



CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

*Guidelines for the Celebration of the
Sacraments with People with Disability*



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

These guidelines have been published by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference under the guidance of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life with the assistance of the Australian Catholic Disability Council.

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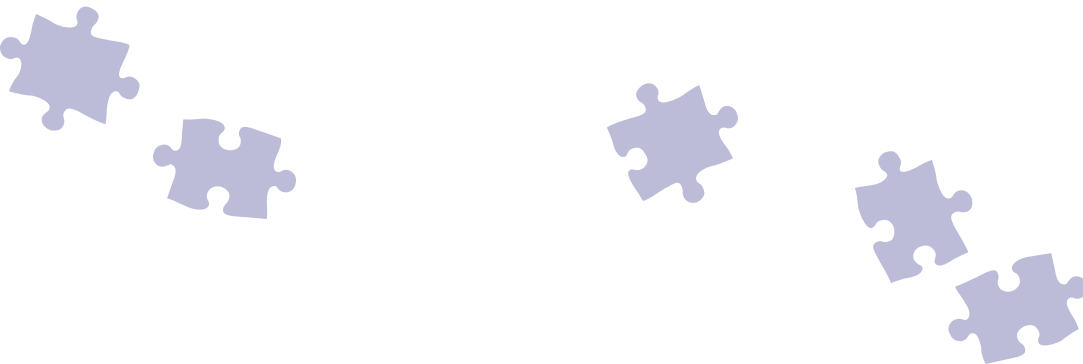
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ISBN 978-1-925508-01-7



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DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS,

The family is where we begin our journey through life. We learn to love, to celebrate, to forgive, to share joys and support each other. Families have their own unique celebrations and rituals that are rich in storytelling and traditions. Celebrations and rituals add to the life and substance of the family, they build bonds and deepen relationships.

The same is true for our journey in faith. Families are the place where we learn about Jesus Christ through stories from scripture, experiencing the liturgical cycle and sacramental life through community, symbols and rituals. It is through our family's example and teaching that we learn about Jesus Christ. The next place of learning, alongside the family, is the parish where catechists and the Catholic school assist and provide support in the ongoing faith formation of the child and family. An essential part of this faith formation is preparation for and celebration of the sacraments.

We have addressed this document to families, clergy and parish leaders. It offers guidance to parishes on sacramental preparation and celebration for people with disability and for their families and carers.

We are called to be inclusive parishes that warmly welcome and acknowledge people with disability and their families on the journey of faith. Let us become communities where the presence of Jesus Christ is recognised in everyone, where we can all participate and journey together in the rich life of our Church.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



Bishop Terence J Brady DD
Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney
Chairman, Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

PREFACE



Jesus loved to celebrate. An invitation from Jesus to any celebration was a call to healing, wholeness, hope and life in him.


Jesus invited everyone to his celebrations. There were no exclusions and, in fact, Jesus sought out people living on the margins of their community to celebrate with Him. It was through these invitations that Jesus welcomed people back to the centre of their communities. Jesus welcomed, celebrated and recognised the value and dignity of every person. He left out no one.

Jesus calls us to build communities where we exclude no one and welcome everyone, especially in the celebrations of the sacraments. As the body of Christ and through our baptismal promises, the Church commissions us to invite and welcome all people to our faith communities.

The journey of faith into the Church community can start from many different places. People with disability and their families and friends are no different.

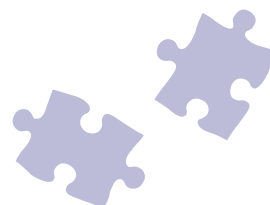
The Church calls parishes to be places that encourage and demonstrate sensitivity to the circumstances in which people find themselves. They can be places where parishes practise flexibility, love and respect so that people with disability, their families and friends might feel welcomed and invited to explore and grow in a deeper relationship with God through the sacraments.

These guidelines explore the many ways in which parents, friends, parish and school can work together to ensure that people with disability have an opportunity to learn about and celebrate the sacraments, and then grow more deeply in their knowledge and love of Jesus. This, in turn, will give people with disability the freedom and knowledge to go out and invite others to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.



