

Some Theology of Disability

1978 Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities

A Few Highlights

The same Jesus who heard the cry for recognition from people with disabilities of Judea and Samaria 2000 years ago calls us, His followers, to embrace our responsibility to our own disabled brothers and sisters in the United States. (1)

The Church that Jesus founded...remains faithful to its mission when its members become more and more a people of the Beatitudes, a people blessed in their meekness, their suffering, their thirst for righteousness. (5)

We all struggle with life. We must carry on this struggle in a spirit of mutual love...so we build a community of interdependent people and discover the Kingdom of God in our midst. (5)

Moreover, individuals and organizations at every level within the Church should minister to persons with disabilities by serving their personal and social needs...

...integration into the Christian community may require nothing more than issuing an invitation and pursuing it. For others, full participation can only come about if the Church exerts itself to devise innovative programs and techniques. (14)

Yet, in order to be loyal to its calling, to be truly pastoral, the parish must make sure that it does not exclude any Catholic who wishes to take part in its activities. (18)

If the participation of persons with disabilities and their families is to be real and meaningful, the parish must prepare itself to receive them. (19)

Quote from Pope Francis

“in a world where some people are not even considered as a part of society, the disciple of Jesus is called to foster a culture that acknowledges the dignity of all. In this way, we can embrace the fullness of the joy of the gospel.”

Quote for Fr. Ron Rolheiser from “The Holy Longing”

“...Church is not about a few likeminded persons getting together for mutual support; it is about millions and millions of different kinds of persons transcending their differences so as to become a community beyond temperament, race, ideology, gender, language and background.”

National Directory for Catechesis

All persons with disabilities or special needs should be welcomed in the Church. Every person however limited, is capable of growth in holiness. (p.207)

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 is a pastoral duty,”(1) parishes should make that much more effort to include those who feel excluded. (P.207)

All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and deserve the means to develop a relationship with God. (p.207)

(1) Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, no.6