

Selected Information for Catechesis for Children with Special Needs

Who is the Child with special needs?

The child with special needs is, first of all, a precious child of God. No one is ever less a person because of his special needs. Persons with special needs have the same spiritual needs and hopes as every other person. They have the same rights within the Catholic Church as any other baptized Catholic.

These children learn more slowly or differently than others and with the help of a loving, dedicated catechist, they can learn. They have a capacity to love and to be loved.

Children with special needs wear no masks and have an ability to go directly to the heart of the matter. Their learning ability is mainly intuitive by nature and, therefore, they learn best through symbols, gestures, touch, looks, music, ways of the heart.

Special Needs is characterized with limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. It usually manifests itself before age 18.

Who is the Catechist of special needs' children?

The catechist of special education will be a person of warmth, peace and love, who is comfortable with his/her strength and weakness, who relies wholly on the presence of the Holy Spirit in his/her work.

Resources Available for Catechesis with Special Needs Children **The items with a star are those which are available in the Office of Religious Education Resource Library for your use.

1. Enclosed in this guide is a list of available resources through NICE (the Network for Inclusive Catholic Educators) for catechesis with children with special needs.

2. An additional resource also available in the ORE Library is *We Grow in Faith Together* - a notebook of resource ideas of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Program to Improve Catholic Religious Education for Children and Adults with Mental Retardation. It is copyright in 1996 and has much good information.

3. Another resource is two volume binders *Opening Doors to People with Disabilities* Copyright 1995 with good ideas and techniques for catechists and families.