Being the only person (teenager) who attends church, my Mum mainly leaves me in the car (doors locked windows down). She parks very close, so I can hear the music, which I really enjoy. There is no ramp at our church.

PURPOSE



We have developed these guidelines to address many of the concerns raised by clergy, pastoral ministers, other concerned Catholics, people with disability, their advocates and their families for greater consistency in pastoral practice in the celebration of the sacraments throughout Australia. The guidelines draw upon the Church's ritual books, its law, and its experience in ministering to or with people with disability. The purpose of these guidelines is to dispel misunderstandings that may impede sound pastoral practice in the celebration of the sacraments. We hope that these guidelines will complement and enhance diocesan policies already in place.

This document is a further contribution to the efforts of the Catholic Church to advocate for ministry to and with people with disability. The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life prepared this document with the advice and assistance of the Australian Catholic Disability Council in response to requests for further clarification and guidance about the means for providing fuller access to the sacraments by people with disability.

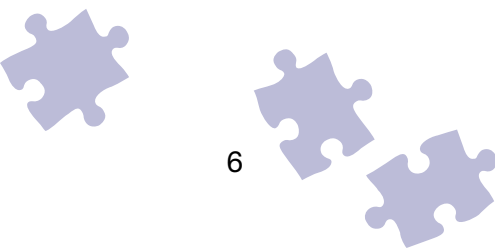
My good news story is that since I've been going to my church meetings I've learned about Jesus and I know He loves me all the time.

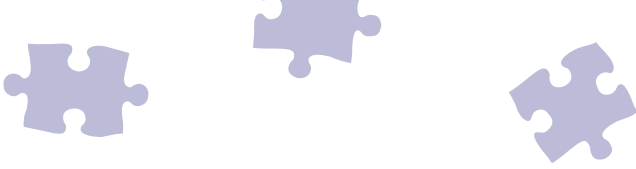
KEY PRINCIPLES



The key principles of these guidelines are:

- Celebration and reception of the sacraments for all
- Full participation of people with disability and their families in the life of the Church in Australia
- Access into and within Church buildings
- Adaptation of programmes
- Attitudinal change and dispelling myths and misconceptions about disability





Our hopes for our child with a disability are no different to those we have for our other children. We want him to be included, to be nourished, and to be valued as a person. Because of the disability the parish may not be able to approach everything with a “one size fits all” mentality. Rather, some aspects may need to be refined in such a way that extra training and support should be available. Sacramental programs may need to be reviewed for people with disabilities to make it easier for them to understand but not to be segregated from the wider group. Children with disabilities often have a smaller social contact group. If fully included in Youth activities, music groups, liturgies, and celebrations of the sacraments then socially as well as spiritually the child with disability will grow in this community.

VISION

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

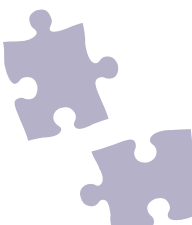
Baptism is our formal welcome to the Christian community and the parish is our immediate community of faith. Therefore, it is vital that our parishes enable the participation of all, including those with disability and their families, and it is the responsibility of the priest and parish leaders to ensure the door is always open. All parishes welcome and accept people with disability, their families and friends into their sacramental preparation programmes so that all people celebrate the sacraments at the appropriate time.

We are all called to divine holiness and friendship in God through Jesus Christ.

Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community.

*“Christ’s faithful have the right to be assisted by their Pastors from the spiritual riches of the Church, especially by the word of God and the sacraments.”
(Canon 213)*

*Ministers cannot refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.
(Cf. Canon 843, sect. 1)*



Pastoral Councils should be making sure that any person in the parish should, if they wish, become a full member of the parish, participating in the life of the parish to the best of their ability. Making sure the sacraments are readily available and encouraging parents to present the young to receive the sacraments and that priests be accepting of their disabilities.

