper Icon*  
Anonymous Artist  
[http://cacina.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/mystical\\_supper.jpg](http://cacina.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/mystical_supper.jpg)

Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14: 12 – 14 New American Bible

## *All Are Welcome*

In Luke's Gospel there are many instances where Jesus teaches on the concept of inclusion. However, one instance in which Jesus is explicit in his desire for inclusion is in Luke 14: 12-14. Here Jesus makes plain the fact that those people who are most isolated, the people who are most despised (in Jesus' time) be invited to the table for the sharing of a meal. And, while Jesus literally means a meal, it is also a figurative lesson for more general inclusion of those most marginalized by society as well.

This passage also reminds us that if we are truly to act as Jesus did, to give and not count the cost, we must be inclusive of those most ostracized by the world. Jesus specifically names the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. However, there are many others who feel isolated from society in today's world for a variety of different reasons. The inclusion of those on the fringes of society, for whatever reason, are human beings deserving of our love and respect, and to include them is to strive to be more Christ-like in our actions.

Being welcoming and hospitable is not a difficult thing to do. To share a meal with someone who is in some way feeling like he or she doesn't belong goes a long way in evangelizing Christ's mission on earth and bringing us into greater unity with God's plan for us to treat one another like we would like to be treated. Too often we miss opportunities to do as Jesus asks in this Gospel passage when we fail to be inclusive in our words and actions. If we are to work for inclusion we must be willing to extend the invitation to others to engage in community and relationship.

The Icon of the Mystic Supper, while created anonymously, is an image that illustrates the idea of inclusion and community. Looking at the people in the icon, it is easy to see that the figures featured are engaging with one another. This is an important aspect of inclusion, as it is not simply enough to invite people into community. Rather, inclusion requires that people not only be invited into community, but then actively be engaged as new members of a community on a consistent and on-going basis. The icon features people in seemingly various conversations that indicate an active inclusion into this community.

Additionally, the icon also features people reaching across one another or closely seated in proximity to one another. This physical proximity demonstrates a certain level of comfort within the community, which is another important aspect of inclusion. For people to be fully included and to feel comfortable being active members of a community, a certain amount of familiarity must exist. Familiarity is created through interactions and conversations, and over time this leads to trust and a feeling of security. Inclusion is at its best when it is properly aided by conversations and comfort within a community, allowing members to feel valued and respected within the group.

Finally, the Icon of the Mystic Supper is an icon referencing the Last Supper. In one of Jesus' final acts before his crucifixion, he engaged in a meal, with his friends who prior to their following Jesus were some of the marginalized and some of the ostracized. Jesus modeled inclusion even in this act, and therefore this icon illustrates why we too must be inclusive.

Kristin Kuzmanich, Bishop Blanchet High School, RLP 9, 2011



“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”

## *Unity of Spirit*

Each of us has a unique call from God to be exactly who we are meant to be. No two human souls are or ever will be the same. We are called to live lives of holiness and to be vessels of grace to all that we meet. God didn't pick and choose who would be called, we are *all* called to live this life of unity of the Spirit. We must choose to act in a way that is worthy of this calling. It must guide our every thought, action, deed and interaction.

We are all connected, unified by the Spirit. As we share one faith, one God and Father, we must always remember that God resides in each of us. Each person we meet, whether they are just like us or as different as can be, is a reflection of the image of God. If we approach our calling through the lens of unification of the Spirit, we can begin to see exceptionalities not as hindrances or challenges but as opportunities for each of us to learn from our brothers and sisters in Christ and to see a greater view of the image of God.

The bible passage from Ephesians places great responsibility on us to respond to God's call. God works through everyone...a frustrating co-worker, an annoying sibling, a defiant child and even angry drivers. We must never lose sight of our duty to be patient and tolerant, witnessing through God's love of all His children. Jesus accepted lepers, paralytics and sinners, setting the example after which we are to model our lives. As we are bonded to others we are also bonded to Christ, sharing our joys, struggles and suffering with him. Paul mentions being a 'prisoner of the Lord'. We can view that as being held against our will or as being so captivated by Christ, our will is so closely unified to His, that we are motivated to use the gifts He has given us to build up and serve the greater Body of Christ. We must use love as the method with which we support the body and do the work intended for us through our calling.

