

National Bulletin on Liturgy

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Marginalized Persons and
Liturgical Celebration

National Bulletin on Liturgy
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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community's life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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On the Edges

Some people live on the edges. They live at the margins of society, they do not always share the experiences of the general populace, they do not fully participate in or benefit from society's institutions. They may not have any say in making the political and economic decisions that affect their lives; they may not receive much support, assistance or affirmation from society.

Marginal people in our society may drop out of school, be unemployed or underemployed, receive inadequate health care, be victims – or perpetrators – of violence and abuse. They may not be fluent in English or French, or accustomed to Canadian culture; they may be Aboriginal people. They may live at the geographic margins as well: north, far east and far west, in rural areas, in the worst districts of cities. They may have physical or mental disabilities, be survivors of broken marriages, have served time in prison.

Today, marginalization is promoted by the intense individualism of our society and by the tendency to view persons as commodities and to value them only as economic producers. It is fostered as well by rampant consumerism, and by the tendency for many to consider themselves as victims.

The center: To think of margins is also to think of a "center" in society. This may be geographic or political or economic; it may have to do with educational attainment, type of job, bank account, physical or mental abilities. It may have to do with values, with a world view, with an appreciation of humanity and creation.

Invisible: People who live on the edges may be invisible to those who live at the "center" of society; they may be unnoticed, ignored, left out, considered unimportant and of less value; they may be treated disrespectfully or with contempt. These attitudes of persons at the center may or may not be intentional, or even conscious. However, those who do not "run in the same circles" simply do not receive as much attention as those who do.

A reality: Those at the center may even deny that anyone else could possibly feel marginalized. They may say that others are merely ungrateful, or lazy, or should pull themselves up – and could do so if they really worked at it. Persons at the edges of society, however, should be allowed to name their "social location" as they themselves perceive it to be. Marginalization is not just a figment of the imagination; it is a fact.

Little choice: Most marginalized persons do not choose to be so. They have been pushed to the edges by pressures against which they feel powerless; they would like to live at the center, if they could.

Countercultural: There are some persons, however, who do choose to be marginal persons in society. They live countercultural lives to protest prevailing value systems, or to hold up alternative ways of living. Christians, individually and as a group, continually need to assess, in the face of societal values, whether they can in conscience live at the center of society or whether gospel values call them to choose marginality.

The Church

People also live at the edges in the church. Some are the same as those marginalized in society: persons with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, the young and the old, those on the geographic and economic margins.

Others have had bad experiences in the church. They may have been hurt by lay or clerical authorities, especially if they have been employed by the church. They may have had struggles with church laws regarding marriage, or with the annulment process. They may be reacting to various scandals in the church, for example, sexual abuse by clergy and religious. They may experience poor community life or liturgical celebrations. They may have received little religious education or inadequate spiritual formation. Some feel they have been pushed to the edges, but still consider themselves church members, however tenuously; others leave the church entirely.

Change: Vatican Council II has itself – quite unintentionally – also contributed to marginalization in the church. Quite simply, it has caused change, and this has come about at the same time as major change in society as well. People react to change in different ways: some love it, some are threatened, some are confused. Some embrace the changes in the church, some reject them in whole or in part; some of the latter admit their opposition while others are not consciously aware of this fact.

Diverse understandings: Today, most Catholics (though not everyone) will say that they accept Vatican II. However, there are quite diverse understandings of its teachings; these range from views that actually are preconciliar to those that the conciliar bishops would not recognize at all. Within the church today quite different positions are taken, for example, regarding moral theology, especially regarding sexual matters; regarding liberation theology, feminist theology, ecologically-related theology, and regarding the interpretation of scripture. Especially, there are differences with respect to the nature of the church: authority, ministry, the place of women, relationships between laity and ordained ministers.

Diversity – pluralism – in theological matters has always been with us; we see this in the new Testament itself. Some schools of thought, however, tend to say, “only we are right; only we are authentic and true Roman Catholics.” In making such claims, they are in effect claiming the “center” vis-a-vis the church. In doing so, they marginalize – even “excommunicate” – those who think other than they do. Those who accept that the center can and should be pluralistic are pushed to the edges by those who do not agree.

Pushed out: As a result, people who take this or that position may be pushed to the edges by others, whether explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously. Who is at the center and who is marginalized will depend on the issue, the local environment, and the dominant voices within the community. Persons who are not particularly well educated in theological matters sometimes feel marginalized because they are not sure what is going on and to whom to listen. And when church authorities speak, almost everyone listens selectively and hears only part of the message.

Many changes: All this is, perhaps, a normal result of change – changes in the church, changes in society as a whole, changes in societal values, changes in family relationships, changes in political and economic systems. One result, however, is that many feel that they live at the edges in the church.

Marginalization in Liturgy

Liturgical celebrations reflect the life and reality of the church at large. The church becomes especially visible, tangible, and audible when it is gathered for worship, especially for the Sunday eucharist. Both the glories of the church and its darker side become especially apparent in our liturgies. Liturgy reveals both the center and, directly or indirectly, the margins of the church.

Participation: It may be possible to define the “center” – the norm – with respect to liturgical celebration with more clarity than some other dimensions of church life. Vatican Council II made this possible by the way it spoke about participation. The Constitution on the Liturgy states:

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. (n. 14)

. . . the faithful [should] take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rites, and enriched by their effects. (n. 11)

The Risen Christ: We need to admit that only Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit participates perfectly; thus the Risen Christ is truly at the “center” of the celebrating church.

Center and edges: At the human level, participation in liturgical celebrations varies greatly; some are more towards the “center” while others are at the edges.

Several dimensions: It may be well to remind ourselves that liturgical participation has several dimensions. It means at least the following:

- our external actions during worship: what we say, do, sing;
- our internal appropriation of the meaning of these actions: we mean what we say, sing and do;
- the communion with other worshippers into which we enter by worshipping together;
- the communion with other worshippers into which we enter by living out the meaning of our corporate worship; for example, ministering with the poor;
- the church that we are becoming through these acts of communion in worship and ministry;
- the communion with God that we experience through being church in these ways.

Causes of Marginalization

How might people be marginal and marginalized with respect to participation in the liturgy?

Participation: Some indeed have not yet accepted the conciliar principle of full and active participation as it is currently understood. They seem to prefer the preconciliar liturgy, where the priest was the only active participant. Lay persons had a more passive role, attending, watching, and engaging in private devotions. Those who actively and consciously take this position are choosing to be marginalized vis-a-vis the conciliar view of participation.

Poor experiences: Other persons may not yet accept the contemporary idea of liturgical participation because they have not yet received appropriate education regarding the Council and the liturgy. Some do so because they have never experienced good liturgy according to postconciliar models.

Inadequate formation: Some have not received the religious education or spiritual formation that would enable them to participate fully. They lack the inner resources required in order to participate, for example, a basic appreciation of ritual, a real relationship with the trinitarian God, some appreciation of scripture, of thankful sharing, of community.

Absent: Some do not participate fully – and hence are among the marginalized – because they are absent from our liturgies. They may simply lack the transportation required to get to church; they may be ill or home-bound for longer or shorter periods. They may be in seniors' homes or in prisons; they may have to work; they may be practising hockey or soccer. They may come only occasionally, perhaps only at Easter and Christmas.

Left the church: Among the marginalized too are those who have left the church. Some have found preaching or singing or community life, for example, so attractive in another church that they have joined that community. Others have done so in relation to marriage and family dynamics. We may also remember the former Catholics who are now ordained ministers in other churches. Some folks have just drifted away and belong to no church.

Obstacles to Full Participation

Obstacles: Some indeed want to participate, however, and are equipped – at least to some degree – to do so, yet encounter obstacles. They feel that they are not being allowed to participate as fully as they would like, and feel marginalized on these grounds.

Lay people as a whole may feel marginalized with respect to full participation in the liturgy when they are not appropriately educated or formed, when liturgical ministries (readers, musicians, presiders and others) are not carried out

well, when they are deprived of the Sunday eucharist because of the scarcity of priests.

Priests may feel marginalized by the high expectations placed on them as liturgical presiders, by the lack of time they have to prepare due to the scarcity of fellow priests and many other demands on their time, by the conflicting demands and expectations of different groups within the church. Sometimes morale and energy levels are low.

Children and youth may feel ignored and neglected in parish communities and liturgical celebrations. Preaching may not speak to them, the music may leave them cold, no one speaks to them, they may not be encouraged or permitted to participate in appropriate liturgical ministries.

Parents of small children may be made to feel unwelcome, or feel under pressure to keep their children quiet at all times and at all costs. They may feel unable to enter into the liturgy because of the demands of their children and because no one will help them care for their offspring.

Single parents may feel unwelcome when the word “family” is used in ways that do not seem to include them. They are left out of “regular” family activities, and may not be able to assume a liturgical ministry because they have to look after their children. Because they have to work as well as be parents, they may not have the energy to participate fully. They may feel that others look down on them and that they are ostracized.

Women may feel that they are considered second-class members of the church, left out of liturgical ministries and liturgical preparation. They may be offended by failure to use inclusive language and feminine images of God, or when preaching fails to address their experiences and needs.

Elderly people may feel ignored because they do not have as much energy as they used to. Their experience and background may be ignored and even made fun of. They may not want to admit infirmities that make it harder to participate or assume liturgical ministries.

Religious sisters and brothers may be ignored and devalued; their contributions over the years are sometimes unappreciated, and they do not have the same status in the church that once was the case.

Persons with HIV, AIDS and their families and friends might feel ostracized within the parish, especially if fellow worshippers think that they might catch AIDS from them. Their own feelings, fears, loss of hope, and nonparochial networks of support and caring might not be understood.

Persons who are separated, divorced, widowed, remarried, or in (other) irregular marriage situations, may be thought less of by other members of the church, and may not be helped with the loss and grief they may experience. Some are excluded from eucharistic communion.

Native peoples may have to worship in a second language, and liturgical inculturation has not yet taken place. They may lack religious as well as secular education, experience unemployment and poverty, and have a generally

low status in society. There are fewer and fewer priests to serve them, and few of their members are ordained, even to the diaconate. Some live in irregular marriage situations and are excluded from communion.

Recent immigrants may find the language of liturgy difficult and the style of music and preaching different from what they were used to.

Non-Catholic family members, guests and visitors may not participate in eucharistic communion.

Newly initiated adults (as well as persons recently received into the full communion of the Catholic Church and those confirmed as adults) may not receive the mystagogy to which they have a right, and hence may not be as well educated and formed as they would hope. After fine experiences of community before initiation, they may feel neglected as "regular" community life goes on around them.

Shut-ins

Two other groups of marginalized persons will be considered here in somewhat greater depth: shut-ins and caregivers.

Housebound: Some members of our parish communities are housebound or in hospital for a long time because of chronic illnesses and other serious conditions. They do not have access to the regular parish liturgies or to other dimensions of regular community life. Some elderly persons may also not be able to go out much either, especially in winter or at night.

Like Lazarus: Donna Williams compares shut-ins to "Lazarus in the tomb, with the stone rolled away, able to see out, but caught in the funeral wrapping and unable to emerge."¹ She says that persons who are chronically ill strive "to live with hope and feeling when many of the activities which arouse hope and stimulate joy are denied, perhaps forever."² The task of parish ministers

is to enter [Lazarus'] tomb and bring resurrection and life and hope into that unlikely environment. It is to make that tomb a real part of the parish, not a token place where hope is only a promise, but a place where promises of hope become reality.³

Frustrated: Shut-ins understandably can become quite bored, frustrated, and sometimes cranky. Those who are sick for a long time can grow to see the infirmity as an integral part of themselves; they can come to have low self-esteem and a diminished image of themselves. They can think that they do not deserve any special care, and yet be upset if they do not receive it.

¹ Donna Williams, "Hospitality to Shut-ins," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 16, no. 6 (August 1989) 4-7

² *Ibid.*, 4

³ *Ibid.*

This ambivalence is common in people in circumstances where they are forced to rely on others a great deal. There is a need to have others offer, the inability to ask for help, and the resentment that life has put them into this situation.⁴

Hurting: This resentment may fall on the parish minister who visits. Visitors also may or may not be thanked; sometimes the hurting persons may associate them with the problem that brings the visitor.

Response

Transportation: Some shut-ins can come to the Sunday eucharist, at least occasionally, if they are provided with transportation – including a helping arm on stairs and slippery sidewalks, and perhaps even help with their coat. Parishes might try to organize a group that could provide such a service on a regular basis.

Elderly and chronically ill persons can also be brought to the parish for healing liturgies, including the anointing of the sick, perhaps at least before Easter and Christmas. Of course, other persons who are seriously ill may participate as well. Priests could go straight from such celebrations to the homes of those who could not be brought to the church, so that all might feel included.

Visiting: It is important that parishes have people who go to visit with and bring communion to the sick on a regular basis. Among other things, the parish needs to make a serious effort to identify and locate all who need their ministry. Some elderly, housebound or institutionalized persons have not been active in the parish for so long that they might have been forgotten. In addition, some move – or are moved – into the parish and never have a chance to check in with the ministers. Others “don’t want to be a burden.”

Public commissioning: Parish ministers of communion to the sick can receive a brief public commissioning at or near the end of the Sunday eucharist. Among other things, this sensitizes all the members of the assembly regarding their own responsibility to minister to the sick and homebound. Communion ministers might also take a flower or two with them.

Tape recordings: Another ministry to shut-ins is to make an audiotape of the readings and homily – or entire liturgy – which can be delivered to the housebound. Even better, a videotape might be made of the entire liturgy for their use. This would allow shut-ins to see the faces of the priest, other liturgical ministers, and others that they know, as well as the familiar church building. It is best if one or several parishioners view (or listen to) the tapes with the housebound person, and engage in conversation about the homily and the rest of the liturgy. For the homebound to hear his or her name mentioned in the general intercessions is especially affirming.

Reporting back: Parish ministers need to find ways of reporting back to the parish community – not just the staff – regarding the persons they have visited.

⁴ Ibid., 5

Bulletins or bulletin boards might be used for this purpose. Occasionally putting photographs of housebound persons for all to see would also be appropriate.

Caregivers

We may think of two kinds of caregivers. One consists of the professional nurses, technicians, doctors and other staff at health care institutions or those engaged in home care. They may not always be present at the Sunday eucharist because of shift work, emergencies or sometimes, exhaustion. They deserve to be included in the general intercessions and made to feel at home in spite of their occasional absences.

The second group consists of physically healthy persons who, because they are caregivers for shut-ins, become shut-ins themselves. Caregivers may give up their own independence, but find little moral or financial support from society. The caregiver seeks to confer dignity, comfort and hope, but should not end up feeling like a martyr. As Donna Williams notes,

These are often the most frustrated and resentful group [parish ministers] meet. Depression creeps up on them as they see their friends, and often their siblings, enjoying the world. Often one daughter or son will have assumed responsibility for the care of an aging or ill parent, and the siblings drop by once in a while.⁵

Response

Provide relief: Caregivers tend to be absent from the Sunday eucharist, other liturgies and the life of the parish generally. One way to help them is to arrange for parishioners occasionally to take their places while they go to eucharist. A group might be organized in the church so that this would be possible, perhaps at least once a month. This would provide enormous support for someone whose life is so closely tied to the care of an invalid.