PASTORAL REALITIES

Catholics with disability, as well as those who minister to or with them, often point out that pastoral practice with regard to the celebration of the sacraments varies greatly from diocese to diocese, even from parish to parish. Inconsistencies arise in such areas as:

- the accessibility of church facilities for people with physical disability
- the availability of catechetical programmes for people with developmental delay, intellectual disability and autism
- the provision of sign language interpreters for persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Our daughter has only received Baptism. We would hope that in the near future it may be possible for her to be confirmed in a private ceremony.

The inconsistencies in pastoral practice often arise from distinct yet overlapping causes. Some of these are:

- Misunderstanding about the nature of disability
- Uncertainty about the appropriate application of Church law towards people with disability
- Fears and myths about disability
- The result of a studied and honest acceptance of the realistic limitations of a parish's or diocese's available resources

Parishes are summoned to be communities that gladly welcome people with disability and their families, recognising in all the presence of Christ, empowering all to evangelise and tell their 'Good News'.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference offers this document in order to give a more concrete expression to our longstanding concern for "realistic provision" of the means of access to full sacramental participation for people with disability, their families and friends.

These guidelines present a set of general principles to provide access to the sacraments for people with disability. Diocesan staff, pastoral leaders, catechists, parishioners, health care workers, families and all those who minister to or with Catholics with disability are urged to familiarise themselves with these guidelines, reflect on them and apply them as appropriate in their pastoral practices.

At the table of the Last Supper, Jesus gave to His disciples the most privileged of names. I call you "friends". Friendship with people with disability, which is open and apostolic, leads to the harmony of mutual giving and receiving in times of both joy and sorrow.



PASTORAL PRACTICES

Since the parish is the centre of the Christian experience for most Catholics, pastoral leaders are obliged to make every effort to welcome all Catholics with disability who reside within a parish's boundaries.

Pastoral ministers and parish personnel must not presume to know the needs of people with disability and their families, but rather they need to consult with them or their family or advocates before making determinations about the accessibility of a parish's facilities and the availability of its programs, policies, and ministries.

The diagnosis of disability in the early years, can be an extremely difficult time for parents and may place strain on their relationships. Thus, accompaniment of parents through sacramental processes, which speak to the themes of faith, grace and reconciliation, may provide a much needed experience of pastoral care, even healing and the awakening to new hope.

Parishes should make special effort to welcome and cater for those parishioners with disability who live in communities or group homes and are unable to frequent their parish churches or participate in parish activities. However, pastoral leaders should remember that many people with disability still reside with their families.

There is a need to recognise that many parents and carers of children or people with disability are often time poor due to the high degree of care and support required. This may limit the opportunity for such parents and carers to take up formation opportunities even when made available. A better focus might be to make resources and reading available for parents and carers to engage sporadically when time permits.

As not all disabilities are evident, parishes can better support families through the activity of asking parents or carers to identify any additional needs on registration in parishes and pastoral programmes.

Pastoral visitation and the diverse forms of parish and diocesan social communication are some of the many ways in which the pastoral leader and parish staff can work towards the inclusion of all parishioners in the parish's sacramental life.

The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodation of people with disability.

Pastoral leaders are encouraged to develop specific programmes aimed at the inclusion of all people, with a flexibility to include adaptations for people with disability, their families and friends, forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord.

***My son has made the sacraments and enjoys Mass though he is shy.
I wish more people would speak to him and that he would talk with the priest.***

FULL PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS



Parish sacramental celebrations need to be accessible to people with disability and open to their full, conscious and active participation.

As is the case in all communities, a parish's care of both individuals and groups requires organisation. A parish can only encourage and support people with disability in parish life with what the parish has, that is, a practical commitment to providing what is possible in the ordinary activities of parish life and mission. Parishes will encourage and support people with disability if there is careful attention to all pastoral processes, faith education and arrangements for liturgical and sacramental practices.

Attendance at liturgical celebrations, learning prayers and responses to the Mass, and actively participating in liturgies are essential in sacramental celebration and people's participation in their faith community. Full sharing in parish life for people with disability may require adaptations and attitudinal changes among parish leaders. Parishes need to invite and encourage people with disability, their families and friends to share their ideas on how they would like to take part in the life of the parish.