The artwork beautifully depicts this unity of the Spirit. The symbol of the Spirit, the dove, is above all, shining on and connecting the people of God. Standing in the waters of our one baptism, we are united by our one faith and the one God who is over all and in all.



Madonna of the Magnificat by Botticelli, 1485  
<http://www.alcocoden.com/Sandro/Madonna-of-the-Magnificat-pre.jpg>

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Luke 1: 46-55

## My Reflections

Mary is the perfect example of a humility, love, and devotion; Luke's Gospel provides me a beautiful prayer to Mary, The Magnificat. Mary accepted God's plan for her and allowed Him to work through and with her. Her kindness, willingness, and patience are all qualities to imitate. It is by Mary's example that I can devote myself to helping those students with exceptionalities.

Students with exceptionalities are just as important as every other student in the classroom, and they deserve the same quality of care that others do. As I reflect on the scripture, the word that resonates with me the most is the word holy. We are all called to holiness. This is especially related to the students with exceptionalities. The holiness and innocence that these individuals possess is an asset to any classroom. As a teacher, I must nurture this holiness in all students. This holiness is the link that connects each of us to each other. We all have different gifts to offer, and we all have holiness. This is the unifying gifts across all levels.

The next line that I think is relevant to teachers of exceptional student is "lifted up the lowly." God is merciful, therefore, I should show mercy, too. In this sense, mercy is not just forgiving, but also showing compassion and care for others. I must not pity students, but rather empower them so that they can be successful and contribute to society. I think that this success can come in many forms; I must be open to see and find the little successes of each day rather than just measure success as a score on a test.

The Magnificat is a reminder of how powerful God can be if I allow Him to work through me. I should protect all of God's children and provide them with an opportunity to know and love God in a meaningful way.

Mary had a deep love for Jesus. Her devotion to him as his mother serves as an example to all teachers. I think that by loving all of God's children in this unconditional manner, God's kingdom will be present for all to see and experience. This is essential for all children. All children regardless of race, gender, age, and learning ability deserve to learn in a loving environment, surrounded by teachers dedicated to serving them and meeting their needs.



(Unknown, <http://katehobbs.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/dirty-hands.jpg>)

### **The Parable of the Sower Explained**

<sup>11</sup> “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup> Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. <sup>14</sup> The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. <sup>15</sup> But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Luke 8: 11-15, New American Standard Bible)

### *Even Good Soil Stains*

Sometimes, when we think of successful educational leadership we turn to this scripture verse from the Gospel of Luke. We like to think that our staff is sowing seeds of truth, of faith, and of justice, and that our student are the different types of soil.

The student that is always in the principal's office is the path, where all too often our teaching never takes root. Our students that always seem to have side conversations, but can answer a question or two, they are our rocky soil. They have some roots but only shallow ones. Those academically "average" students, well, we have such high hopes for them. Alas, they are among thorns and our teaching is choked out by the necessity to be cool. Leaving us with our "A" students, surely they represent our good soil, so bright, so articulate, and are able to reply to our questions whenever we call on them.

To some we can just stop here, yes, our "A" students are our good soil. Academically, their grades prove that our staff has done their jobs. But take a look at your hands, are they dirty? Did you scrap you knuckles trying to pick up the student who has fallen behind due to emotional distress? Are your hands stained with the hours of extra help and the countless corrections in the margins for the student who is unable to write a coherent sentence, due to a learn disability? Are they muddied from shaping and reshaping the earth, our classroom, to meet the needs of the student, who requires physical accommodations?

Remember, the good soil receives the Word with a good and honest heart, when we apply this to our student populations, let us not forget our students with learning needs. They are honest with their limitations, and they are good because they are made in the image and likeness of God. Even good soil stains the hand of the one sowing the seed.