Keep informed: They too may be named in the general intercessions, kept informed about parish activities, included in pastoral visits, and brought into the general caring network of the parish.

Who else is there?

Other marginalized persons will be considered at greater length in the remainder of this issue of the Bulletin.

Readers are invited to reflect on their own experience and the life of their own parish and civic community. To what extent does this brief sampling apply to your community? Who should be added to this list?

⁵ Ibid., 4. See also "Care for Caregivers," in *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities* (Washington DC: National Organization on Disability 1992) 35-39

What to do?

Welcome and acceptance: The specific needs of various kinds of marginalized persons are diverse. What is common to all, however, is a need to be welcomed and accepted as they are. They need to be recognized and named as persons; they need to be respected. Pastoral ministers and parish members at large need to get to know marginalized persons as individuals. Consciences need to be examined; is there any tendency to push anybody out? Persons on the margins need to be consulted and asked about their lives and their feelings about the parish liturgy. The quality of parish liturgies needs to be looked at critically, and constantly improved. Other issues will be considered below.

Jesus' words and example show us the way.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:1-3, 5-6, 10, NRSV)

Persons with Disabilities

Who are they? The phrase “persons with disabilities” is commonly used to refer, in the first place, to the roughly ten percent of women, men and children who have disabilities that are permanent and severe. They tend to be forgotten in society, and may be entirely absent from our Sunday eucharistic liturgies or hindered with respect to participation in liturgical celebration.

Several types: Disabilities can be physical, such as having to use a wheelchair; or sensory, not being able to see or hear; or mental, as with limited intellectual development.

Another classification: The important book, *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*,¹ uses the following categories:

Mobility impairment: This includes people who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, braces or crutches. Also referred to as physical disability, it may be caused by accidents, genetic conditions, or various diseases. Aging may lead to lessened strength and the chance of broken bones.

Blind or visually impaired: All liturgical assemblies include people with varying amounts of vision. Almost always there are ways that persons with little or no vision can participate in worship and other aspects of parish life.

Deaf or hard of hearing: Truly deaf people cannot hear at all, and tend to prefer to communicate through American Sign Language and interpreters (“signers”) who use that language and also speak. Many deaf persons consider themselves to be members of a Deaf Culture, distinct from that of hearing persons.

People who are hard of hearing have some hearing, and tend to communicate through enhanced sound – assistive listening devices, such as a hearing aid or audio loop worn around the neck.

Both groups may read lips, but this may actually disguise the extent to which they understand or fail to understand, what is spoken.

Mental illness: Persons with mental illnesses have biological dysfunctions in their brain. These may lead to disturbances in the way they think, feel and relate to others; they may find it difficult to cope with everyday life. Sometimes these are also referred to as psychiatric disorders. These brain-based illnesses are not caused by poor parenting or other social causes.

Other persons suffer from episodes of poor mental health, often due to stresses and traumatic experiences.

Developmental disability: “Persons with developmental disabilities have lifelong disabling conditions which occurred at or before birth, in childhood or

¹ *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*, edited by Ginny Thornburgh (Washington DC: National Organization on Disability 1992)

before the age of twenty-two. These conditions include mental retardation, spinal cord injury, epilepsy, sensory impairment, cerebral palsy, autism, and traumatic brain injury, as well as other conditions resulting in limitations.”²

Some persons have good intellectual skills but limited physical development. Others learn slowly and have a limited capacity for abstract thinking, with or without physical limitations. Roughly three-quarters of this group have mental retardation, but this should not be confused with mental illness, nor is it a disease. There are many causes of developmental disabilities, including genetic disorders, birth trauma, accidents, substance abuse, some kinds of poisoning, poor prenatal care and head injury.

Because developmental disabilities tend not to be well understood, three articles later in this issue are devoted to them.

Learning disorder: “A person who has one or more learning disabilities has constant interruption in the basic, brain-centered processes that affect listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling and sometimes calculating. The person has average to above-average intelligence, although learning is slower or different in the affected areas. This invisible disability is frequently not diagnosed. The person with learning disability does not have developmental disability, mental illness or a communicable disease.”³

Chronic illness: These are sometimes referred to as “hidden” disabilities. These persons have one or another chronic illness, which are long-lasting and which interfere with daily living. They may be completely invisible unless disclosed, or remain so until hospitalization is required. These include “psychiatric disorders, AIDS/HIV, seizure disorders, respiratory conditions, diabetes and other metabolic disturbances, head trauma, sickle cell anemia, cardiac conditions, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and other neuromuscular degenerative diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, allergies, the many forms of cancer, arthritis, chronic back pain, lupus, osteoporosis, glaucoma, retinitis, cataracts and numerous others.”⁴

Multiple disabilities: And of course a person may have more than one disability.

None here: Disabled persons are sometimes, in society and church alike, viewed as a separate class of human beings, who are “abnormal” in various ways. Often a parish will say to itself, “There are no disabled persons in our community, and therefore we do not have to make any special provisions.”

Hidden disabilities: In fact, almost every parish includes, at the very least, persons with “hidden” disabilities. After all, wearing eye glasses is a sign of some loss of sight. There may also be someone with a heart condition or with multiple sclerosis who has trouble climbing steps or walking steadily, and therefore may not be able to read from the ambo or take up the collection or bring up the gifts. There may be persons who are having trouble reading the hymnal (or holding it up), but who still pretend to sing along with everyone else. There may be persons who cannot hear the preacher or reader very well, but do not want to sit in the front pew where hearing is better.

² Ibid., 29

³ Ibid., 31

⁴ Ibid., 33

And aging: Hidden disabilities may also include AIDS, epilepsy and Alzheimer's Disease. They also include short-lived difficulties such as broken bones and whiplash. They vary in how much they affect a person's life; they may not be apparent unless the person discloses that information to the community. As some disabilities tend to accompany aging, and aging is a natural part of human life, acquiring some disability is also a normal part of human living. It is hard to imagine a parish community that does not include persons with disabilities of some kind.

A continuum: "Visible" disabilities are, therefore, part of a spectrum of conditions that range from mild to severe, from short-lived to permanent.

Not given a chance: From the point of view of liturgical celebration, persons with disabilities may seem to be limited in their ability to participate fully, actively, consciously, and fruitfully. This may indeed be the case. One of the biggest problems, however, is that sometimes they are not even given the chance to participate; they are excluded from the liturgical assembly in one way or another. Sometimes the assembly's attitude constitutes a barrier: they are not wanted. At other times the assembly's language offends and excludes them. As well, there may be physical or architectural barriers to their entry into the assembly's place of celebration.

Individual differences: Liturgical participation also has to be related to individual differences; it is not exactly the same thing for each and every person. We know implicitly that young people and the elderly, parents with small children, and others participate in their own ways, which may not be exactly the same as that of the middle aged, childless, religiously well educated, spiritually formed adult. Individuals can only be expected to participate as best they can, as well as their potential permits, to the extent that their own bodies and minds allow.

Language

State of flux: Language referring to persons with disabilities is in a state of flux at the present time. We want to be accurate, respectful, and affirming, not condescending or insulting. Today, one hears "persons with disabilities," "handicapped persons," and "those who are 'challenged.'"

Disability is widely considered to be a descriptive term. It is used to denote "a permanent physical, sensory or intellectual impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities."⁵

Handicap is increasingly considered to be a view from the outside. It is "a barrier society places on the person with a disability."⁶

⁵ Ibid., 10

⁶ Ibid.

Challenged is a newer term, and usually is an attempt to be positive and affirming. This may originate with persons who are not themselves disabled, in which case it may or may not reflect the self-understanding of the disabled person. Alternatively, it may come from disabled persons themselves. Unfortunately, there have been so many jokes that use this term that it has to some extent lost its respectfulness.

Different preferences: Persons with disabilities themselves differ – and may hold strong feelings about – these different language usages; some prefer one, others prefer another. Pastoral ministers and parishioners should not assume that they know which is best or which individual disabled persons prefer. Perhaps the wisest approach is to ask disabled persons which term they prefer or at least find acceptable. If there is disagreement among disabled persons, encourage them to discuss the matter among themselves and try to come to some agreement. Otherwise, tell them that because there is disagreement, a variety of terms may be used. Here, “persons with disabilities” will be used most of the time.

Be person-centered: It is preferable to use language that emphasizes the person and not the condition, and that is descriptive rather than being judgmental or negative. Try not to use categories such as “the disabled,” “the blind,” or “the mentally retarded.” Instead, speak of “Mary, who uses a wheelchair,” and “the stairs will be a handicap for John.”

Politically correct? Attention to language is not being “politically correct;” instead, it is an attempt to be caring and affirming. The term “politically correct” may infer some outside, oppressive and coercive imposition of language. The use of this term may also be a way of dismissing any attempt to be careful about language; it may be a “put down.” Again, we need to be careful of language lest we hurt people.

Other resources: In the chapter on **Hospitality and Welcome** some further resources will be noted that are very helpful regarding language.

Two other kinds of language-related issues arise in connection with the language of liturgy.

Posture and movement: First, we may say or print or gesture for people to assume a posture or begin some movement: sit, stand, kneel, come forward. Some persons with disabilities cannot change posture, or cannot walk, or cannot do so without considerable difficulty. The 1986 *Book of Worship* of the United Church of Christ made an attempt to be sensitive in this regard, using rubrics such as “All who are able may stand” However, not all persons with disabilities find this satisfying; it still makes ability primary. This is a difficult issue, and we need to continue to give it serious consideration.

Disability images and moral judgment: A second issue is when physical or mental disability is equated in some way with moral weakness or sin. “I once was blind, but now I see,” is used to speak of moral or spiritual weakness. To explain that “we are all spiritually blind” is not always comforting to someone who is physically blind. Images of disability are often used to illustrate ways in which the worshipping community – or the world – has lost wholeness. This can lead people to think that “there is some kind of cause and effect relationship between salvation and physical conditions. Able-bodied language suggests that . . . persons with disabilities [have] little chance to participate in the salvific actions of the liturgy as part of the worshipping community As

long as images of body disability are used negatively, they are in danger of defining all persons with disabilities as sinners by virtue of our body experiences." Valerie C. Jones Stiteler, a blind minister and liturgist, has written two strong and helpful articles on this matter that ought to be widely consulted; the preceding quotation is from the first.⁷ Again, we need to wrestle, on an ongoing basis, with these questions in relation to scripture, preaching, hymnody, and liturgical texts.

Attitudes

Welcome? Persons with disabilities sometimes feel unwelcome in a parish and in its liturgical assemblies. Often the attitudes they feel from other persons make them feel unwanted and excluded. Sometimes there is a strong prejudice against persons with disabilities.

How we react: Persons with disabilities – by definition, visible disabilities – are first of all different from ourselves. This is enough to engender discomfort, perhaps including embarrassment and fear.

- How and why are they different?
- Could this happen to me?
- What should I say?
- How should I behave?
- What will others think or say if I speak to or associate with them?
- Is it catching?

Lack of understanding and respect: There is a tendency to consider all disabled persons as having limited mental capability, and a tendency to speak past them or to a caregiver rather than directly to them. Some may think that the disability is "their fault" or a result of sin or bad living. Because their very sight may be painful or threatening, they are avoided and made unwelcome. They may be treated with disrespect; they may be considered of less worth as human beings than ourselves; they may even be considered not to be fully human. And all of these may, in some cases, be concealed beyond kind words and polite behavior.

Theological Perspectives

Full members of the church: Persons with disabilities are human beings, created by God in God's image and likeness. If baptized, they are sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ, invited and enabled to live the life of the Trinity, full

⁷ Valerie C. Jones Stiteler, "Singing Without a Voice: Using Disability Images in the Language of Public Worship," *liturgical ministry*, vol. 1 (Fall 1992) 140-142; and "Dancing in the Dark: Guidelines for Including Persons with Disabilities in Congregational Worship and Community Life," *liturgical ministry*, vol. 1 (Fall 1992) 143-150

members of the church. Through creation and through baptism, they are endowed with dignity and worth.

Disabled God: A second theological perspective, developed recently by Nancy L. Eiesland, is that of "The Disabled God." The Risen Christ, she points out, still retains the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, and the mark of the spear in his side. In his resurrection, these have not been "healed" or "repaired," but glorified with the rest of Christ's body. The nails in his hands and feet would have torn flesh and even broken bones; the spear thrust would have damaged internal organs in ways that are not readily apparent. Jesus died as a disabled person, and he was raised up, still with these disabilities, now glorified. Eiesland concludes:

The symbol of Jesus Christ, the disabled God, has transformative power This revelation of God disorders the social-symbolic order, and God appears in the most unexpected bodies. The disabled God does not engage in a battle for dominance or create a new normative power. God is in the present social-symbolic order at the margins with people with disabilities and instigates transformation from this decentered position.

The disabled God repudiates the conception of disability as a consequence of individual sin. Injustice against persons with disabilities is surely sin; our bodies, however, are not artifacts of sin Our bodies participate in the *imago Dei*, not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them.

The resurrected Jesus Christ in presenting impaired hands and feet and side to be touched by frightened friends alters the taboo of physical avoidance of disability and calls for followers to recognize their connection and equality at the point of Christ's physical impairment. Christ's disfigured side bears witness to the existence of "hidden" disabilities, as well. Historically, interpretations of the "pierced" side of Jesus have emphasized the tragedy of innocent suffering. But understanding the internal damage wrought by hacking swords as part of God's eternal existence necessitates a deromanticization of interpretations of Christ's impaired body and a recognition of the population of people who identify with Christ's experience of disabilities, hidden and displayed, as part of our hidden history. For many people whose hidden disabilities keep them from participating fully in the church or from feeling full-bodied acceptance by Christ, accepting the disabled God may enable reconciliation with their own bodies and Christ's body the church. Hence, disability not only does not contradict the human-divine integrity, it becomes a new model of wholeness and a symbol of solidarity.⁸

⁸ Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon 1994) 100-101

Hospitality and Welcome

Parish communities and liturgical assemblies are called to be hospitable to persons with disabilities, both their own members and guests and visitors. They are called actively to welcome persons with disabilities and facilitate their fullest participation. They are called to demolish any barriers that might exist that make participation more difficult than it may already be. How can this be done?

Awareness and Commitment

The first thing is to be aware that your local church community includes some persons with disabilities; some probably are hidden disabilities, others are visible. Part of the process of making these persons welcome is to find out who they are, especially those who do not come to the Sunday eucharist regularly.

The second thing is to get to know persons with disabilities as persons, as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ, as human beings with feelings, worth and dignity. Keeping them at a distance, thinking of them as a problem or challenge, considering them only in abstract terms, is not satisfactory and will solve nothing. Making friends is the best approach.