These adaptations are an ordinary part of the liturgical life of the parish. While full accessibility may not always be possible for every parish, it is desirable that at least one fully accessible parish or facility be available in a given area. In fact, parishes may decide to collaborate in the provision of services to people with disability.

In accord with Canon 777, n.4, pastoral leaders are to be as inclusive as possible in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, providing catechetical formation and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disability. People with disability, their families and their advocates, as well as those knowledgeable in serving people with disability, can make a most valuable contribution to these programmes.

Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programmes may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disability.

Further, parishes should encourage people with disability to participate at all levels of pastoral ministry (e.g., as pastoral associates, catechists, acolytes and servers).

Dioceses are encouraged to establish appropriate support services for pastoral leaders to facilitate proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disability.

In the course of making pastoral decisions, it is inevitable that pastoral leaders will encounter equal opportunity challenges. Dioceses are encouraged to establish appropriate policies that respect the procedural and substantive rights of all involved, and which ensure that appropriate consultation takes place.

People with intellectual disabilities should be encouraged to receive the Sacraments and be involved in the Mass.

PARTICULAR SACRAMENTS

Pastoral Realities

For many families, baptism is the beginning of the faith journey for their child. Parents may have a strong desire to seek baptism for their child, but because of different circumstances or medical challenges, they may feel uncertain or cautious about requesting baptism. This is a time when parishes can offer a sincere welcome and assurance that the local parish community loves, supports and welcomes the child.

Preparing for the reception of a sacrament may provide an opportunity to link the family into existing parish and school networks and groups.

Some parents may wish to deepen their learning about their faith and their relationship with God so they can fully support their child in the journey of faith. This might be a time where the diocese or parish could invite the parents to faith education and formation groups.

When older children or adults with disability come forward seeking initiation into the Catholic community, parishes need to be aware of the trained personnel, resources and programmes available to them.

Some people may have questions about their faith and the sacraments. People with disability or their families may feel hesitant about expressing their concerns or asking specific questions. It is vital that parishes are places where people feel comfortable asking questions about any aspect of their faith journey.

One of our readers is young and blind. She has a very supportive family who ensures she is involved in things. She also has a vibrant personality so one could never try to keep her out of things. Also, she was able to access a Braille copy of the Sunday missal given to all children involved in the Sacramental program.





Baptism

“Through the sacrament of baptism the faithful are incorporated into Christ and into his Church. They are formed into God's people and they obtain forgiveness of all their sins. They become a new creation and are called, rightly, the children of God.”

(Rite of Christian Initiation, General Introduction, n. 1)



Baptism was refused to my grandson because his mother wasn't Catholic and my son had an intellectual disability. I was prepared to be responsible for my grandson's faith development and now have guardianship. I eventually found a priest who would baptise him. Parishes are not aware of the aids that are available to them and the information should be compiled at a diocesan level.

Guiding Principles

Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring baptism. Because it is the sacrament of universal salvation, clergy are to make baptism available to all who freely ask for it, are properly disposed, and where the law does not prohibit its reception.

The only time when one may defer baptism is when there is no reason to believe that the parents or carers will raise the person in the Catholic faith.

(Canon 868, sect. 1, n. 2)

The pastoral leader and parish staff have a duty to ensure that they properly instruct the parents of a child, or those who take the place of the parents, as to the meaning of the sacrament of baptism and the obligations attached to it. Either the pastoral leader or the parish personnel are encouraged to talk to and visit the family. The parish community can offer parents the strength and support of the community which rejoices at the gift of new life, and which promises to nurture the faith of its newest member.

We recommend that preparation programmes for baptism gather several families together so that pastoral direction and prayer may form them together and so that they may mutually support and strengthen each other. (Canon 851, n. 2)

If the person to be baptised is of catechetical age (an adult, i.e., over the age of seven years), the Rite of Christian Initiation may be adapted according to need.

(Cf. Canons 851, n. 1 and 852, sect. 1)

Parents and carers choose sponsors (Godparents) who will assist the newly baptised in Christian initiation. Sponsors have a special role in fostering the faith life of the baptised person. Parish personnel should prepare sponsors accordingly.