Ryan P Hinton, East Catholic High School, RLP 9, 2011

# Creating a Universally Designed Ministry

## Applying the Universal Design Concept to Ministry

Chapter One, Section B, describes ways to create an access plan utilizing the principles of universal design. Ron Mace, identified by many as the creator of the concept of universal design, defines it as “an approach to design that incorporates products as well as building features and elements which, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by everyone.”<sup>1</sup> *Universal* is defined as “of, for, affecting, or including all or the whole of something specified; not limited or restricted; highly adaptable.” *Design* is defined as “to plan and carry out in a skillful way; to form in the mind, contrive; a thing planned or an outcome aimed at; a working out by plan, or development according to a plan.”<sup>2</sup>

Design is a key element of this concept. As defined above, to design is to plan. The importance of thoughtful and careful planning for any ministry cannot be overemphasized. Planning should likewise be approached with creativity and openness to new visions and possibilities. The following questions can initiate the planning process toward a universally designed ministry:

- What does it mean to create a church community open to all?
- How was Jesus accessible to his followers? How can we share the Good News today?
- How can accessibility features benefit the whole community?
  - an adjustable ambo can be used by a person of short stature, a child, or one who uses a wheelchair;
  - a pew cut benefits a person who uses a wheelchair or crutches or who has a broken leg;
  - accessible meeting space and such accommodations as braille agendas and sign language interpreters allow for full and meaningful participation by colleagues with disabilities;
  - large print materials are enjoyed by elderly parishioners, other people with visual impairment and learning disabilities;
  - a good sound system is appreciated by all.
- What diocesan office or parish ministry could benefit from knowledge of disability?
  - Buildings and Grounds;

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<sup>1</sup> *Housing For The Lifespan of All People*, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, 1988, reprinted in 1994 by the Center for Accessible Housing, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary*, Third College Edition, Webster's New World Dictionaries, Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1988.

- Worship;
- Faith Formation;
- Education;
- Pro-life (to name but a few).

The principle of universal design is highly effective in creating accessible environments. It is equally applicable to the design of a ministry which is inclusive and welcoming to all people. A universally designed ministry moves away from “special” and “separate,” rather creating a church community in which all members interact and participate in the various elements of a life of faith. The following statement, made by architect and gerontologist, Edward Steinfeld, D.Arch., in relation to building access, likewise applies to ministry:

Specifying different features for different groups of people will always cost more and require massive coordination and selective judgment about who should be accommodated and where. All of these impossible issues are eliminated by the universal design concept.<sup>3</sup>

The trends in recent years of diminishing fiscal resources, downsizing of personnel and programs, and diocesan restructurings all support a move toward designing disability ministry on the diocesan and parish level in such a way as to make it more inclusive and universal. That is, once it is recognized and accepted that functional limitations are a normal and expected part of the living process, such awareness should be infused into all aspects of the life of a community of faith. Thus, disability ministry is a concern to be addressed by national, diocesan and parish personnel in their respective offices, ministries or committees, rather than by a few caring persons. In their 1978 *Pastoral Statement*, the U.S. bishops utilized this principle when they mandated of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) that “each office and secretariat, as it develops its plans and programs, address the concerns of individuals with disabilities.”<sup>4</sup>

On a national level, the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) offers counsel and resources on disability issues to, and places disability on the agendas of, the NCCB and USCC, as well as other national Catholic organizations whose mission affects the lives of people with disabilities. NCPD works to infuse

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<sup>3</sup> *Housing For The Lifespan of All People*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops (hereafter NCCB), *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1989), par. 32. The original version of this *Pastoral Statement*, published November 16, 1978, was revised in 1989 to update language used in referring to people with disabilities.

disability concerns and language into national level Church documents, and offers resources and training to personnel on the diocesan level.

The same strategy is effective on diocesan and parish levels. Within this schema, the director or consultant of disability ministry (hereafter referred to as “the director”) serves as a consultant and facilitator to diocesan and parish personnel, rather than solely as a provider of direct services. Likewise the person assigned on a parish level to oversee this ministry, whether a parish advocate, parish council member or member of a disability concerns committee (hereafter referred to as “parish advocate”), would offer counsel and resources to parish staff and committees. Detailed information on conducting ministry at the diocesan and parish levels is offered throughout this section.

### **Mission of a Universally Designed Ministry**

The mission of this ministry, whether conducted on a national, diocesan, or parish level, is to facilitate the implementation of the *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities* which calls for “realizing the unique gifts individuals with disabilities have to offer the Church...[and] the need for their integration into the Christian community and their fuller participation in its life.” (par. 1)

The remainder of this section describes the ways in which to accomplish this mission by outlining the foundational principles of this ministry, as well as the essential components, priorities, goals and objectives, and ministry models of a universally designed ministry on both diocesan and parish levels.