The third thing is to make a commitment, personally and with other parish ministers and leaders, to work toward greater hospitality toward all persons with disabilities, to seek to welcome them more graciously, and to facilitate their participation in liturgical celebrations. This cannot be a short-term commitment; the barriers cannot be lowered completely in only a few weeks or months. Time and money and energy will need to be expended – but it's worth it.

Education and Consciousness-raising

Parish leaders, the rest of the parish and its liturgical assemblies need to be educated regarding disabilities in general, the barriers that may exist with respect to liturgical participation, and actions that can be taken to improve the situation.

One excellent and highly recommended resource is a pamphlet that could be given to each member of the parish: *Welcoming People with Disabilities: Do's & Don'ts for Parish Ministers*, by Marilyn E. Bishop. First published in *Church*, (vol. 10, Spring 1994) 28-31, it is now available as a pamphlet from the National Pastoral Life Center.¹

¹ National Pastoral Life Center, 299 Elizabeth Street, New York, NY 10012-2806. Single copies (in US funds), \$1. Bulk prices: 20-39, \$0.80 each; 40-99, \$0.75 each; 100-499, \$0.60 each; 500-999, \$0.55 each; 1000+, \$0.50 each.

The same author has also scripted a 30-minute videotape, "Disability Etiquette: How to Relate to People with Disabilities." It is produced by the Center for Ministry with Disabled People, The University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio 45469-0317, and costs US \$30.

Also very highly recommended is an excellent and easy to read book, *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*, edited by Ginny Thornburgh (52 pp, 1992). It is published by the National Organization on Disability, 910-16th Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006, and costs US \$10.

Other helpful printed and videotape educational materials are listed below.

Hans Peter Ahlers, "Spiritual Rehabilitation: The Church's Mission to the Handicapped," *Worship*, vol. 55 (November 1981) 504-518

Nigel Dees, "The Disabled in Church," *Liturgy* (London, England), vol. 15 (April-May 1991) 151-158

Robert M. Doran with Gabe McHugh, "Healing services for the HIV-affected community," *Celebrate!*, vol. 32 (May-June 1993) 27-30

Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon 1994)

Eileen E. Freeman, "Get Me to the Church on Time," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 6-7

Eileen E. Freeman, "Special Celebrations for Special Children," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 8-9

Eileen E. Freeman, "Liturgy and the Handicapped: A Recent Bibliography," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 10

Mary Therese Harrington, "Liturgical Integration of the Disabled Person," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 28-30

Dennis Kennedy, "Attitudes the Physically Disabled Bring to Worship," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 4-5

Walter Kern, *Pastoral Ministry with Disabled Persons* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House 1985)

Gijs Okjiujsen and Cees van Opzeeland, *In Heaven There Are No Thunderstorms: Celebrating the Liturgy with Developmentally Disabled People* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1992)

Ingram C. Parmley and Tresco Shannon, "Ministry and Persons with Developmental Disabilities," *Worship*, vol. 66 (January 1992) 10-24

Maurice Raymond, "Leading the Retarded to the Sacraments," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 4 (May-June-July 1977) 11

Karen Sue Smith, "The Art of Hospitality," *Church*, vol. 10 (Winter 1994) 26-29

Karen Sue Smith, "Do's & Don'ts for Ministers of Hospitality," *Church*, vol. 11 (Spring 1994) 29-31

Valerie C. Jones Stiteler, "Singing Without A Voice: Using Disability Images in the Language of Public Worship," *liturgical ministry*, vol. 1 (Fall 1992) 140-142

Valerie C. Jones Stiteler, "Dancing in the Dark: Guidelines for Including Persons with Disabilities in Congregational Worship and Community Life," *liturgical ministry*, vol. 1 (Fall 1992) 143-150

Donna Williams, "Hospitality to Shut-ins," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 16 (August 1989) 4-6

Donna Williams, "How to Make Shut-in Ministry Part of Sunday Liturgy," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 16 (August 1989) 7

Donna Williams, "A Liturgical Response to AIDS," *Modern Liturgy*, vol. 17 (August 1990) 6-9

Videotapes

The Center for Ministry with Disabled People, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio 45469-0317, offers the following videos. All tapes are US \$30.

- Scripture Based Inclusion
- "PATH" (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)
- Circle of Friends
- The Inclusive Catholic Community
- The Inclusive Classroom
- Building the School Team
- Multi Action Plans: MAPS
- Disability Etiquette
- No Barriers
- Baptism – A Promise to Disabled People
- Welcome One, Welcome All

A Place to Come Back to: Mental Illness & The Church. Produced by The American Lutheran Church. Seraphim Communications, Inc., 1568 Eustis Street, St. Paul, MN-55108

Make a collection of useful educational materials, and use them.

Welcoming Persons with Disabilities

The book, *That All May Worship*, already referred to, proposes a structured and comprehensive process of welcoming persons with disabilities in worshipping communities. One step, mentioned above, is for the parish community to get to know its disabled members, and get to know them as persons. Making introductions and inviting social contact is helpful.

Another part of the process would be to set up a parish “task force on disability issues.” This group, which will be chosen with care, will first educate and raise consciousness among themselves, and then constitute a core group in the parish that can help everyone with this issue.

Parish ministers “have a unique opportunity to be role models when they demonstrate a vibrant interest in the lives of children and adults with disabilities. Even if they have not yet been personally touched by disability, they can lead their congregations into new ways of thinking and acting.”²

Learn to use language that is accurate and respectful. The materials already recommended provide excellent advice and examples regarding language.

Identify and dismantle barriers to inclusion in the community and full participation in worship. One type of barrier is attitudinal. The whole community needs to reflect on questions such as these:

- Are persons with disabilities welcome to worship with us?
- If not, what are we doing wrong?
- Do we recognize the gifts of people with disabilities and are they fully involved in the life of the congregation?
- Are people with disabilities given opportunities to serve others within the congregation and in the outreach program?

A second type of barrier has to do with communication. Several issues related to language have already been considered.

- Is spoken communication, by readers and presider, for example, really effective?
- Are large-print hymnals or bulletins available?
- Are participation aids available in Braille?
- Is the amplifying sound system effective?
- Are other assistive listening devices available?
- Does someone translate the liturgy for persons who are deaf, using American Sign Language?
- Are there religious education and spiritual formation programs for persons with disabilities?

Another issue is transportation from homes or institutions to the Sunday eucharist.

- Is there a team of drivers who will bring persons with disabilities to church, and take them home again?

Ministers of hospitality or ushers need to greet persons with disabilities warmly, introduce them to other members of the parish community, if necessary, and be sensitive to their special needs.

² *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*, edited by Ginny Thornburgh (Washington DC: National Organization of Disability 1992) 12

- Are they prepared to help lift wheelchairs, if there are stairs, or take someone's arms, if there is no railing?
- Are they prepared to open heavy doors, take coats, and ask their preference in seating?

Architectural barriers are often among the most difficult to solve, as there may be expenses involved. Fortunately, architects today are increasingly sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities; in some places building codes require this. In the past, however, this was not the case, and many church buildings are quite unfriendly toward persons with disabilities, especially those with mobility impairment.

That All May Worship breaks architectural barriers down into a number of sub-categories, each of which is explained further:

- Parking and paths
- Ramps and stairs
- Doors and doorways
- Worship space
- Bathrooms
- Water fountains
- Elevators and lifts.

Two other dimensions of welcoming persons with disabilities are:

- Improving personal interactions with such persons, and
- Widening congregational hospitality.

That All May Worship considers these separately as they apply to the different types of disability: physical, loss of sight, loss of hearing, mental, developmental, learning, and chronic illness.

Liturgical Participation

The grounds need to be laid for the participation of persons with disabilities in the Sunday eucharist and other liturgical celebrations of the parish. Attitudes need to be changed, communication needs to be improved, they have to be able to get to church and get into the church, they have to be welcome. Then the liturgy begins. How can they be enabled to participate in ways that are up to their potential?

Mystagogy – reflection on the liturgy, their role in it, and its meaning in their lives – is their right, as it is that of all the faithful. This is more than a lecture, more than religious education, more than a book given them to read. Serious group reflection is needed – and often, desired – by all the members of the church. Appropriate sacramental preparation will also be supplied when needed.

The Roman Catholic liturgy employs many languages: verbal, musical, and nonverbal; we communicate and express ourselves in many ways. Persons who find one method difficult may find others more congenial and engaging. The sincerity of a reader or presider may convey more than the content of the words; the spirit of the music may be richer than the texts of the songs; the reverence and spiritual hunger of the people may communicate much; the power of the ritual, when well done, is powerful in itself and reaches most people, even with disabilities.

Recognizing persons with disabilities in the assembly is an added incentive to celebrate very well. Especially, the nonverbal dimensions of the liturgy must be allowed to flourish; signs and symbols, gestures and movements need to speak at the unconscious level.

Preachers will be attentive to the needs of persons with disabilities, as will the musicians and readers. The presider will be a model of gracious hospitality, with a warm and welcoming attitude and genuine desire to care for all persons.

It is not enough simply to try to minister to the persons with disabilities. Ministry needs to be mutual to be most effective. Persons with disabilities need to be enabled to minister to the rest of the liturgical assembly; their rich gifts need to be received and welcomed by the community at large. To the extent that is possible, they should be welcomed into various liturgical ministries. Of course, they will receive ongoing preparation and help; not to do so would be unfair. Depending on the particular disability, most persons with disabilities can carry out some liturgical ministry. Often, the greatest contribution of some will be their smile and sense of joy.

Vatican Council II's call to full, active, conscious and fruitful participation in the liturgy applies to every baptized person, including persons with disabilities. The entire community, and especially its pastoral leaders and other ministers, need to take their responsibilities in this regard seriously.

Editor's note: After this issue went to press, the bishops of the United States published "Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities" in *Origens*, vol. 25, no. 7 (June 29, 1995) 105-110.

Access to the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation for Developmentally Disabled Persons

Joseph Bernardin

Cardinal Bernardin is Archbishop of Chicago. This document, in which Sister Mary Therese Harrington collaborated, is copyrighted by the Archdiocese of Chicago, 1985. It is reprinted with the permission of Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Hermitage Avenue, Chicago IL, 60622-1101, who publishes it as a booklet. As the document was written in 1985, it includes some nomenclature that has since changed; this is indicated in the notes.

After a brief covering letter addressed to the church at large, Cardinal Bernardin speaks to the developmentally disabled persons on whose behalf he is writing.

My dear friends,

I want to write a special letter to you, who are sometimes called mentally retarded, brain damaged, or developmentally disabled. I want you to know that God loves you very much and that you belong to God's people.

I want your parents, brothers and sisters, and friends to know that you are full members of the Church. By Baptism and Confirmation, you have a place in the Church that no one can ever take away from you.

Some of you live with your families. Some live in group homes or in very big houses. But all of you belong to the family of Jesus.

I am enclosing a paper which says that ways must be provided for you to go to church and to receive Holy Communion. All the people who come to church are to be your friends.

I want you to know that you have a place at the table of the Lord.

The body of the document follows.

This seems an appropriate time to examine sacramental opportunities for developmentally disabled parishioners. While sometimes referred to as mentally retarded or brain damaged, in these guidelines they will be referred to as developmentally disabled persons.

Often they live in institutions, some in residential settings in our neighborhoods. Others remain at home with their families. Most of them would formerly

have stayed close to home, but now many go to school or work and they participate in sports and recreation. Similarly, although their participation in parish life would most likely have been passive in the past, now they are to be welcomed as full members of the parish and, in particular, the liturgical assembly.

The Liturgical Assembly

The liturgical assembly is the gathering of all the members of the local parish who stand before the Father, offering thanksgiving and praise. This gathering is always in the process of growth – growth in faith in God and in respect for persons. One challenge to the parish is to discern and decide why and how to assimilate developmentally disabled people into its life through the sacraments.

The parish's liturgical life provides a dynamic context which can help them, regardless of age, to break out of isolation and discover others as believers. It provides an opportunity to help them overcome fear of others. It also helps each parishioner to have the courage to risk something to build solidarity, to build unity, to build up the Body of Christ.

The parochial assembly provides continuity in the sacramental life of all its members, including those who are developmentally disabled. If families cannot bring all their members to the parish church, where can they bring them? If each person does not have a place before the table of the Word of God and the table of the Bread of God, where is there a place?

Nevertheless, to provide an appropriate atmosphere of dignity and reverence for worship requires leadership, common sense, and a strong sense of respect for the assembly as well as for each disabled person.

The Family

The disability of an infant, child, teenager, or adult is a terrible blow to a family. The disability threatens the equilibrium of all the relationships among family members – parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents and the larger family. It also can challenge faith in God as a merciful Father. Sometimes a family needs to pull back for a time to cope with anxiety and rebuild its bonds. Often only gradually can the family approach the parish leaders to request a sacramental celebration.

To respond well to such a request, parish leaders need sensitivity and the ability to listen attentively. They are not responding merely to the disabled person but to his or her whole family.

The family has a right to expect sacramental participation and the catechesis involved for its disabled member. This is so even if progress is slow and the process is not always serene and easy. On the other hand, the parish and its

leaders have the right to expect the family to be involved in the religious or faith education of its family member. In this process, in other words, there is a mutual relationship between family and parish.

For a variety of reasons, some developmentally disabled persons who live in residential settings do not have contact with their families. In these instances, the relationship between the administrators of the residence and the parish leaders becomes especially important to ensure proper pastoral care for these members of God's people.

The Developmentally Disabled Person

Developmentally disabled persons may live at home or in a residential facility. They may be able to speak or may be nonverbal. They may be able to walk or may live from a wheelchair. Nevertheless, such individuals are human beings, each with his or her own ways of relating within the world. Abstract, conceptual thought may not be possible, but there are other ways of knowing, such as symbolic or intuitive thought and/or response.

Religion is neither fundamentally abstract nor purely conceptual. It is primarily relational, and, for that reason, the developmentally disabled person can be educated in faith.

It was often said in the past that such persons needed only the sacrament of Baptism in order to go to heaven. However, today we see how persons – even those with severe disabilities – are transformed by belonging to a loving community of faith. We observe how the sacramental event gives people a history, a larger family, a feeling of belonging, and a future.

In the past, whether or not a person had reached “the age of reason” was generally determined by the answer to the question, “Does this person understand the sacrament?” However, today the term is understood as referring not just to knowledge, but also to autonomy. Developmentally disabled persons are often dependent on family or sponsor to initiate a sacramental event. But, just as there are many ways of knowing, so there are also many ways of expressing consent and nonconsent. This makes it essential to get to know each person well to make certain that each knows and consents to the sacramental event according to individual capacities.

The context of sacramental initiation for developmentally disabled persons is the quality of their relationships. Relationships which are inviting and welcoming, and which foster insight and assent, allow them to awaken gradually to the larger sacramental dimension of life. This active, spiritual nourishment is a far cry from the days when some parents took their children from one parish to another with the hope that someday someone would give their children Communion. No parent should have to go outside of the local ecclesial community for normal sacramental participation. The assembly which integrates developmentally disabled children into its celebrations can experience its own transformation and rejoice in the growth of all its members.