Where appropriate, people with disability may be sponsors for candidates for baptism and confirmation.

Confirmation

“Those who have been baptised continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation. In this way, they receive the Holy Spirit, conforming them more perfectly to Christ and strengthening them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love.”
(Rite of Confirmation, nn. 1-2)



My daughter is preparing to receive the sacraments of confirmation, reconciliation & communion over the next year. I would like to have access to modified material to help her prepare with simpler language. So far there has been no barrier to my daughter's inclusion, she has been warmly welcomed and participates in school Masses, God's Word for Kids, Offertory Procession, which are appropriate for her age.

Guiding Principles

“Pastoral leaders, parents, and people providing support for people with disability have an obligation to ensure that the people who have been baptised are properly instructed to receive the sacrament of confirmation and to approach it at the appropriate time.” (Cf. canon 890)

The diocesan bishop is obliged to confer the sacrament of confirmation on people who properly and reasonably request it (Canon 885, sect. 1). Any baptised Catholic can make such a request where he or she possesses the use of reason, is properly disposed and is able to renew his or her baptismal promises and where parish personnel have suitably instructed the person (Canon 889).

Persons who because of developmental delay, intellectual disability or autism may never attain the use of reason are to be encouraged either directly or, if necessary, through their parents or guardian, to receive the sacrament of confirmation at the appropriate time.

A sponsor of the candidate for confirmation should be present. The sponsor assists the confirmed person on the continuing path of Christian initiation (Cf. Canon 874). For this reason, it is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at baptism be also the sponsor for confirmation (Canon 893, sect. 2).

Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist is the centre of the entire Christian life, in which Jesus Christ is offered and received, and by which the Church constantly lives and grows. It is the summit and the source of all Christian worship and life, signifying and effecting the unity of the people of God, providing spiritual nourishment, and achieving the building up of the Body of Christ. (Canon 897)



When my sister expressed the desire to receive Holy Communion, the Parish priest was hesitant, but because he respected our parents, he suggested that she make it during the week on a week day. This was done and all went well. She knew so well how to behave in church and yet the church community lost the opportunity to see this first event.

Guiding Principles

Parents, guardians, and pastoral leaders are obliged to prepare children correctly who have reached the use of reason for the reception of and to receive the nourishment of the Eucharist as early as possible. (Canon 914)

It is important to note that the criteria for reception of holy communion are the same for persons with developmental and intellectual disability as for all persons: namely, that the person be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally.

In making their judgement, pastoral leaders are encouraged to consult with parents, guardians, diocesan personnel involved with disability issues, psychologists, religious educators and other experts.

If it is determined that a parishioner who has a disability is not ready to receive the sacrament, parish personnel are to take great care in explaining the reasons for this decision.

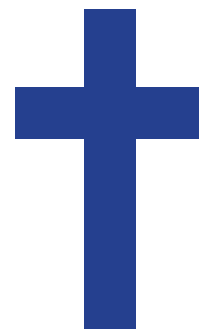
Cases of doubt should be resolved in favour of the right of the baptised person to receive the sacrament.

The Church does not consider the existence of an intellectual disability in and of itself as disqualifying a person from receiving the Eucharist.

When someone parks in the disabled spot without a sticker, I have to go home because there isn't any other parking for wheelchairs. I miss receiving Holy Communion.

Reconciliation

“In the sacrament of reconciliation, the Christian faithful obtain from the mercy of God pardon for their sins. At the same time, they are reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins and which works for their conversion by charity, example and prayer.” (Lumen Gentium, n. 11)



One Deaf boy could access what was being said at a Reconciliation liturgy through interpreters.

Guiding Principles

Only those who have the use of reason are capable of committing serious sin. Nevertheless, even young children and persons with intellectual disability often are conscious of committing acts that are sinful to some degree and may experience a sense of guilt and sorrow. As long as the individual is capable of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution.

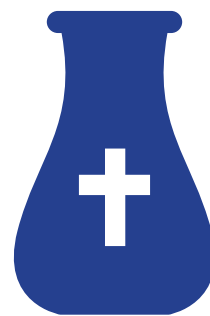
Parishes may invite those with profound intellectual disability, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability.