### **Foundational Principles of a Universally Designed Ministry**

#### **•Is Christ-centered, and fits within the mission and ministerial scope of the diocese.**

Christ, who reached out to all people in love and compassion, is at the heart of this ministry. The bishops, in their 1978 *Pastoral Statement*, remind us that, “Concern for people with disabilities was one of the prominent notes of Jesus' earthly ministry....The Church that Jesus founded would surely have been derelict had it failed to respond to His example in its attention to people with disabilities.” (paragraphs 4 and 5)

In addition to being Christ-centered, it is essential that any diocesan ministry be sanctioned by the bishop and conform to the diocesan mission and goals. Parish ministry would likewise be sanctioned by the pastor and conform to the parish mission and goals.

**•Has a broad vision in its coordination and planning.**

Planning for a universally designed ministry encompasses looking at all the possibilities of creating a mosaic of participation by Catholics with disabilities in all facets of the life of the Church. Care must be taken to avoid traditional models or narrow perspectives which tend to isolate people in special programs.

Planning involves this visioning process, combined with setting of priorities, goals and objectives, described in detail later in this section. Planning should be ongoing and systematic, with regularly scheduled evaluations, review, and modifications.

**•Recognizes and values the dignity and uniqueness of each individual.**

In a 1992 address, the Holy Father reminded us that: “Every human person, as international legislation clearly recognizes, is the subject of fundamental rights which are inalienable, inviolable, and indivisible. Every human being is always worthy of maximum respect and has the right to express his or her dignity as a person fully.”<sup>5</sup> This ministry respects and honors the gift of life bestowed upon each of us by our loving God.

**•Fully includes people with disabilities in the life of the Community of Faith.**

As outlined in the mission statement, this ministry is inclusive, calling for people with disabilities to participate fully in the faith community. Rather than advocating separate programs, the director or parish advocate follows Christ's example of welcome and the mandates of the U.S. bishops, who stated, “There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that serves a single shepherd.” (par. 33) The director provides resources and consultations to all areas of the church to assist in calling forth Catholics with disabilities to full membership and participation. Working within the parish, the parish advocate offers advice and resources to the pastor and other priests, parish council, school staff, committee chairs and members, and others in leadership within the parish.

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<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II, “The Disabled Have the Right To Be Accepted into Society and To Assume Responsibility for Their Own Lives,” *Dolentium Hominum: Journal of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers*, No. 22, (1993; 8th year, no. 1): 8.

**•Calls each person forth to share in and contribute to the celebrations and obligations of the faith.**

By virtue of baptism, each person is a vital member of the Body of Christ, and is called to contribute to the building up of the this Body. *The Code of Canon Law* addresses this responsibility of the Christian faithful: "...those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one."<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the U.S. bishops, in their 1978 *Pastoral Statement* urge that people with disabilities be supported in living out their Christian responsibility to serve the community: "Full participation in the Christian community has another important aspect that must not be overlooked. When we think of people with disabilities in relation to ministry, we tend automatically to think of doing something for them. We do not reflect that they can do something for us and with us...Moreover, they have the same duty as all members of the community to do the Lord's work in the world, according to their God-given talents and capacity." (par. 17)

**•Acknowledges disability and functional limitations as a common and prevalent part of the living process.**

In recent years a shifting paradigm has replaced the medical model which sees those with impairments as patients whose needs must be met in special ways, with a political socioeconomic alternative which conceptualizes the environment and attitudes as the handicapping factors. A new definition asserts that disabilities are the normal and anticipated outcome of the risks, strains, and stresses of the living process itself, occurring *in utero*, at the moment of birth, or at any stage along the life cycle. Therefore, the condition ceases to be merely an individual tragedy and becomes an expectation within any community.

A 1991 Louis Harris and Associates survey indicates that one family in three has a member with a disability.<sup>7</sup> Based on these surveys, NCPD estimates that ten million Catholics in the United States have a functional limitation. In any given parish or diocese, it can be expected that 15-20% of the Catholic population has a disability significant enough to warrant accommodations to increase the

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<sup>6</sup> James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel, eds., *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) canon 204.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Harris and Associates, *Statistical Report: Public Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities* (New York: Louis Harris and Associates, 1991).

individual's ability to participate more fully. In addition, aging individuals who may not report themselves as having a disability often experience diminished mobility, vision, hearing, and mental capacities.