The Sponsor / The Catechist

A pastoral process is necessary to initiate any person into the parish's sacramental life. Often baptismal godparents are more honorary than functional. In the case of developmentally disabled people, the parish might consider carefully selecting some of its members to be sponsors, so that these members can be with them and help them in their sacramental initiation into the parish's life.

Disabled children, adolescents, young adults and adults may be grouped with their peers and their sponsors into small communities of faith. Local parishes may work together to build supportive bonds among these people. Attempts to give individual sacramental instruction to a developmentally disabled person will, in most instances, lead to frustration for all concerned, whereas sharing life in a group stimulates faith, hope and love.

It is disrespectful to the person and to the family to administer a sacrament before there has been adequate catechesis, but it is equally disrespectful to prolong catechesis indefinitely or to avoid celebrations in the larger assembly because of fear, embarrassment or prejudice. At some point, the catechist must make a prudential judgment and, if it is a positive one, affirm that this person is ready for the sacramental event even when the ordinary signs of this readiness may seem remote. A catechist can only make such an affirmation if he or she has taken time to build an authentic relationship with the person. A true relationship understands beyond words or sounds, communicates beyond definitions, and frees persons to be at their best beyond simple behavioral control. True catechesis takes time, but is often most effective after a sacramental celebration, when even greater meaning is discovered, based on common lived experiences.

The Priest

The presider at a sacramental event, interacting with a developmentally disabled person, needs the skill and capacity to relate to others in the sacramental exchange.

When a significant disability is involved, the celebrant needs to prepare carefully for the sacramental celebration. He needs an opportunity to get to know the person and to receive honest answers to his legitimate questions. Often the catechist is the bridge between the family and the priest, assuring the family that questions do not imply rejection and assuring the priest that a person has been prepared according to his or her capacity and that requested adjustments are reasonable. . . .¹

During the sacramental celebration, it is most important that the priest relate effectively with the developmentally disabled person by slowing his pace,

¹ *Ed.*: Here there is a reference to an agency of the Archdiocese of Chicago that helps with such catechesis.

being more deliberate in gesture and speech, being gentle, and using language which communicates directly and clearly.

The priest may need to emphasize part of the readings of the day or use only part of them rather than rework the entire Liturgy of the Word. He may also consider using the second of the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children, which has frequent acclamations. A liturgy such as this, scheduled monthly, can accommodate people with a wide range of disabilities. This special liturgy can also have an impact on musicians, ushers, and other family members and celebrants so that beneficial adjustments influence all other liturgies in the parish. While we often expect to help developmentally disabled persons change or grow, in the process we frequently, and to our surprise, find ourselves changing as well!

As time goes on, this practice may help developmentally disabled persons feel comfortable enough to participate in other liturgies. Inclusion in appropriate parish liturgies is often more important than developing "special" liturgies exclusively for them.

Baptism

Through Baptism a person enters into the life of Christ, the life of the Church, and, concretely, the life of the local parish. This mystery needs to be visible and tangible to all concerned.

When presenting for Baptism a developmentally disabled infant, parents are still in the throes of shock. In fear and uncertainty, and possibly in hurt and anger, they are trying to enter into a new rhythm of life. This is an important time for parish members and staff to show their care and concern for the entire family. Perhaps another family in the parish has lived through a similar event and is willing to be of assistance. With the encouragement of the parish staff, there can be some bonding between these families for mutual support.

If the disabled person is older, the usual process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is to be followed. In this instance, the director of the catechumenate and the sponsor/catechist must foresee where adjustments are needed according to the needs and capacity of the individual.

Confirmation

"In Confirmation we are most intimately joined to the Church and endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength." (Constitution on the Church, #11).

Developmentally disabled persons, who have been baptized and have agreed to belong to a community of faith through catechesis and liturgy, are not passive members of the Church. They are full members who belong and contribute

according to their capacity. A child who is profoundly disabled and cannot speak or move can still contribute to those around him or her by a loving presence. Developmentally disabled members of the faith community belong fully to the community. Each contributes according to his or her capacity to give and our capacity to receive. Each is confirmed as a member according to his or her capacity.

When family members, facility administrators, religious workers or catechists request the sacrament of Confirmation, they are giving witness to the bonds which exist between the Church and the developmentally disabled person. They desire to express that relationship to the assembly gathered around the bishop so that the body of the Church may be built up in love. In the assembly, the bishop affirms that the disabled person is a full member of the Church, filled with the Holy Spirit – a member of the family of Jesus, offering praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

In the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation, the person's age is to be respected. Developmentally disabled adults ordinarily should be confirmed with other adults. If they are baptized as adults or received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church,² they should normally be confirmed at the same time. In keeping with the Church's ancient tradition, the Easter Vigil is the ideal time for Christian initiation.

Eucharist

By what signs can a developmentally disabled person indicate readiness for the Eucharist? They are desire, relationships with people who share faith and prayer, and a sense of the sacred as manifested in behavior. Often these people cannot use words which express their understanding of the difference between ordinary bread and the Bread of God, but they can show that they recognize the difference by their manner, the expression in their eyes, their gestures, or the quality of their silence. God's desire to be in communion with the person can be presumed; the person's desire for communion must be awakened and sustained.

When developmentally disabled persons are in the assembly and feel bonds with those around them, it is normal for them to have a desire to go to Communion. Families and catechists should foster that desire, nourish it, and arrange for the First Communion while the desire is alive. A precise catechesis elaborating the meaning of the event in greater detail is often more fruitful after First Communion.

Sometimes a person is so disabled that it is difficult for him or her to approach the minister of Communion. Then it is appropriate for Communion to be brought to the person in the pew.

¹² *Ed.:* Now referred to as being received into the full communion of the Catholic Church.

Sometimes a developmentally disabled person is too ill to go to church. A liturgy in the home or residential facility is then the most appropriate occasion and place for First Communion.

When a developmentally disabled person is dying, providing Viaticum should be considered.

Reconciliation

The sacrament of Reconciliation can be very fruitful in the lives of developmentally disabled persons. Often they have had the experience of being offended by others or of offending others without knowing exactly how this alienation happened. Participation in a celebration of Reconciliation can help them sense a new beginning in these relationships.

Such persons frequently are comfortable in parish celebrations of Reconciliation, especially during Advent and Lent. When they approach the priest, if they have poor communication skills, a question which elicits a “yes” or a “no” can be very effective.

Sometimes several communities of faith – composed of developmentally disabled persons, their families and their sponsors – may gather together for a special celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation. The process of going to the priest may be difficult for those who have problems walking, and communicating may be difficult because of communication disorders. In this setting the liturgy can be adapted to the communication and relational gifts and limitations of those present. In this way, gathered together, they can effectively celebrate the merciful love of the Lord of all God’s children.

Catholic Burial

As a full member of the Church, a developmentally disabled person has the right to a Catholic burial.

When the person dies in close proximity to his or her family, the parish celebrates his or her life and witness and offers the honor due a Christian. The person is entitled to the Church’s Rite of Christian Burial³ including the celebration of the Eucharist. Family and friends who request the Church’s complete rites for a developmentally disabled person should not be denied them.

When the person dies in a residential facility, the family can make arrangements which are normal for any Catholic. If the person is a ward of the State,

³ *Ed.*: Now referred to as the Order of Christian Funerals.

his or her record should show that the family or guardian requests a Catholic burial. The leaders of the local parish should welcome and claim the body for burial. We belong to one another and to God our Father. We are all members of the communion of saints.

Conclusion

By welcoming developmentally disabled people through the waters of Baptism, the oil of anointing in Confirmation, the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist and the peace and joy of Reconciliation, the parish builds up the Body of Christ.

“From our parents and grandparents we have received the rites by which we give thanks, intercede, anoint and confirm, marry and bury. We do them over and over, and we teach our children to do them. Thus do we discover what it is to be a Christian and a Catholic. We learn this in hearing the word of God, in the hymns and acclamations, in the genuflections and the kneeling, in the greeting of peace, in sharing the consecrated bread and wine at the holy table. The liturgy is not an ‘extra,’ something nice that may give us good feelings. It is our life, our very spirit. It is the source of our identity and renewal as a Church.” (*Our Communion, Our Peace, Our Promise*, pastoral letter on the liturgy by Joseph Cardinal Bernadin, Chicago, 1985).

A Celebration of Life: l'Arche Calgary and the Church Community

Patrick Lenon

Pat is married to Jo and they have three adult daughters. The Lenon family helped to found the community of l'Arche Calgary in 1973. Pat served as Community Leader for 17 years. He presently is involved with the training and formation of l'Arche Community Leaders. Pat has a long experience of creating and building community.

Friday afternoon held the promise of spring: a clear blue sky and a touch of warmth in the air. We were putting the finishing touches to our weekly community meal. Suddenly there was a knock. Mike haltingly walked to the back door, yanked it open, and in a slurred voice asked, "Yes, can I help you?" And in walked Brian with his social worker. He was our guest for supper. Brian was looking for a home.¹

It is now twenty years since Brian and I began our journey in community together, twenty years of stretching, negotiating, forgiving and loving. The scar tissue that has formed over our hearts by our shared sorrow and joy, grief and celebration, has bonded us in a covenant relationship with each other.

The Gift of l'Arche

l'Arche, founded by Jean Vanier, is now over thirty years old. l'Arche is an instrument of the Spirit in building the kingdom of God. Simply put, the role of l'Arche is to introduce to the world, brothers and sisters who are mentally challenged so their gift can be given. The essential truth that I have learned is that persons who are mentally challenged have an incredible gift to give to the church and to the world. At a time when as a culture we are becoming frequently isolated from each other, persons who are mentally challenged have been given to our society as a gift from God. The gift our society can receive is the gift of relationship and the knowledge that we, as people, live in our humanity. When we live in our humanity we discover that it is the values of the heart and the gifts of the Spirit (faith, hope and love) that we yearn for. And persons who are mentally challenged are teachers about the values of the heart.

¹ The names of persons who are mentally challenged have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

Brian's Story

Brian was born in southern Alberta ten years after my own birth. The gap between us is not ability/disability. It is the gap of the rich and the poor. While I received the best of what the province had to offer (somewhat stable natural family relationships, long-time enduring friends, education, work, marriage and children) Brian received the worst.

Brian was ten years old when he was admitted to Michener Centre in 1959. Michener Centre is the provincial institution for persons with a mental disability. For the next fifteen years Brian was incarcerated in this institution for no greater crime than having been brain damaged at birth. During his time in the institution he received little if any education or training. He had minimal contact with his family and found out that his father had died only months after the event. When Brian walked through the back door of l'Arche Calgary I had little realization or understanding of the grief and pain he carried. Grief and pain from the loss of his family, from the loss of his childhood, from the loss of the many normal life experiences that so many of us take for granted.

Over the next two years Brian displayed a great deal of insecurity. He was physically aggressive and pushed people around with his voice and his hands. It was as if he was testing us to see if we would be there for him. Could he trust us with his heart or would we abandon him?

Brian would often talk about a recurring dream. He told us of his father appearing to him and saying, "you need to kill yourself." Several times we found him in his bedroom with a shoelace around his neck, his hands tight on the lace. A look of anguish would be in his eyes and he would cry out, in his almost unintelligible English, "I am going to end it all."

Evening times would find him in the living room "whacking" on a guitar and singing in a screeching, grieving voice:

Bye bye mom,
Bye bye dad,
I so sad.

Fortunately we found support from a psychiatrist who was willing to help us understand Brian's behavior. After meeting with Brian several times the psychiatrist reflected with us that the pain and anguish Brian was experiencing was unacknowledged grief around the death of his father. He suggested to us that what was needed was a memorial service for Brian's father.

I talked with Brian about the possibility of a funeral celebration. The idea seemed strange to him as his dad was already dead. After thinking about it for several days he said yes. As a community we had become close to a Catholic priest who had a strong sense of family and community. We approached him with the idea of having a funeral liturgy. He immediately agreed to the proposal and a date was set.

The morning of the celebration was clear and cold, but what took place in the church warmed every heart. A box representing a coffin was in front of the altar, together with flowers, and the church choir was present. At the homily Father Jim spoke directly to Brian about fathers: That it was not always easy

to be a loving father, but that the desire of the father was to be faithful to the child. He spoke of how difficult it must have been for Brian to be separated from his father and family at a young age; and how his parents must have suffered to let him go. Father Jim finished by speaking about the love God the Father has for each of us and how Brian's daddy was now in heaven with God the Father.

After the funeral we went to the cemetery where Brian's father was buried. The grave site was a numbered plot, and as the ground was covered by snow, we could only approximate where the grave site was located. Father Jim picked a spot. As we stood in snow, which crept up our legs and into our boots, Brian bent down, and with his right hand inscribed a large cross in the snow. Looking up at each of us he said, "This is where my dad is." The following Fathers' Day we returned to the cemetery, and crawling on our knees looked for the numbered marker. When we found it Brian placed flowers on the grave site.

There was no immediate change in Brian's behavior. As Brian matured, the unacknowledged grief around many aspects of his life has needed to be tended to. This step of celebrating loss, in the context of church and liturgy, was one of many healing moments that Brian has experienced. It is the cumulative effect of many such moments, over the span of years, which has helped to heal Brian's wounded spirit.

Life: A Faith Journey

The ultimate journey of our life is the journey of our soul. Life's experiences usually bring us to the place where we have few if any answers. We are often confronted with the mystery of suffering, death and resurrection. Persons who are mentally challenged are close to the passion of Jesus. Much of their life is experienced in moments of suffering and anguish, without being able to process or make sense of what is happening.

Persons who are mentally challenged have the mysterious capacity to live from a radical level of trust in spite of their intense suffering. To survive they have learned to trust and be dependent upon other people to help facilitate activities that many of us take for granted: money management, laundry, cooking, friendship.

Persons who are mentally challenged do not have many friends that are life long and enduring. Often their life is a series of broken relationships, usually with staff or caregivers who come and go. Yet there is a capacity of the heart that allows people to live in great trust and faith. By faith I am talking about a radical assent to live life with the "confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see" (Hebrews 11.1). The capacity to live faith at this level is the gift my brothers and sisters have to give.

Persons who are mentally challenged face the same existential questions that every human faces:

- Who am I?
- What is the purpose and meaning of my life?

These are profound questions whose answers are often cloaked in the raw experiences and memories of one's life. Persons who are marginalized carry these same questions. The response people receive from others determines the extent to which they are able to live a fullness of life.

The Church as Community

The purpose of church is to help each of us, particularly the weakest and the poorest, to nourish, encourage, support and sustain our journey of faith.

Avery Dulles has identified six models of church:

- Church as community
- Church as institution
- Church as sacrament
- Church as herald
- Church as servant
- Church as pilgrim people.

Each of these models describes a particular and valid aspect of Church. I want to focus on the model of church as community. In doing so I am aware of leaving out other models.