Deaf Catholics should have the opportunity to confess to a priest able to communicate with them in sign language, if sign language is their primary means of communication. They may also confess through an approved sign language interpreter of their choice (Canon 990). The interpreter is strictly bound to respect the seal of confession (Canons 983, sect. 2 and 1388, sect. 2). When no priest with signing skills is available, nor sign language interpreter requested, the priest should permit Deaf Catholics to make their confession in writing. The priest is to return the written materials to the penitent or otherwise properly destroy them. Priests should give Deaf Catholics the option to choose which method of communication is best suited to them.

In the case of individuals with poor communication skills, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through gesture or through visual aids rather than verbally. In posing questions and in the assignment of penances the confessor is to proceed with prudence and discretion, mindful that he is at once judge and healer, minister of justice as well as of mercy. (Canons 978, sect. 1; 979; 981).

Anointing of the Sick

Through the anointing of the sick, the Church commends to the suffering and glorified Lord the faithful who are seriously ill, so that they may be relieved of their suffering and be saved.
(see Canon 998)



“Those who have the care of souls and those who are close to the sick are to see to it that the sick are consoled by the sacrament of anointing at the appropriate time.” (Canon 1001)

Guiding Principles

Since disability does not necessarily indicate an illness, Catholics with disability should receive the sacrament of anointing on the same basis and under the same circumstances as any other member of the Christian faithful.

The ordained minister may confer anointing of the sick if the recipient has sufficient use of reason for the sacrament to strengthen him or her, or if the sick person has lost the use of reason and would have asked for the sacrament while in control of his or her faculties (Rite of Anointing, nn. 12, 14). If there is doubt as to whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, the minister is to confer the sacrament (Canon 1005).

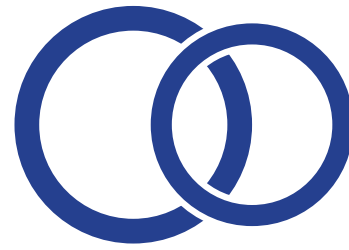
Inclusion in communal celebrations of the sacrament of anointing may at times best serve people with disability (see Canon 1002).

One of the barriers I have found is access. Even though many churches now have ramp access, seating arrangements are rarely altered leaving no option for people in wheelchairs but to sit in the aisle. They are then an obstruction to others particularly when they are queuing to receive the Eucharist or returning to their seats afterwards.



Marriage

“By the sacrament of marriage, Christians signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church. They help each other to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children.” (Rite of Marriage, n. 1)



Guiding Principles

Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman (Canon 1055). It is a permanent union and is ordered to the good of the spouses, and the procreation and education of children (Canon 1055).

All persons not prohibited by law can contract marriage (Canon 1058).

The local ordinary should make the necessary provisions to ensure the inclusion of people with disability in marriage preparation programmes. Through this preparation, all couples may become predisposed toward holiness and to the duties of their new state. In developing diocesan policies, the local ordinary should consult with men and women of proven experience and skill in understanding the emotional, physical, spiritual and psychological needs of people with disability (Canon 1064).

Pastoral leaders and other clergy are to decide cases on an individual basis and in light of pastoral judgement based upon consultation with canonical, medical and diocesan personnel involved with disability issues. They should seek medical canonical opinions in determining the presence of any impediments to marriage. However, they should note that paraplegia in itself does not always imply impotence, or the permanence of such a condition. In case of doubt with regard to impotence, ministers may not impede marriage (Canon 1084, sect. 2).

The inclusion of people with disability in sponsoring programmes for couples is an especially effective way of supporting both the needs and the gifts of couples preparing for marriage.

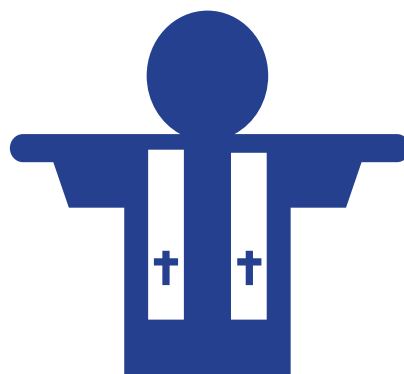
Ministers are to offer Deaf Catholics the opportunity to express their matrimonial consent in sign language, if sign language is their primary means of communication (Canon 1104, sect. 2). Ministers may also contract marriage through a sign language interpreter whose trustworthiness a pastoral leader has certified (Canon 1106).