People with disabilities are a part of every demographic classification, although they are often clustered at the outer margins of any particular category: the poorest of those in economic distress; the most unschooled of the inadequately educated, and the most commonly unemployed. Disabling conditions can add one more barrier to overcome for those already members of a minority. However, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* defines those with disabilities as the newest and largest minority in its own right.

**•Identifies human vulnerability as a catalyst in bringing people together and renewing the community.**

The presence of a disability is a normal part of the living process, which in no way diminishes the dignity or value of an individual. In fact, vulnerability may be seen as the catalyst which brings us into community and Church with renewed recognition of our need for each other and our Lord. It is the acknowledgment of this interdependency that weaves the threads of our society and Church together. Even the most severely disabled person is capable of teaching the important lessons of love.

**•Does not generalize about disabilities, recognizing every person's experience of disability, skills, and coping mechanisms as unique.**

Often people with disabling conditions are grouped according to their disability, with no recognition of their individual skills and abilities. The uniqueness of each person should be respected. People should be treated as individuals and given the opportunity to speak for themselves and explain their needs, rather than be defined, categorized, and clustered by their disability.

In 1993, the American Association on Mental Retardation issued a new definition of mental retardation to provide a clearer, more practical approach to diagnosis and habilitation, and to redirect the assumption of mental retardation as an absolute trait to that of a condition which can be improved with the right supports. This important shift in emphasis can and should be applied to any disabling condition, recognizing that appropriate supports lessen many of the limitations faced by individuals.

**•Appreciates accessibility features and inclusion as of mutual benefit to the entire community.**

*Opening Doors, Chapter Two, Sect. A.1.*

It has been noted that what is a necessity for one, is a convenience for many. As physical access is becoming the norm in our society, the entire community is benefiting from such accommodations as curb cuts, ramps, widened doors, increased lighting, and improved sound systems.

Ron Mace explains the advantage to society of universal design, "My whole philosophy has been to get away from those labels like 'special' and 'aging' and 'barrier free.' If universal design elements were simply made part of all building codes, it would benefit everyone."<sup>8</sup>

**•Is open to change and growth.**

Everyone in ministry should expect to grow, and be stretched, challenged and changed. As anyone who has been in ministry for any length of time knows:

- definitions change
- expectations change
- perceptions change
- perspectives change
- policies change
- situations change
- needs change
- skills change
- responsibilities change
- structures change.

To be successful in building an inclusive and welcoming community of faith, personnel at both the diocesan and parish levels need to be willing to respond to such changes with creativity, ingenuity, and flexibility. Ongoing education and other efforts should be made to keep abreast of current initiatives and thinking in order to maintain relevance.

*This resource may be reprinted provided you credit the source:  
Opening Doors, National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities*

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Mary, "Universal Man," *Mainstream*, Mainstream, Inc.: Washington, D.C., August, 1994, p. 18.

## **Studies on Inclusion's Effects on Non-disabled Kids:**

- **[Inclusion and the Other Kids: Here's what Research Shows so Far about Inclusion's Effect in Nondisabled Students](#)**

Since the entire doc from the [US DOE's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services](#) (OSERS) dept's [National Institute of Urban School Improvement](#) program is devoted to nondisabled kids, the whole thing is more or less a quote but here are a few from the first page:

- "these studies have shown no slowdown in nondisabled children's learning in inclusive classrooms."
- "The researchers compared the amounts of instructional time and found that the presence of students with severe disabilities had no effect. And, time lost to interruptions wasn't significantly different either."

