

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL NEEDS

Although every child is unique, there may be common difficulties with social interaction, communication, intellectual abilities, and patterns of behavior among those with special needs. They may have sensory processing challenges, speech/language delays, a lack of social interaction skills, and self-esteem issues.

They may miss some social cues; have difficulty coping with sudden changes in their routine; and may be sensitive to sound, light, texture, smell or touch.

Autism is often called the "Invisible Disorder." A person with autism may look just the same as anyone else in the pew, but his/her behavior patterns may tell a different story.



PRAYER OF INCLUSION

Jesus, help us to understand and recognize that each one of us has gifts and challenges. May we see You in each person and may each person see You in us as we work together to bring about Your kingdom. Help us to open our hearts to relationship as we open our doors to be a welcoming and inclusive faith community. Amen.

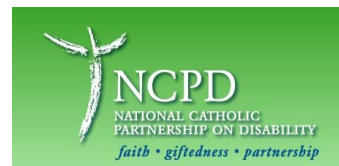
For more resources go to:

www.usccb.org



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS

www.ncpd.org



Office for Respect
Life Ministries

ARCHDIOCESE
OF CINCINNATI
WWW.CATHOLICCINCINNATI.ORG

www.catholiccincinnati.org/respect-life-2/

Welcoming Persons with Sensory Needs



Office For Respect Life Ministries
The Archdiocese of Cincinnati

100 East Eighth Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
respectlife@catholiccincinnati.org
(513) 421-3131

A WELCOMING APPROACH

Unconditional Love

Everyone desires and deserves our love and support. We must appreciate that we are all a part of our parish community and help each person enter into the Mass as fully as he/she is able.

A Place to Rest

Offer a quiet place to go if needed. Avoid creating a separate space where anyone might feel detached from the Mass.

Support

Encourage your fellow parishioners with supportive words during the Sign of Peace or after Mass. Ask if they need any help, but do not offer continuously. Families with special needs members will usually have a plan to handle issues that may present themselves.



GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY

Lighting

Check the lights, especially fluorescent ones – are they flickering? Replace them with new ones or LED lights with a diffuser panel and no dimmer switch.

Noise Levels

Be attentive to any changes that may be made to the Mass that can create more noise than usual. Clapping, for example, can be a huge trigger for those with sensory issues. If possible, try to avoid it. If not, warn those in the congregation who may have a reaction to the unexpected change.

The Order of Service

Those with Autism are very literal, and pictures aid their understanding. Explicitly clear instructions, e.g., when to stand and sit, what to say at each point are important for their participation. Picture guide examples are available on our website.

Physical Interaction

Many of our liturgical rituals, such as shaking hands, sprinkling water, and using incense may be uncomfortable for those with sensory issues. Advise your congregation before Mass of any special rituals. Also avoid initiating physical contact unless you know it is welcome.

Be Consistent

Those on the autism spectrum may find it very distressing if an expectation is created and not met. Try to keep the liturgy as consistent as possible. Use a consistent Mass setting and Eucharistic Prayer (when possible), avoid lengthy announcements, and explain any changes in advance.