The church as community has as its emphasis the gathering of believers together in unity. There is a focus on relationship that can have the effect of people being led to God and each other. This focus on relationship can have a positive influence on persons who are mentally challenged. A church community can be a place where people find belonging.

The basic or primary condition of belonging is the dependency on a primary group and the group's openness to the person. Belonging to a group gives a sense of purpose and meaning. The group is often the place where "milestone" events are celebrated and meaning is derived.

As people we are exceptionally vulnerable, even fragile in our need to belong. This is particularly true for persons who are mentally challenged. Belonging is often equated with a role or a function and not to our personhood. The work skill is more often valued than the richness of personality. For persons who are mentally challenged adulthood can be a time of suffering and isolation. There can be low self worth because one's work is not valued.

A key to belonging is the possibility of alternatives. Practically, there are few reasonable alternatives for persons who are adult and mentally challenged, simply because society traditionally does not offer many options beyond the administration of bare necessities. When there is an economic slowdown, it is always the weak and fragile to first receive the brunt of cutbacks.

The grace of l'Arche is that it creates a place for persons to belong. Community life can provide a place of valorization of both the task and, what is more important, the gifts of personality and spirit. The task can often be the medium for people to connect with each other as brothers and sisters.

The role of a l'Arche community is to help persons discover their dignity by having alternatives in relationships, work and leisure. When persons have choices, a sense of freedom is created. Choices help us to express who we are.

Persons who are mentally challenged carry within themselves the gift that churches, and society, often need. It is the gift of creating relationship. They carry within their heart the grace of spontaneity, laughter, and singing. They have the capacity to draw people to themselves and thereby draw people out of themselves. The church can provide a primary place of belonging for persons who are mentally challenged.

I remember Marion, who would say aloud the prayer of consecration with the priest, but always two words behind. Rather than this being a distraction, at least for the priest, he publicly acknowledged Marion's faith and her desire to participate and belong. Although some parishioners were clearly upset with Marion's pronouncements she was not admonished. Rather the priest helped her to feel that this worship community was her community.

Persons who are mentally challenged have the capacity to draw people out of themselves. Every Sunday Andy would hug Alex, the corporate secretary and say, "My old buddy." It took many months for Alex to become comfortable with Andy's extroverted gesture. Every Sunday, as if from a mission from God, Andy would seek Alex out. Little did Alex know that Andy, in his own way, was casting the net. Alex ended up being a member of the l'Arche board of directors. He grew in his vulnerability to receive Andy and many other members of the l'Arche community. Alex's humanity was deepened and strengthened because Andy had the audacity to stop Alex in the pew and hug him.

The church has a responsibility to include all people in the worshipping community. This means more than enculturation. By enculturation I mean the process by which people absorb the culture of an institution indirectly. By attending Mass every Sunday, people will eventually learn the right moves, without understanding why they do what they do. This is a passive way of belonging.

Inclusion means that one belongs to a church community in an active way. One is valued for who they are as a person and there is a way in which a person's gift can be given. A person belongs because they want to belong and the community wants them to belong.

Ways of Belonging

The church community can actively participate in the process of helping people belong through honouring the gifts people bring. The gifts of persons who are mentally challenged can be honoured in three ways: liturgy, ministry, and building community.

Liturgy

Church liturgy is the way in which the community expresses its relationship with God and God with the community. Persons who are mentally challenged are

drawn to celebrations. Celebrations are events where people have the opportunity to transcend themselves. They help us to feel that we belong to a body. Music, candles, flowers create an ambience signifying something special.

Unfortunately, what often occurs seems to be routine: Passive attendance of the congregation, half-hearted singing, flowers and plants that can appear tired, readers that don't always announce the word with clarity and conviction, and homilies that can tend to focus on how "bad" we are.

One Sunday, at the end of the service, Denise, one of the core members in my community, turned to me with tears in her eyes. She said, "I love God, and pray to God." Her voice trembled with misery and fear. The homily had been rather harsh and focused on how we don't love and pray to God. Denise had personalized the message and was crushed. I have the capacity to "tune out" the negative messages. Denise just soaks it in. Effective liturgy is supposed to tune us in, not out.

Ministry

Persons who are mentally challenged have a particular gift to offer the church community. They can remind the community of its humanity; that indeed all of us are fragile, sometimes living realities in our lives that seem unspeakable and unbearable.

Brian, about whom I wrote earlier, has become an integral part of the church community. He is part of the hospitality team (he refers to himself as an altar boy), welcoming people as they come through the door, helping with the collection and passing out the church bulletins at the conclusion of the Sunday celebration. He knows people and they know him. Brian belongs because he is valued for who he is and has a place to exercise a role. And in his role his gift of caring and love for people is given.

Brian's belonging came about because of the sensitivity of the last two pastors. Their own hearts were touched by this gregarious man. Brian likes nothing better than to talk about his favourite sports teams, and in his engaging way "netted" these men. They helped him to find his place so his gift would be given.

Worship communities need to be sensitive to the needs of "wounded people" in their community. There can be a focus on what the community can do for "the poor people." Time must be taken to consider the gift marginalized people can give to the community.

Dennis, through the initiative of l'Arche Calgary, was invited to be a minister of communion. He received preparation with the other people of the parish who were invited to this ministry. Dennis had the habit of going out with different coloured socks on his feet and wearing shoes on the wrong foot. The first Sunday he was to minister Dennis was visibly nervous. We assured him that he would do well and took extra care that his clothing was clean and put on correctly.

During Mass his anxiety heightened. In a quiet voice I kept assuring him that he would be able to perform the task. As the priest said the "Lamb of God," he left the pew and walked to the altar. The nervousness seemed to evaporate from him as he stood there. I could see that he was proud to be called to this responsibility of service to God and the community.

Dennis had a way of ministering that was remarkable. He was always the last minister to return to the altar. As people would approach him to receive the eucharist, Dennis would look them in the eye. He would hold up the host and in a very slow voice say, "The Body of Christ." It was as if Jesus was saying these words and asking, "Do you believe this?"²

David is a man who loves to sing. Originally David sang with a youth group in a parish near his home. When the youth group quit singing in his parish, he joined a group in a neighboring parish so he could sing. The group he joined was highly organized and filled with "accomplished" singers. He has been a member of this choir for the past ten years. While David can "carry a tune," he is not a professional singer. David cannot read music, and when he is nervous, does not always understand verbal instructions. What he brings is his commitment, and his desire to sing. He has a deep need to belong and over the years was generally accepted by choir members. Recently the leader of the choir asked David to "step down" from the choir. He did not have the necessary skills to sing some complex pieces that were being performed. David was shattered and his grief is immense. He has lost his place of belonging and is not able to give his gift. Which raises the obvious question: Who is the choir for – the people or the performers?

Building Community

Community provides the structure that holds people and gives each person a place of belonging. People have the opportunity to relate to each other as persons and not in roles. Persons who are mentally challenged have a "feel" for community. Their inherent fragility can draw others to them.

Community can be the place where the strong can give to the weak the physical and emotional support that people sometimes need. Community can also be the place where the weak can give to the strong. The weak can give to the strong those gifts of the heart that our intelligence can sometimes hide:

- Wonderment
- Spontaneity
- Directness.

The Ecumenical Journey

Many people we have welcomed into the l'Arche community have little, if any, church tradition. We try to discover if the person has been baptized, and if so, into which tradition. If people have not been baptized, we try to discover the religious heritage of their family.

² Dennis died suddenly. The church was overflowing with people who came to celebrate his life. One person came up to me and said that she worked with Dennis. Often she picked up Dennis in her car as he stood at the bus stop. She related how they talked together and how he had changed her life with his simplicity of caring.

The process of helping a person discover their religious heritage implies that people have choices. Often persons who are mentally challenged want to attend the church that everyone else in their home attends. This is another part of the enculturation process and can lead to people unintentionally belonging to a church.

What is important is that people have choices. We help people to attend the church of their baptism or religious heritage. If there is no church background, and people express a desire to belong, we support people in visiting different denominations.

This process has brought us into contact with many different Christian churches. We have had to clarify our own ecclesial identity as a community: Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, interdenominational, or interreligious.

L'Arche lives an ecumenical reality that is unique. We are men and women choosing to live together in our differences yet focusing on that which binds us together: the love of God the Father, the presence of Jesus in each person, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is not always an easy journey as many of us are conditioned to focus on differences rather than on what binds us together.

Sacramental Life

Persons who are mentally challenged need to and are able to participate fully in the sacramental life of the church. However, it is not always easy to know the kind of program of initiation and formation that will be effective for people. What is important is that each person is seen as unique. The church community may have to be creative in how to respond.

Ron belonged to an RCIA program. The couple responsible for the program knew Ron and helped him find his place in the group. While Ron did not understand much of the discussion, it was important for him to be with a group of people who were in a journey of their faith life. It helped him to feel that he was part of the community.

Denise, on the other hand, would have been confused at belonging to such a program. Instead, my wife Jo met with Denise monthly for over two years. They used Jean Vanier's book *I Meet Jesus*.³ Through the pictures, and by listening carefully to the meaning behind Denise's words, Jo helped her to begin to discover the love Jesus has for her.

During this time Denise attended both a Catholic and an Anglican church. At one point she made it clear that she wanted to belong to "that church over there." Sitting in her chair, she pointed to the Catholic Church.

Denise, with an assistant from l'Arche, met with the parish priest. They explained that Denise was here because she wanted to join the church. The priest nodded and said, "Yes, this is wonderful. I have a few questions to ask."

³ (Québec: Les Éditions Anne Sigier, 1981)

"May I have the names of your mother and father?" Denise broke into tears and the assistant explained that Denise didn't know who her parents were. "Well, may I have the names of your relatives?" Again, Denise started crying for the same reason.

The priest was very wise. He put down his pen, looked at Denise, smiled and said, "Do you love Jesus?" To which Denise, in an explosion of joy and laughter, threw back her head, clapped her hands, bounced in her chair and exclaimed, "Yes, I love Jesus!" The priest responded, "You are ready to be baptized."

Life in the Home

Life in a l'Arche home is much like life in any family home. There is the myriad of chores, bickering, joys, sorrows and celebrations that families experience. People get up, eat, go to work, come home, prepare and eat an evening meal.

The Meal

The supper table is a wonderful experience. Supper is high liturgy in a l'Arche home. Time is taken to be with each other. Food is the way our bodies are fed, and the exchange between people is the way our spirits are fed. It is a time in which each person can speak about their day, play tricks on each other, and enjoy being together.

Dale is a man in his late forties. He needs much support with dressing, eating, and personal care to get through the day. He does not speak, but knows how to communicate. If he wants a drink he will take a person by the hand and lead them to the refrigerator. After four years he is close to feeding himself.

Dale has the capacity to draw people around him. In the past few months we have discovered that he loves to have people place things on his head. Sitting on the living room couch, he will pull a sheet over his head. When we pull it off his head and then put it back on, he breaks into laughter. We began to play with the place mats at the table. A place mat was placed on his head and he would yank it off and start to laugh. And in a l'Arche home this automatically leads to place mats being thrown at Dale. From all sides of the table, when the meal is finished, place mats and napkins come flying. Dale will sit, sometimes in his chair, sometimes on someone's lap, receive the barrage, and then break into a "sunflower" grin. He brings out the playfulness in all of us, and because he is who he is, many of us lose our inhibitions.

Prayer

After much laughter the meal closes with a prayer. Later in the evening the household gathers around a lit candle. Denise clinks on her guitar (she always leads us in song) and we ask our God to forgive us, love us and support and nourish our many friends.

The rhythm of prayer is quite simple and is often focused on the liturgical seasons. Most people belong to church communities and have lived the liturgical seasons enough to know their significance. Our life together is a closing of the gap between what each of us desires in our heart and what it is we are trying to live.

Prayer Companions

Tanya approached my wife many years ago with some questions about God. After reflecting with Tanya, Jo met with her spiritual director, a wise old Jesuit. She asked him if he would be open to giving spiritual direction to Tanya. He in turn responded by saying, "Why don't you do it? You know her better than I do."

This was the beginning of what we call our "Prayer Companion" program. Persons who are mentally challenged, if they are interested, are matched with an assistant, as a way of reflecting on their faith journey. An opportunity is given for people to deepen in their faith through having a valued friend listen to their story. People have time to talk about their relationship with God and their relationship with Jesus. For some people a bible with pictures is used. For others, talking about the pictures in *I Meet Jesus* becomes the way for the person to name their experience and be able to find a meaning in their experience.

One Christmas Brian was asked to reflect on the Wise Men. It was explained to him who they were and why they were bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. Brian was asked what gift he would like to give the baby Jesus. He was silent for a very long time, face screwed up in concentration, and then in a moment of deep insight exclaimed, "I give Jeeders (Brian's name for Jesus) my heart."

Conclusion

The people of l'Arche are poor. We need God to guide us and show us the way. There are often not many answers to the sufferings and histories that people carry. The people of l'Arche, like many people, need the church. We need the church because it is the place where the message of Jesus can be celebrated in a body. We need the church because it is the place where the poor and suffering can find comfort and hope. And the truth of our life, as people of God, is that we are all the poor and suffering. We need the church because this is where we can celebrate that we are a people. A people loved for who we are and accepted for the gift that we bring.

Liturgical Participation at l'Arche Daybreak

Beth Porter, with other members of Daybreak¹

Beth Porter joined l'Arche Daybreak in 1981, after teaching university English. She recently completed a Master of Divinity degree at The Toronto School of Theology (Regis College). In addition to other responsibilities, Beth serves on the Daybreak Pastoral Team.

Our Daybreak community is a member of the International Federation of l'Arche Communities, founded by Jean Vanier. We are the oldest l'Arche community in North America, and recently celebrated our 25th anniversary. In l'Arche, people who are intellectually challenged (core members) and others who come to assist, create homes and share life together. Founded in the spirit of the beatitudes and based on covenant relationships of mutuality between people of differing intellectual ability, social and cultural origin, and religion, l'Arche seeks to be a sign of hope in our world – a sign of unity, faithfulness and reconciliation.

We recognize that l'Arche has an ecumenical vocation. Its essence is to share within the Christian Church, and also with worshipping communities of other faiths as opportunity allows, our discovery of the gift of the person with a disability. This gift is to mediate God's presence, break down barriers, and call together in unity and celebration people of different backgrounds. As our charter states, "People with a mental handicap often possess qualities of welcome, wonderment, spontaneity and directness. . . . [I]n this way they are a living reminder to the wider world of the essential values of the heart, without which knowledge, power and action lose their meaning and purpose." They teach us that it is often "through weakness, recognized and accepted, that the liberating love of God is revealed." Out of this revelation comes potential for social change as well as for individual growth and healing.

In this article we would like to share some of what we have learned about facilitating the participation and leadership of Daybreak core members in liturgy. It is our personal experience that when people with disabilities are placed at the heart of our community and its liturgical life, our spirits are deeply nourished. It also comes of an intellectual and spiritual conviction that to be complete and fruitful, the larger community needs the gift of these persons, who often are marginalized. Without this gift, something fundamental is missing in our churches.