Pastoral care for married persons extends throughout the married couples lives. By their care and example, the entire ecclesial community bears witness to the fact that the matrimonial state may be maintained in a Christian spirit and make progress toward perfection. Parish personnel are to take special care to include parishioners with disability in parish programmes aimed at assisting and nourishing married couples in leading holier and fuller lives within their families (Canon 1063, n.4).

Parents always have to initiate participation. It would be nice to be invited.

Holy Orders

“By divine institution, some of the Christian faithful are marked with an indelible character and constituted as sacred ministers by the sacrament of holy orders. They are thus consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they may serve the People of God by a new and specific title.” (Canon 1008)



Our son's expectation for participation in parish would be to be accepted for who he is, to discover friendship and support through other people in the parish, to experience a sense of belonging.

Guiding Principles

‘The existence of a physical disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from holy orders. However, candidates for ordination must possess the necessary spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and psychological qualities and abilities to fulfil the ministerial functions of the order they receive.’ (Canons 1029 and 1041, n. 1)

The bishop or competent major superior makes the judgement that candidates are suited for the ministry of the Church (Canons 241, sect. 1; 1025, sect. 2; 1051, n. 1). They should consider cases on an individual basis and in light of pastoral judgement and the opinions of diocesan personnel and other experts involved with disability issues.

Diocesan vocations offices and offices for ministry with people with disability should provide counselling and informational resources for men with disability who are discerning a vocation to serve the Church through one of the ordained ministries.

In preparation for responsible leadership in ordained ministry, the diocesan bishop or major superior is to see to it that the formation of all students in the seminary provides for their service to the community and for their possible ministry to or with people with disability. Formation personnel should consult with parents, psychologists, religious educators, and other experts in the adaptation of programmes for ministerial formation.

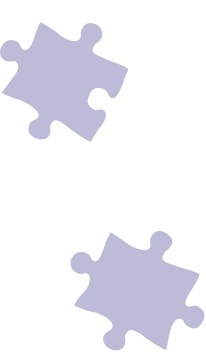


CONCLUSION

Jesus calls us to build communities where we exclude no one and where we welcome everyone, especially in the reception of the sacraments.

Many of our parishes are not welcoming to those with physical disabilities, as there is firstly no access to church buildings. Provision must be made for ramps (church entrance, sanctuary, meeting rooms), space for wheelchairs/scooters/frames/sticks etc. in the pews, aisles wide enough for wheelchairs etc., reconciliation rooms big enough for wheelchairs etc., disabled toilet facilities, disabled parking spaces, large print newsletters, church notices, good sound systems, hearing loops.

This document is a further contribution to the efforts of the Catholic Church to advocate for ministry to and with people with disability. The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life prepared this document with the advice and assistance of the Australian Catholic Disability Council in response to requests for further clarification and guidance about the means for providing fuller access to the sacraments by people with disability.



Within the mass, a lady loves to join in the singing of the hymns. This adapted liturgy provides for participation for all, with movement to the Responsorial Psalm. This lady loves to enter into the responses to the prayers together with her friend. As the lady is blind and has limited hearing she particularly likes the bells being rung. They give her a sense of timing in the Mass. This lady has participated, with the commitment of her parish friends, in the washing of the feet liturgy on Holy Thursday. This physical participation was deeply meaningful for her. The lady's absolute delight in her participation in that particular way was also a very powerful experience for the people around.

We acknowledge the assistance and support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for allowing us to base this document on their publication *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disability*.

Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/upload/guidelines-for-sacraments-disabilities.pdf>

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***As the body of Christ and through our
Baptismal promises, we are commissioned
to invite and welcome all people to our
faith communities.***



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ISBN 978-1-925508-01-7