



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian bishops launch guidelines for celebrating the sacraments with people with disability

**Media Statement
16 February 2017**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference today launched guidelines about the appropriate sacramental preparation for people with disability.

The purpose of the guidelines is to address 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.

Gathered at Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, the Australian Catholic Disability Council launched the guidelines with Bishop Terry Brady, the Australian Catholic Bishops Delegate for Disability.

'We have addressed the guidelines to families, clergy and parish leaders. They offer guidance to parishes on sacramental preparation and celebration for people with disability and for their families and carers,' Bishop Brady said.

The guidelines are a further contribution to the efforts of the Catholic Church to advocate for ministry to and with people with disability. Prepared by the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life with advice and assistance from the Australian Catholic Disability Council, the guidelines respond to requests for further clarification and guidance about the means for providing fuller access to the sacraments by people with disability.

The key principles of the guidelines include: 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.

Bishop Brady explained, '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'.

Council Chair, Myree Harris OAM RSJ, said, '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'.

The guidelines can be purchased from the [ACBC online shop](#)

Media queries, please contact Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597