Good effects are being made these days to "accommodate the handicapped," but this way of thinking is inadequate. The larger worshipping community needs to move beyond the well-intentioned but limiting mind-set that sees efforts at inclusivity merely as acts of kindness or as justice-doing. This way of thinking

¹ I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mary Bastedo, Joe Egan, Peggy Hopkins, Paula Keleher, Kathy Kelly, and Marcie Taylor.

will not yield the creative energy and openness that are needed to elicit and receive the gift of the marginalized person.

In our Daybreak community, some are more physically or intellectually able than others, and some have multiple disabilities. All, however, are able to participate in liturgical celebrations in some way, with appropriate assistance. Our community life includes a variety of types of celebration: the small daily home liturgy or prayer around the table, the larger Daybreak community liturgies and celebrations, the various local parish services we attend on Sundays, and sharings with the wider society among whom we sometimes have an opportunity to minister. Our membership is both ecumenical and inter-faith in composition, and we seek to find ways to receive and celebrate the gift of people of various denominations and other faith traditions in our midst.

In telling something of the story of liturgy at l'Arche Daybreak, we will mostly share anecdotes and experiences.

The Setting

People with disabilities usually get much more out of a liturgy if they are able to sit close to the front. People should be seated where they can see whoever is speaking and whatever there is to look at – and there should be something beautiful to look at, to help focus the attention. An attractive visual focal point and well-dressed altar help convey the beauty and goodness of God. Other appropriate visuals may also help people grasp and enter into prayer. A picture of others in need, for instance, may awaken compassion and the call to intercede.

We need a setting that is wheelchair-accessible, with an accessible washroom nearby. A fairly intimate setting, with people present whom we know or at least see regularly at liturgies, suits us best. We have weekday liturgies in our Daybreak chapel; it is intimate, and carpeted for those who wish to sit on the floor. It includes attractive religious art, including a carved statue of Our Lady of the Mantle with many children clustered around her. This is a good tactile object for those who do not see. We use moveable furniture that includes bean bag chairs, some chairs with arms for those who may be unsteady, and stools and cushions. We like to sit in a circle around the altar. This allows everyone to see one another and promotes a feeling of warmth and inclusivity.

Our chapel contains a specially-made altar that is low and moveable, and we can create a smaller or larger circle as need arises. Everybody can see the altar easily, even if seated on the floor. The altar is made of beautifully polished cherry wood and always looks lovely, whether dressed or not. In front of the altar, an attractive piece of cloth can be draped over boxes of varying heights, and a cross or an appropriate icon or picture, some flowers or plants, and small vigil lights are arranged against this backdrop. This simple center can provide an uncluttered avenue into communion with God.

When people are not verbally skilled, they receive the message by other means. It is especially important that the setting and the liturgy itself be beautiful and appeal to various senses. When there is a strong emphasis in a particular liturgy on the word and preaching, creative ways need to be found to make the service accessible to all. In Daybreak we find that a picture is

often worth the proverbial thousand words. Indeed, it may provide the substance or at least the starting point for the homily. Our pastor, Father Henri, is gifted at using art for this purpose. Among other large pictures, we have Rembrandt's "The Prodigal Son," and we sometimes use it as a focus for reconciliation services.

Some form of respectful touch may make the spiritual experience more accessible. For example, we may hold hands to pray, or give a blessing, or sing a song that is accompanied by hand gestures. Incense can be a fine addition, if no one is allergic to it.

The conventionally designed churches which we attend on Sundays are structurally less ideal for us. However, if the aisles are wide enough, if a few chairs are provided for those who cannot get in and out of a pew, and if there are no steps, we can all manage. As much as possible we like to be integrated into the larger congregation, among whom we can best interact in ones and twos. Peggy, who attends her Anglican church independently, is pleased that two ushers now stand at the steps where people ascend to the communion rail, to assist those who have difficulty. She prefers to accept the arm of one of her fellow parishioners, as others do, rather than have a Daybreak assistant come forward and single her out for help.

If a parish is willing, space at the front for wheelchairs and for others unable to sit in conventional pews can sometimes be made by removing some pews. We are glad if this space can be used as well by other members of the assembly who have special physical needs, so that we are not unduly segregated. Altars often are too high for us to see what is on them. Sometimes the altar can be made lower, or a few people in wheelchairs or bean bag chairs can be located on the same level as the altar so they can see better.

Music

Most people at Daybreak like to sing, and if they do not know all the words they will hum along if the tune is familiar. Those who do not read are excluded when a long, unfamiliar hymn is chosen, and when each verse has a different melody. When we use a hymn book, we try to find hymns with a frequently repeated refrain that non-readers can pick up. We also like to include some chants or familiar choruses or rounds. As well, we find the Taizé chants quite suitable for reflective times; we use the English translations. Sometimes we have marimbas and tambourines available for lively songs. One member of our community plays the spoons and, if cued when an appropriate song is coming, he makes a great contribution. Another plays the autoharp. If he sits near someone who can give him the chords, he can play in a folk group.

Silence

Silence can be very meaningful. Many people who are limited in verbal ability can enter deeply into holy silence. After the homily, after receiving Holy Communion, and during periods of intercessory prayer, are especially good times

to allow for periods of silent contemplation. One of my most important early L'Arche experiences was with a prayer partner who could speak very little. We would go to the chapel, light a candle together – she holding the candle and I the match – place it before a favorite icon of Jesus, and kneel in silence for ten or even twenty minutes. Often, we would enter into a quiet deep peacefulness. Then we would take each other's hand and repeat the Our Father.

A small ritual would conclude our prayer time: I would hold the candle and she would blow it out. I looked forward to these times together – small oases in a busy week. The Daybreak Seniors' Club has a similar prayer time after the weekly planning and sharing meeting. Roy, who is Jewish, does not join in the Our Father, but he enjoys a special blessing and a special role with the candle.

Accompaniment

At large Daybreak events we usually accompany one another in twos and threes, to see that everyone is well and has a nice time. To link people in accompaniment relationships has been an important aid in becoming integrated into parish life. Some accompaniers can be drawn from the parish congregation. They must have taken the time to get to know and become a friend of the Daybreak member, and visit in their home. They will also have talked to others who know them, to become aware of their friend's needs and to be able unobtrusively to facilitate their participation.

There should be as much mutuality as possible in this relationship. Creative ways may be found for someone who is quite disabled still to contribute. Sometimes this is as small a matter as carrying something in a wheelchair bag for their friend. Talking to the core member, even if he or she is unable to converse verbally, and giving respect and honouring their dignity, are key. If the core member is fairly independent, they may choose not to sit together, but the accompanier will still be aware of how their friend is doing and be ready to give support.

At social events, the accompanier can help the Daybreak member meet others and get refreshments. This kind of practical accompaniment relationship sometimes develops into a genuine and mutual spiritual accompaniment, a source of great blessing for both individuals.

Beyond whatever special relationships such as accompaniment we may develop, the attitude of people in the congregation towards us is important. If the congregation is large and impersonal, our experience will not be very meaningful.

When we began to help Ellen attend synagogue services it was important to find a welcoming congregation, since none of us who could accompany her was very familiar with Judaism. The small, participation-oriented synagogue to which we were directed received us well. Ellen's presence and gifts of friendliness and enthusiasm are valued by this congregation, and she is asked to participate in ways meaningful to her. For example, she may open the curtain of the Ark before the Torah scroll is taken out, and close it after;

she sometimes walks in the Torah procession. This is especially important since much of the service is in Hebrew, which she does not read.

Creative ways were suggested for Ellen to learn what she needed for her Bat Mitzvah celebration. One person prepared a tape so that she could memorize the Hebrew blessings. Others helped her deepen her grasp of Jewish customs. On the day of her Bat Mitzvah, as we from Daybreak prayed and sang and danced together with Ellen's family and her synagogue friends, it was clear that one of Ellen's many gifts to us was her need for some support in her journey. We and her synagogue friends continue to be enriched by contact with one another.

Verbal Content

Listening to fairly lengthy verbal input is not too difficult, even if the ideas are too complex to follow, provided that the speaker speaks with integrity. People at Daybreak often seem to sense intuitively whether a speaker really believes what he or she is saying. If the speaker not only speaks the truth of his or her heart but is also known and loved, it is even easier to listen. The key to attentiveness lies not so much in the content but in the relationship with the speaker. When visiting l'Arche in France, I remarked once on the capacity of core members to listen for many minutes – and apparently with rapt attention – to Père Thomas, who was given to long, theological homilies. A friend explained: "Mais, c'est son coeur qu'ils écoutent! It is his heart that they are listening to. They are reading his heart!"

How true this has seemed to me over the years as I have watched people lovingly sit through long talks by those with whom they have some special bond. And how wonderful to have that kind of transparent heart that allows people to meet God's love even in our obscure language!

Difficult Texts

Some gospel passages associate various disabilities with evil and demon possession. These can give offense; they should not be ignored, but sensitively contextualized.

Likewise, negative content about Jews and Judaism should be addressed. I was strongly awakened to the need to listen to the readings from the perspective of others during one Easter season when reference was made to the Christians hiding "for fear of the Jews." Ellen turned to me and remarked painfully, "I'm a Jew and I didn't kill Jesus." Out of this moment and our awareness that Ellen's Jewish identity was very important to her ("Jesus was Jewish too," she reminds us), came, four years later, the wonderful Bat Mitzvah celebration. This was a time when all of us at Daybreak joined with Ellen in affirming her religious identity.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Dimensions

We have come to value strongly the diversity of faith traditions represented at Daybreak. We are predominantly Roman Catholic, but we have strong Anglican and United Church representation, as well as one Muslim and three Jewish members. We have Roman Catholic liturgies daily, and Anglican liturgies weekly. Our major community liturgies on Monday or Friday evenings vary, with Common Worship (such as in the Protestant tradition) some evenings, the Roman Catholic Mass others, and an Anglican eucharist once a month. Those who are not receiving communion at a particular service are invited to receive a blessing. People wishing a blessing are asked to fold their hands in front of them. This custom helps everyone to feel included.

On or near important feasts of other faiths we usually hold a liturgy that focuses on the feast. It may not be a Jewish or Muslim liturgy per se, and we are careful to respect the integrity of each tradition and not to blend them into Christian services. This year we invited the father of Alia, who is Muslim, to speak to us about the meaning of Ramadan. His talk helped us understand the link between prayer and fasting, and was good preparation for Lent. He concluded with a basic prayer of praise to Allah as God that we could all join in.

At Passover, we generally invite Ellen's parents to lead a Seder for Ellen and as many of her friends as can squeeze around a large table. We have purchased several copies of a simple Haggadah (order of service) that is prepared with interfaith groups in mind.¹ At Hanukkah, Jewish members of Daybreak are encouraged to light their own Hanukkah lamps in their houses. At one of our Friday evening services we also tell and celebrate the story of the Maccabees and God's faithfulness. One service was related to the Jewish High Holy Days, including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Some of Ellen's coworkers in the Daybreak Woodery accompanied her to part of the Rosh Hashanah service. This was an affirming experience for her, and interesting for them.

We have begun to contextualize Christian feasts that have their roots in Jewish ones by asking someone to speak briefly about the connection at the beginning of the Christian service. This year we did this on Holy Thursday (for Passover) and at Pentecost.

During the year that Ellen was preparing for her Bat Mitzvah we set aside two Common Worship times for her to tell us about her preparation. A Daybreak friend and a friend from her synagogue assisted her. In one service she spontaneously asked everyone to pray for her, as has become our custom when someone is approaching a major event. We gathered around to lay hands on Ellen, just as we did when Bill, Linda and Loretta were preparing for Baptism and Confirmation, and when Zenia was being sent to start Faith and Light in Ukraine.

This prayer for and in solidarity with Ellen was an important aspect of our participation in her preparation. When the day came for her celebration, even though the Hebrew service was new to most of us, we were ready to enter into it wholeheartedly.

¹ *The Passover Celebration*, ed. Leon Klenicki, with introduction by Gabe Huck (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1980)

Meals

In l'Arche, meal times are sacred. They are usually lengthy, with time to eat slowly, to savour both the food and the companionship, and to talk of the day's events. The custom in most l'Arche houses is to join in prayer around the table after the meal. The basic elements in this time are the lighting of a candle, a song, a short reading, and silence in which individuals offer their prayers as they wish. To close, usually we hold hands and say the Our Father or sing the Prayer of l'Arche. Often we rotate the responsibility for prayer according to the cooking roster. The cook gets to light the candle or designate someone to do so, and to choose the song and reading.

Well-illustrated books, such as Jean Vanier's *I Meet Jesus* and *I Walk with Jesus*,² allow people to choose an appropriate text without needing to be able to read. The pictures in these two books are especially evocative. Sometimes we pass the book around the table so each person can say what he or she sees in the picture. Remarkable spiritual insights can emerge.

On his cooking night, Mel may choose to read a shortened grace after meals from his Jewish prayer book. We try to help core members of other faiths include some of their food traditions in the meal at important feast times and to talk about the significance of the food: to eat apples dipped in honey at Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, for instance. Birthday celebrations usually conclude with prayer, in which the guests give thanks for the gifts of the person whose birthday is being celebrated and speak their hopes for that person for the coming year.

Commitment Night

Annually, usually in September, we celebrate the start of another year in our houses in a Commitment Night liturgy. Usually two people, a core member and assistant, plan the evening and make the living room attractive, with some sort of spiritual centerpiece, candles and flowers. A reading such as chapter 12 of I Corinthians, about being different members of one body, is presented, perhaps being both read and mimed. Each person is welcomed and thanked for the contribution they made to the house the preceding year. They are also given some token – a flower or card perhaps – in recognition. Each then speaks about the commitment they plan to make to the well-being of the household for the coming year. The commitments may vary from the extremely practical, such as taking out the garbage, to the more “spiritual,” such as welcoming guests. Each commitment is recognized as important in that it builds up the body.

² (Québec: Les Éditions Anne Sigier, 1981)

Prayer Partners' Weekend

One of the highlights of the Daybreak year is a weekend retreat for prayer partners. The event is organized with care; there is much participation and well-planned questions for the partners' reflection times. It is almost always a rich experience of mutuality in the spiritual journey. It provides an opportunity for some parish friends of Daybreak members to discover the spiritual depth of their Daybreak friends and our radical mutuality. We all have the same common need and desire for God.

Seasons of the Church Year

During Advent and Lent we augment our house prayer time after dinner with a special book of daily reflections contributed by Daybreak members.³ Accompanying activities include making a poster on which can be mounted pictures telling the story of the approaching holy season and the names of people for whom we especially want to pray. Each one at the table can contribute a name, and these are written on a cut-out shape (usually a heart). Someone helps those who cannot talk to contribute a name. The hearts are mounted in a circle on the poster, bringing those prayed for into the circle of our love and prayer. The season and the book are introduced at the Friday evening liturgy immediately prior to the season. A series of talks or fireside chats may also be scheduled during these seasons.

