

Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit

FAMILY GUIDE

Dear Parent(s),

This week your children are learning about the **inclusion of persons with disabilities** in all aspects of their lives, especially in church and church activities.

We are basing our lessons for the children and young people on the following scripture passage:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as He wishes.”

In this passage we are shown that through the Spirit all persons are given gifts for the good of the entire



community. Each person is expected to use his/her gifts for the common good. It would be a waste if that gift were not acknowledged by the community and put to good use.

The children and young people learned about including persons with disabilities in their adventures and their worship. You can help us to reinforce these ideas by participating in one or more of the suggested activities for the family.

Enjoy this time with your family. It is certainly a time of learning, but more importantly it is a time for the family to grow in its faith. **A good mealtime discussion would be to talk about the gifts each family member (from the littlest to the biggest) has, and how those gifts are used for the common good.**

You and your family could also brainstorm ideas for the parish to include all persons in their worship.

FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING

To reinforce what was learned in class, we ask you to do the following:

1) Pray the family prayer as follows:

Dear God,
Help us to be open to all the gifts that we have received.
Help us to use those gifts wisely and for all persons at home, at school and in the parish.
Help me to see each person and his or her gift rather than the person and his or her disability or difference.
Help me to remember that we all have difficulties of one sort or another. We have all been given gifts to share with one another.
We pray this in the name of Christ Jesus who has gifted us.

- 2) Identify each family member's gifts and abilities.
- 3) Talk about the differences in each family member, and how our differences complement each other.
- 4) Read the scripture passage on the front page or look it up in the family Bible - 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
- 5) Talk about the different gifts that we have been given. What are our gifts? How well do you use them for the good of all?
- 6) Talk about how your parish is equipped (or not equipped) to meet the needs of ALL its parishioners.



Here is a partial checklist:

- Do you have a ramp into church or onto the altar for the people who use a wheelchair or walk with crutches?
- Do you have signs to show where the accessible ramps are?
- Are the restrooms accessible to all parishioners?
- Are the parish facilities (church and school) accessible ?
- Are persons with disabilities invited to be ministers at the Liturgy?
- Can people who use wheelchairs or walkers sit with their families in various areas throughout the church?
- When parish Liturgies are planned, are ALL parishioners taken into account? For example, when you move in the church for any occasion, are all parishioners included?

- What could be done to improve inclusion in parish facilities?

After you have discussed these things, here are a few projects that you could undertake:

- You may find it helpful to write a friendly letter to your pastor or parish council to suggest forming an **inclusion committee**. Many pastors and parish councils have found inclusion committees helpful in raising awareness about inclusion in the parish community on an ongoing basis.
- Get involved in your community center. As a family, **volunteer** to help with the Special Olympics, Buddy Baseball, Best Buddies or other organizations that promote inclusion. See if there are other people with disabilities that you can play with or help out.
- The children learned about **“person first” terminology** to use when talking about or writing about persons who have disabilities. When discussing this topic with your children, it is important to name the person first – a boy who is deaf, a girl who is blind – and emphasize what a person can do as opposed to can’t do – a person uses a wheelchair or walks with crutches. Practice using the correct words as you are reinforcing the lesson of inclusion.
- It is also important that your children know that there are **“hidden” or “invisible” disabilities**. One may be a learning disability. Your children probably know someone in their school with such a disability. Use this as a starting point when talking about disabilities with your children.
- Talk about how you can include all friends and neighbors in **worship on the altar** and in community services.
- **Talk with your children** about how they would play with a person who is blind or deaf. For instance, a person who is blind may have a dog that helps them. To communicate with a person who has a hearing loss, you will have to speak clearly and directly to the person so that he can read your lips. You may also want to take a sign language class at your community college to learn some basic sign language skills.
- Volunteer to help your Liturgy committee or parish council make plans for the next **Inclusion Sunday**. Or, suggest hosting several mini-Inclusion Sundays throughout the year, to keep parishioners mindful of the importance of inclusion and to ensure that all who want to play an active role in the Mass have the opportunity.
- Read the **Beatitudes of Acceptance** as a prayer for the family.

Family Resources and Volunteer Opportunities

- **Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors 25-minute video** serves as a guide for discussing inclusion. The video and accompanying booklet can be purchased for \$20 by contacting:

Pathways.org

355 E Erie St.

- Chicago, IL 60611
800-955-2445 (voice)
800-326-8154 (TDD)
888-795-5884 (fax)

www.teambelong.org and
www.pathways.org

- **Courage Song**, Available as a CD single or as part of the “Starting Small” collection of songs by the late Bob Blue - \$10

www.bobblue.org

- **Buddy Baseball**
Dean Klassman
847-454-0660 xt. 106

- **Special Olympics Illinois**
605 E. Willow Street
Normal, IL 61761
309-888-2551 (voice)
309-888-2570 (fax) or

800 Roosevelt Rd.,
Bldg. B. Suite 220
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137-5560
630-942-5610 (voice)
630-942-5613 (fax)

www.ilso.org (Illinois program)
www.specialolympics.org

- **Best Buddies Illinois**
222 Merchandise Mart Plaza
Suite 493 A & B
Chicago, IL 60654
312-828-9313 (voice)
312-527-7782 (fax)

www.bestbuddies.org

Written by Mary Sue Wielgus

Produced and distributed by

Pathways.org TEAM Belong: That Every Ability May Belong

1-800-364-1337 www.teambelong.org

With Ecclesiastical Approbation – Archdiocese of Chicago – September 8, 1999