- **[Toward Inclusion of Special Education Students in General Education](#)**

This document is more of a technical study from the journal [Remedial and Special Education](#) and it contains a little more jargon than some might like but since it was written by educators for educators, we wanted to include it. It seems to be a balanced view of the subject and presents the details. Here are quotes from pages 84-85 and 89-90 (the doc retained the page numbers from the original journal):

- "The most striking finding was that three of the four elementary schools made a noticeable improvement in average student scores over a period of 4 years... These data provide evidence that the presence of students with disabilities in the general education program had not been deleterious to the test performance of the general education students. This finding was further substantiated by the general impressions of the teachers when interviewed."
- "Across the four secondary schools, the majority of respondents (58%) reported that the other students in the general education classroom remained unaffected by the presence of students with disabilities in their class. About a quarter (24%) thought that the other students improved across the seven variables... The most striking finding was that with one exception, each school made noticeable improvement in average student statewide test scores over a period of 4 years (with built-in controls for test-retest validity)."

- **[Educating Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms: A summary of the Research](#)**

This article from the University of Oregon has an extensive bibliography. Here are some quotes from page 7:

- "The fear that inclusion may result in a watered down curriculum for students without disabilities, or that less time will be devoted to learning, is not borne out by the research. None of the studies examining outcomes for students without

- disabilities has found any negative impact for students who are not identified as having disabilities."
- "Standardized test and report card measures used to determine impact revealed no significant negative academic or behavioral effects on classmates who were educated in classes with students with disabilities ..."

- **[What is the Impact of Inclusion on Students and Staff in the Middle School Setting](#)**

This is a kind of information brochure for school staff written by the [National Middle School Association](#). Here are a couple of quotes from page 3:

- "...the inclusion of special students created a caring and accepting community of learners as well as improved student learning for non-disabled peers."
- "... the presence of students with severe disabilities had no effect on levels of allocated or engaged time. They also reported that time lost to interruptions of instruction was not significantly different between inclusive and non-inclusive classrooms."

- **[An Inclusive Talkback: Critic's Concerns and Advocate's Responses](#)**

This document from the City University of New York's [National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion](#) is a kind of Q&A format where key criticisms of inclusion are addressed one by one.

- "In none of the four 'full inclusion' circuit court decisions did the courts find that there were harmful effects for the general education students' education. ... the court described the 'reciprocal benefits of inclusion to the nondisabled students in the class.'"

- **[Still Separate and Unequal](#)**

This document is from the [New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities](#) and is a follow up from a similar document produced 10 years earlier. Quoting from page 9:

- "The presence of students with disabilities in general education classrooms stimulates learning experiences and activities that could not occur in a classroom that does not contain students with disabilities."
- "Students without disabilities demonstrate consistent academic gains when educated alongside students with disabilities and do not show evidence of any negative impact from inclusion."
- "Studies indicate no difference in academic engagement rates between classrooms with and without students with disabilities, suggesting no negative impact on instructional opportunities."

Below are some documents from the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database. ERIC is sponsored by the [US DOE's Institute of Educational Services](#). Only a

short abstract is online for these articles at [www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov) but if you enter the document ID into the [ERIC web page's search engine](#), you can pull up a little more information. Also, if you follow the links to the journal web pages, some of the articles may be available for a fee.

- **The Effect of Inclusion on Nondisabled Children: A review of the Research**

Journal: [Contemporary Education](#)

Eric ID: EJ556298

Abstract:

Research indicates that inclusive education promotes and enhances all students' social growth within inclusive classrooms and does not negatively affect typical students' academic growth. Studies also show that the presence of students with severe disabilities in regular classrooms does not affect teachers' levels of allocated or engaged time. Six potential benefits of inclusion are examined.

- **Effects of Inclusion on the Academic Performance of Classmates without Disabilities: A Preliminary Study**

Journal: [Remedial and Special Education](#)

Eric ID: EJ491015

Abstract:

Academic performance differences between 35 general education students, educated in an environment that included 5 students with mental handicaps or emotional disorder, and 108 general education students in noninclusive environments were compared. Results revealed no significant differences between the two groups in reading, language arts, mathematics, conduct, and effort.

- **Use of Instructional Time in Classrooms Serving Students with and without Severe Disabilities**

Journal: [Exceptional Children](#)

Eric ID: EJ494818

Abstract:

This study of 6 students with severe disabilities and 12 without disabilities in an inclusive elementary school found that both groups evidenced comparable levels of engaged time in general education classrooms. The quantity of time actually used for instruction was unaffected by the presence of students with severe disabilities

*Prepared by Pat Heffernan*