We also plan and try to prepare well for a community Reconciliation service. In these, concrete activities often graphically communicate the substance of the liturgy. For example, we may take a stone as we enter the chapel and, later in the service, place it on a large plank cross. Or we may light a candle, or take home a flower bulb to plant.

We hold all-community ecumenical liturgies before some people disperse for Christmas and Easter. At Christmas, we may enact the nativity narrative to the point where Mary and Joseph reach the inn. At Easter we have a Holy Thursday afternoon foot (or hand) washing service, usually with mime and sacred dance, and commission the pastoral team for the following year.

Illness, Death, and Grief

In the past few years, through a number of deaths of Daybreak members and close friends of the community, we have arrived at some simple rituals and liturgical customs that we find helpful. When someone is seriously ill in hospital, besides developing a schedule of visitors, we plan a service of healing prayer with the members of the sick person's household and their closest friends and family.

³ This year we published the Lenten book as *Living the Beatitudes: Daily Reflections for Lent* (Chicinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press 1995)

When Helen was hospitalized with Alzheimer's Disease, a picture of her was placed in the chapel and each Daybreak house was given a copy. This helped us keep her in our prayers and also encouraged us to talk about Helen and prepare for her approaching death.

A schedule of visitors allowed many who were close to Helen to see her regularly. Lloyd and I used to go during lunchtime on Thursdays. Lloyd would hold Helen's hand while I helped her eat. We would also stop in to see Connie and Hank, parents of two other Daybreak members and good friends of the community. We seemed to form a little community within the hospital, and the nurses came to know us and welcome our presence.

When it became clear that Helen was going to die soon, a "phone tree" went into operation, and many friends were able to pray for her; some were also able to visit and say a last "Goodbye." A round the clock vigil was maintained in her room. When she did die she was being held in the arms of one of her dear friends.

During the evening just before Helen died last November, we came together as a community in the chapel to pray, and the morning after her death we gathered again to hear what had happened and to share memories of Helen and grieve together. At the funeral home, photo albums and letters about Helen were displayed and again some structured time was given to allow people to share stories about her and to pray together.

Helen's funeral was planned with her family and with a view to the participation of as many people as possible who were close to her. Daybreak members were pall bearers, and one of Helen's housemates shared in giving the eulogy. At the end of the funeral all those present were invited to file past and touch the casket to bid Helen a final farewell. Those of us who had lived with Helen went with her family a few days later to bury her ashes in a simple service at the cemetery and then have lunch together. It was important for us to do this and in this way put closure on this stage of our grieving.

For weeks after, we continued to talk about Helen in our houses and to unpack the gift of her life to us. In our liturgies we pray for her and other community members and friends who have died. On her birthday we will gather to plant a tree in her honour, again to tell stories of the memorable person she was, and celebrate her life. Out of our experience of the deaths of Helen – and earlier, Maurice, and very recently, Lloyd – we are learning how to be together in our grieving, to support one another well, and together give thanks and celebrate the lives of those precious to us.

Sunday in the Parish

Our custom is to attend Sunday services at the local churches to which Daybreak members belong. Several Daybreak people have special roles in their churches. Bill is an altar server and a minister of communion; he took the training required for these roles. Francis and Gord are both ushers, one at the Catholic church and one at the United church. Gord has the phone number of the captain of his team of ushers and can call to check the schedule. Peter sings in the Anglican church choir, and goes to the regular rehearsal on Thursday evenings. Francis is a member of the Knights of Columbus; he

attends with a special friend. Some Daybreak men attend a monthly men's breakfast. Peggy is on the roster of women who provide flowers for the sanctuary, and as well, refreshments after the service at her Anglican church. She keeps track of when her name is coming up and asks someone to assist her on the appropriate Sunday. George and Gord help build the nativity float entered by the United church in the Santa Claus parade.

Sacraments of Initiation

For a person who has often been marginalized to participate in a major rite of initiation of their own faith can be a great source of pride and self-esteem, as well as giving impetus for new spiritual growth. Such parish celebrations can be enriching experiences for the larger community. Sometimes, because of illness or upsetting experiences surrounding the birth of a person who has a disability, the child of Christian parents may never have been baptized, though that would have been the parents' desire in normal circumstances. We have learned to look into this when new people come to our community. They may not know whether they have been baptized.

To celebrate the beautiful rites of baptism and confirmation as an adult can be a very meaningful experience. Such was the case with Carol, who has Down's Syndrome and also did not speak. (She has since begun to speak a little.) She had lived in an institution for many years. Carol herself deeply welcomed her baptism. For her mother, who was elderly but nevertheless made the trip to Daybreak for the event, Carol's baptism represented an important fruition in her own life.

We try to participate in the sacramental preparation offered by the parish and to supplement these where needed with other forms of catechesis. The key in helping Daybreak core members participate with others in sacramental preparation has been to link each person with a committed friend. He or she can teach the content in a simplified way and also quietly model the kind of relationship it is possible to have with their friend. Both the instructor and others in the group discover how to relate and can include everyone. Where appropriate, the accompanier may advocate for and facilitate the core member's participation. In such settings the Daybreak member's gift of openness, spiritual perception, and directness can give discussions a new freedom and lead them into greater depth.

Ellen grew significantly in her sense of her place in Daybreak and in self-esteem through formally choosing her faith identity as an adult Jewish woman. Now Mel, who stood so tall wearing his brand new kippa at Ellen's celebrations, wants to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. I have noted similar growth in spiritual commitment and self-esteem among other Daybreak members who have chosen to be baptized or confirmed or to formally join the church they have been attending. It can be very settling to make such a choice and to be clear about one's religious or denominational identity.

Gord, a man with Down's Syndrome in his mid thirties, was in the habit of attending both Roman Catholic and United Church services on Sundays. His family had both United and Anglican connections, and he had close Roman Catholic friends in Daybreak. One of his United Church friends invited him to consider joining the church. Gord took the invitation seriously, sought spiritual direction, and entered into a period of careful discernment.

As part of his discernment he made a silent retreat at the spiritual centre of l'Arche Erie, where he had made annual retreats for years. (On retreat, Gord spends long prayer periods silently in the chapel, and instead of reading the Bible, he listens to taped Scripture passages prepared by his trusted director; it includes a commentary prepared for him personally. He also finds some religious music tapes helpful.) The outcome of Gord's discernment was a clear decision to become a member of the United Church. Many of us came to celebrate with Gord and three other Daybreak members who joined the United Church that day. Some of us, including Father Henri, participated in the service, and out of this event there emerged a new solidarity and cooperation among the communities of Daybreak and Richmond Hill United Church.

The Spirit Movers

Over the past few years some people in Daybreak, approximately a third of whom are core members, have formed a liturgical dance company under the leadership of Marcie Taylor, an experienced dancer who is a Daybreak member. The group developed from a few people who like to do circle dances into a company who had a beautiful ministry of liturgical dance. Increasingly, they are invited to dance at church services, at major celebrations of groups outside Daybreak, and to give sacred dance workshops.⁴ The group ranges in age from a young teen to an agile man in his seventies. Two of the core members in the company, Alia and Michael, have multiple handicaps. They are moved about in their wheelchairs by other dancers during the performances, their parts beautifully choreographed so that their wonderful smiles add much to the effect of the dance. Other core members are placed so that they can "shadow" someone else if need be.

The approach to choreography is important for the inclusiveness of the group. The dances are easier for all to learn because they emerge through a process among the members of the company and are not imposed from without. The dancers begin by listening to the music with their eyes closed, allowing visual images of movements to arise within them. One by one, they share what they see and then begin to explore these movements. The choreographer watches and works to put a structure around the various movements, but the choreography is a fluid group process. One dance was choreographed to tell the story of a community member who received a heart transplant. At points throughout, to a quiet drum beat, the dancers imitated with their hands the palpating movement of their own hearts.

Daybreak's Theatre Troupe

We have often enjoyed preparing skits and mimes, and have used this medium to present the gospel in worship services. For our 25th anniversary celebration this past year, we ventured to draw forth these gifts more extensively. With the help

⁴ For further information contact Marcie Taylor at L'Arche Daybreak, 11339 Yonge St. N., Richmond Hill, ON L4S 1L1; (416) 884-1492.

of professional friends who knew us well and could serve as co-directors, we wrote and staged a full-length musical in a downtown Toronto theatre to tell our story. Daybreak members were the cast and singers, and the Daybreak Spirit Movers were the dancers. While not a liturgy, it employed elements of liturgy and had a strong spiritual message, clearly expressed in the theme song, "You can change the world with love, one heart at a time." "One Heart at a Time" played to school audiences for three days as well as to sell-out crowds at both evening performances. The enthusiastic reception has convinced us that the story of l'Arche is needed in our society.

Core members are at the heart of the story, and two of them play major roles. In organizing the acting company so that those with disabilities could have significant parts, the troupe gained some important insights. As with the dance group, roles were not imposed. Instead, they grew out of who the various actors are, and used their particular mannerisms or turns of phrase – what came naturally to them. Janet, for instance, loves theatrics, so her part was a theatrical one. Francis has a characteristic laugh, so that became his trademark. He was not given too many words to say at once, and the dialogue was set up so that the person he was conversing with repeated what he said, but not in such a way as to take away from his part.

It was important to be realistic about what people could manage, and not set anyone up for failure. It was decided that only Francis and Janet could sustain the whole length of the performance and all the changes and demands for flexibility that would be required as the play was rehearsed. Many smaller, walk-on parts were created for others who wanted to be in the play. These people needed to come to only one or two rehearsals. Again, each player had a part natural to him or her, and with a familiar line, not something new. Thus David played Jean Vanier, a part he has played before and that suits him well; Peter played himself playing the piano; John clowned, taking other people's hats as they danced.

Alia was highlighted in the opening scene, seated on a bean bag chair, stage centre. When, as the music starts, Ben picks her up and dances with her in his arms, she breaks into an enormous smile. In a way Alia, who can neither walk nor talk nor see, and who might be said to do the least – but is truly present to the music and the moment – had the most powerful impact. "Come into my light, one heart at a time," the song rings out as we look at her. She is the star of the show. Such is the case perhaps more often than we notice!

Conclusion

In sharing some of the ways in which we celebrate liturgically in the Daybreak community, we have three hopes:

- that more and more of God's people will discover the gift of the person with a disability;
- that they will discover the mysterious truth of the beatitude, that the poor person is in fact blessed;
- that if we will put that person at the centre of our community life, we will be able to recognize and receive the gift of inner freedom and well-being that he or she carries for the rest of us and for the wider society.

The 'Blessing' of Noncommunicants

Noncommunicants: When people do not share eucharistic communion, they can feel marginalized, even if this exclusion can be justified by the church on its own grounds. This occurs with Catholic children who have not yet "made" their First Communion; with Catholic adults who are in the state of mortal sin; and with Catholic adults who are divorced and remarried (or in other irregular marriage situations) and hence have been excommunicated in the literal sense of that word. It also occurs with Anglican, Protestant and non-Christian guests and visitors.¹

Invitation: In an attempt to be hospitable at least to non-Catholic guests and visitors, and to Catholic children – even while not inviting them to the eucharistic table – some communities invite them to come forward in the communion procession and receive "a blessing;" sometimes, "Father's blessing."

Official status? The practice of 'blessing' noncommunicants is interesting because it has no official sanction; it is nowhere mentioned in any official document. (So far as is known, no official document prohibits or limits this practice, either.) It seems to be a kind of inculturation, in that local church communities are responding to their perceived needs in advance of any direction from church authorities.

Questions and concerns: This practice, while done with the best of intentions, raises a number of questions. Now that we have some years of experience with this approach to hospitality, it seems appropriate to begin to reflect on it in a deeper way. This brief introduction to the matter will try to name issues involved and raise questions and concerns. It cannot settle the matter, nor is this the intention. Rather, it is an invitation for the wider community to enter into conversation regarding this practice.²

Infants and Young Children

Several situations: Because several classes of persons are involved, the practice of 'blessing' noncommunicants, needs to be considered from several perspectives. The first pertains to infants and young children.

¹ From the Roman Catholic perspective, Orthodox Christians are welcome to share eucharistic communion in the Catholic church; however, the Orthodox churches do not permit this.

² Questions were raised in England a few years ago. See James Cassidy, "A Blessing at Communion," in *Liturgy* (London, England), vol. 14 (April-May 1990) 161-164.

Children: It is natural for parents (or other caregivers) who go up for communion, to carry an infant or bring along children who are quite young. To leave them in the pew by themselves in the first place divides the family. In addition, there are questions of safety; children left alone in the pew might fall, trip or otherwise injure themselves. Finally, most likely there is the fear or expectation that young children left alone will be noisy or get into mischief. Parents take them along, in part, to maintain control and discipline.

Natural: Thus a minister's invitation to bring children up for a blessing is, to some extent, irrelevant; parents do not need one and they would be brought up anyway. From the perspective of the parents it is simply a natural thing to do. From the perspective of the children, it is not optional; they do as their parents wish.

Touch: Infants and young children who are brought forward with their parents may then be touched on the head by the communion minister. The minister may also say "May God bless you," or something similar.

Preparation? One might say that the act of going to the place where communion is received is part of preparing children for their First Communion. Participation in the communion procession is a normal liturgical action, a step toward the fullness of eucharistic communion a few years hence. We need to ask, however, if this is really valid.

Is exclusion justified? It might also be said that the practice just described disguises or conceals an important theological-liturgical question, namely whether it is really justified to exclude baptized children from eucharistic communion at all. Our Orthodox sisters and brothers, for example, criticize Roman Catholics on this point; they fully initiate infants – baptism, crismation (confirmation) and eucharist – in the same rite, and they do not understand why we do not do the same. The question of communing infants and young children is widely discussed in Anglican and Protestant communities these days, but not as much in Roman Catholic circles.

From this perspective, infants and young children ought to come forward with their parents for eucharistic communion, not just for a 'blessing.' Are we in fact short-changing our children?

Adults

Guests and visitors may come from the Anglican and Protestant communities, or they may be non-Christians, or of no faith. Some will come to communion – because they do so in their own churches – whether they are invited or dissuaded. This is a separate issue. Here we will consider those who know that the Roman Catholic Church does not invite them to share the eucharistic banquet and who respect that position.

Left alone: When the Catholics around them go forward, guests and visitors are left all alone in the pew; they have to suffer the awkwardness of having people climb over them as they go and as they return. There can be a certain embarrassment at having to sit there alone; they feel that everyone else is looking at them; they are clearly outsiders whose participation is limited and incomplete. (Catholics who cannot share communion may also

feel conspicuous.) On the other hand, guests at any kind of event usually understand that there may be things that they cannot participate in as fully as do regular members of the family or group.

Invitation: If guests do go forward, it is in response to an invitation to do so; this may be spoken or written in the bulletin. It is not a natural thing to do, and they would not go up otherwise. However, it clearly is simply an option; they may or may not wish to respond to the invitation.

Two reasons: A positive response to the invitation to come forward and receive a blessing, may have several bases. On the negative side, guests may respond to avoid being left alone and having people climb over them. On the positive side, they go forward to receive something, and something that is valued.

Touch: Adults who go forward may, as with children, be touched on the head or shoulder by a communion minister; the minister may also say "May God bless you," or use similar words.

Varying responses: Anglican and Protestant guests respond to this practice in different ways. Some find it moving and spiritually significant. Others dislike it strongly, and find it condescending and patronizing. The bases of such diverse responses deserves further research.

Questions and concerns: The practice of 'blessing' adult guests raises a number of questions.

- Are we saying that the blessing is just as good as eucharistic communion?
- Are we saying that this blessing is all we can share at the present moment?
- Does it gloss over differences between the churches; does it lessen the gaps in a theologically simplistic way?
- Is this a high point in guests' experience of hospitality at the Catholic eucharist? If so, it raises serious questions about our practice of hospitality at other times and by persons other than the communion ministers.
- Is it a good idea to use the communion procession and communion minister in ways that are not really related to eucharistic communion?
- Does it keep us from looking seriously at the present position of the Roman Catholic church regarding eucharistic sharing?
- Does it foster the idea that communion is really the people's part of the eucharistic liturgy, and that the eucharistic prayer is the priest's? Are we saying that guests can participate in the eucharistic prayer, or that guests and Catholic laypeople are passive during the eucharistic prayer?

To Receive a 'Blessing'

What do we mean when we invite children and adults guests to "receive a 'blessing'"? At one level what they receive is recognition and acknowledgement as individuals of worth and dignity. They are touched, looked at, spoken to – and as individuals. But these are general characteristics of hospi-

tality. Is there a greater felt need for hospitality at communion time than any other? Is this the first or the best experience of hospitality persons receive? Do people feel neglected and unrecognized otherwise?

Questions that need to be explored further include the following:

- What are the actual expectations of the people who go forward to receive the 'blessing'?
- What are the intentions of those who give the 'blessing'?
- In either case, does it make any difference whether the communion minister is lay or ordained?

What is meant by 'blessing' in this context? This needs to be considered carefully. We know from the history of liturgy and especially of sacramentals, that we ought to be careful to exclude any chance that the 'blessing' will be understood in a superstitious or magical way.

Celebrations of blessing: In recent years, most considerations of 'blessings' have been in relation to liturgical celebrations that include scripture readings and prayers in addition to the 'blessing' per se. This has been the orientation of the Canadian, Roman and United States books of blessing.³ The 'blessing' of noncommunicants is not, however, of this sort.

Different kinds: At the beginning of the process of revising the Roman Ritual with respect to blessings, the Study Group involved made distinctions between different kinds of blessing. Annibale Bugnini quotes their 1970 report as follows:

Blessings can be differentiated as:

- a) *constitutive* (of things or persons): these are the blessings that make a person or thing sacred by destining a thing for use in worship or consecrating a person to a special state. These blessings should be reserved to ordained ministers;
- b) *invocative*, which can be performed by laypersons in the absence of a priest or deacon;
- c) blessings more properly to be left to the laity: these are the blessings having to do with family life (for example, the blessing of children by their parents and blessings at table).⁴

Today we may ask if this classification is still valid? If so, what kind of blessing is the 'blessing' of noncommunicants?

Ordained and lay: The Roman *Book of Blessings* clearly takes the position that some blessings are reserved to ordained ministers. The Canadian *A Book of Blessings* states on page 34 that "the priest may give this blessing (to an

³ *A Book of Blessings* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops 1981); *Book of Blessings* [a section of the Roman Ritual] (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1989); *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (Washington DC: Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops 1988)

⁴ Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1990) 779

adult) at any time: 'N., may almighty God, Father, Son, + and Holy Spirit, give his blessing to you for ever and ever.'" As this book generally avoids clericalism, the restriction of this blessing to "the priest" is noteworthy. Yet this is rather like the 'blessings' given to noncommunicants.

Meaning? Is the communion 'blessing' of the sort "more properly left to the laity," and what exactly is this type of blessing? Is it a prayer for God's presence and favor? Is it an acclamation that recognizes that the person is in fact already blessed by God? Is it an oblique way of blessing God for creating this person and bringing her or him to this liturgy? Or all of these, or something else entirely?

Result? We may also ask what is supposed to happen as a result of the blessing, if anything? What exactly does the minister do? Does the recipient of the 'blessing' have any active role, or is he or she completely passive? Does faith play any role in the 'blessing?' Does it make any difference whether the recipient of the blessing is a Christian or not?

All are invited to participate in this conversation.

Cardinal Bernardin on the Preacher

In a recent address to the National Federation of Priests' Councils of the United States, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago spoke of the person and ministry of priests.¹ Part of what he said had to do with preaching and the person of the preacher.

The following is taken from the middle of his talk.

Study after study has shown that the people in the pews want, above all, good preaching from their priests. This altogether reasonable demand reflects a hunger and thirst for mystagogy, a desire to be told of the mystery and drawn into it.

Preceding this, he had spoken of “mystery” and the priest as “bearer of the mystery.” The following, then, can be read as one understanding of the aims of preaching.

The priest of Jesus Christ is in a pre-eminent way the one who bears the mystery of God and initiates others into it. At the heart of the Christian faith is a confrontation with the all-encompassing mystery of being – that is, with God. The believer is grasped, shaken, overwhelmed by that powerful, fascinating force, which in Jesus Christ is revealed as unconditional love. The priest is the one who in his ministry and very being leads the people of God into an ever more intimate contact with it. In carrying out this task, one is most authentically a priest.

Cardinal Bernardin had also already spoken of “mystagogy” and the priest as “mystagogue.” Here, preaching is described using artistic images.

The primary “function” of the bearer of mystery is to hold up to the people of God the great images, stories and pictures of salvation that lie at the heart of the Christian tradition. The mystagogue is like the shaman in the Native American community, the one who has been entrusted with the sacred symbols and given the responsibility of making them speak. He is the artist, the poet, the visionary whose task is to make the liturgy and sacraments great dances expressive of God's graceful embrace of our fallen humanity. Through a skillful use of color, line and texture, the painter unveils some truth about nature or about the human condition and invites the viewer to enter into that truth.

Now preaching is considered in terms of beauty.

In a similar way, the mystagogical artist presents – in image, symbol and story – the truth, which is God's love in Christ, and then draws the

¹ “Priests: Religious Leaders, Doctors of the Soul,” *Origins*, vol. 25, no. 2 (May 25, 1995) 24-28

worshiping community to share in it. In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, is grasped by a vision of the beautiful and feels compelled to abandon everything in order to become a creator and mediator of beauty. The mystagogue of God's beauty is seized by the same power and has essentially the same vocation.

The preacher, according to Cardinal Bernardin, needs to see God in nature and art. He himself needs to be a kind of artist.

This artistic or iconic role presupposes that the priest is deeply in touch with the genius of the Catholic imagination.

According to this Catholic view of things, God is present everywhere in the universe. Hints and traces of divine love are "spread out on the earth" for those who have the eyes to see them. If he is to mediate the mystery, the priest must be gifted with the Catholic imagination and must be a lifelong apprentice to those who, throughout the centuries, have particularly embodied the Catholic sensibility.

Accordingly, he must develop an eye that can see the incarnate God in the dome of the Hagia Sophia, in the spires of Chartres cathedral, in the prophets and seers on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, in the light that illuminates Caravaggio's figures, in Giotto's frescoes of St. Francis and in the stained glass of Sainte Chapelle. The bearer of the mystery of God must be an artist filled with the light and energy of the incarnation, and his vision must be contagious. G. K. Chesterton once said that to see the world properly, one must stand on one's head, for then one sees it as it is, literally "dependent" on the Creator God. The mystagogue is the one who dedicates his life to standing upside down in order to share his unique vision with the church.

The preacher needs to have encountered God in the mystery of the scriptural word.

The one who bears the mystery must also be teacher and preacher. In Jesus, God has spoken the definitive word of love, and the priest is conformed personally and existentially to that word.

Paul Tillich said that one cannot help but speak about what concerns one ultimately. The priest is the seer and the poet who cannot help but speak the ultimate concern that is God's unreasonable and excessive love. Like Isaiah, his lips have been seared by the fire of God's mind and, like Ezekiel, he has tasted the word, taken it into his flesh and bones, and has found it at once sweet and overwhelming.

The preacher also needs to be inspired by the great spiritual writers of our heritage.

The preacher of the word must be a lifelong student not only of the Scriptures, but also of the great literary expressions of the Catholic sensibility. He must be able to appreciate the incarnational spirituality in the autobiographies of Augustine of Hippo, Teresa of Avila and Thomas Merton. He must be able to feel with the other-world journey of Dante and the bawdy worldliness of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. He must be able to share the anguish in the verse of Gerard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot. He must

be able to enter into the visions of Charles Peguy and Paul Claudel, and climb the mountains that are Feodor Dostoevski and James Joyce.

Finally, the preacher is called to be a person of contemplative prayer.

If the priest . . . is to speak symbolically of the all-embracing and ever-elusive mystery of being itself, he must be in habitual contact with the mystery, standing stubbornly in the presence of God. He must take with utmost seriousness the command of St. Paul to pray continually, to orient the whole of his being to the love of God. In short, the priest must be a mystic, a contemplative, a person of prayer. This is hardly the unique vocation of a monk. It is also the parish priest, the privileged bearer of the mystery of God, who must be, in every fiber of his being, formed by prayer.

Simply put, the priest must be an authentically religious leader. He must be, in the richest sense possible, spiritual director, mystical guide, shaman. It would be a great mistake to turn the priest into psychologist, sociologist, social worker, counselor – anything but a uniquely religious leader. I am in no sense questioning the validity or importance of those roles. I am simply suggesting that the authentic task of the bearer of the mystery of God is incomparably rich and carries with it its own justification.

Cardinal Bernardin holds up a high ideal for the priest-preacher. Though demanding, it deserves to be taken seriously.

First, we should ask if this ideal is in any way realistic? Or, is it in fact beyond the reach of real parish priests? Is it simply pious rhetoric? Would priests want to be the person described here?

If it is at least potentially realistic, then we may ask, how may it be attained in practice? Do seminaries educate and train candidates with this model in mind? Do seminarians study art and literature, and learn to exercise the “Catholic imagination” of which Cardinal Bernardin speaks? If his descriptions were to be made criteria for ordination, would we have more or fewer new priests than at present?

After ordination, would bishops, fellow priests and parishioners support priests who wished to become mystagogues and bearers of the mystery in the sense described by Cardinal Bernardin? Would priests commit themselves to the long-term discipline required?

A likely first response to these questions is, “I don’t have the time, even if I wanted to be this kind of priest and preacher.” That is entirely understandable. However, could time be made in the busy life of the parish priest? Would parishioners understand that their pastor really needs to take the time to read and pray and be an artist?

It is also true that busyness – even the most legitimate responsibilities – can become an excuse for not tending one’s spiritual garden. This is a trap that is easy for anyone to fall into. What support can be given to be able avoid this difficulty?

Liturgy in the West Indies ca. 1700

J.-R. Labat was a Dominican priest who left France in 1693 and went to serve in the West Indies. He returned to France in 1705, and some years later wrote his memoirs: six volumes in the first edition and eight volumes in the second.¹ He traveled throughout the West Indies, and often was in contact with pirates – then referred to as *filibusters* – of which there were many in the Caribbean. He became known as a kind of chaplain to the pirates, and included many stories of them in his memoirs.

Of particular interest are the details of liturgical life in the West Indies two centuries after their colonization by Europeans, especially on board the various ships on which Père Labat traveled. In addition, his accounts tell several stories of how sailors and settlers alike responded to the scarcity of priests. We are not the first generation to face this challenge.

Titles have been added. The text is quoted from the abridged, English translation of Père Labat's accounts.²

On Board Ship Sailing from France to Martinique

We had prayers early in the morning, and after this we said Mass, which was solemnized on weekdays by the [ship's] chaplain or by my companion. On Sundays and Fête-days we all said Mass when the weather permitted this. When Mass was over we had breakfast. This meal, as a rule, consisted of a ham or a paté, with a ragout or fricassee, new bread, butter, cheese and above all very excellent wine.³

I found the day always too short for the various things to be done, for though I got up at dawn, dinner time arrived before it was expected. Prayers, Breviary,

¹ J.-R. Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amerique*. Six vols. (Paris 1724); Eight vols. (Paris 1743)

² *The Memoirs of Père Labat 1693-1705*, translated and abridged by John Eaden (London: Frank Case 1970)

³ *Ibid.*, 8

Mass, breakfast, a little walk on the poop, reading and a geometry lesson successively occupied my time till then.⁴

[Christmas at sea]: Père Holly said midnight Mass on Christmas. M. de la Herroniere, everyone in the cabin, and many passengers attended communion. This was followed by a big breakfast. I said Mass at daybreak, my companion said it after me, and the chaplain was reserved for *la Grande Messe* which we sang with almost as much solemnity as in a cathedral. I preached after vespers.⁵

[Between Christmas and New Year's the ship crossed the Tropic of Cancer. The initiation rite for those who had not done so before is referred to as "baptism;" each initiate had a "godfather," and they were signed on the forehead by the pilot.]⁶

1 January 1694. We saluted our captain and wished him a happy new year. All the ships did the same by firing their cannons, and M. de la Herroniere fired 13 rounds to thank them. Most of the captains came on board and heard Mass and we kept them to dinner.⁷

[On the Eve of the Epiphany there was a great party, the crew's ration of wine was doubled, 15 to 20 quarts of brandy was distributed, and there were many toasts.]⁸

On Wednesday, the feast of the Epiphany, P. Holly and I said Mass rather late, because everyone needed a little rest after the fatigue of the past night.⁹

Travels around San Domingo¹⁰

We at length went ashore at Cap on Saturday, 1st January 1701, and after leaving our belongings at a cabaret we walked to the church. The Capuchin priest, who was curé [pastor] of the town, had gone to Limonade, nine miles away, and was not expected back before ten o'clock. The Mayor told me that it would please the curé and every one if I would say Mass at the usual time, i.e., between eight and nine.

The parish church was in a street on the left of the square. It was built like the other houses but roofed with wooden shingles. The walls at the back, and for ten feet on either side of the sanctuary, were of boards. The rest of the walls were open but for a palisade fence four feet high, so that Mass could be heard outside as well as inside the church. The altar was the ugliest, worst deco-

⁴ Ibid., 10

⁵ Ibid., 11

⁶ Ibid., 11-14

⁷ Ibid., 15

⁸ Ibid., 16

⁹ Ibid., 17

¹⁰ Now called "Dominica;" there is a Cap Capuchin.

rated, and dirtiest affair one could possibly see. There was an armchair, a prie-dieu, and a footstool for the Governor, and the rest of the church was furnished with benches of different sizes and make. The aisle was as clean as the street, that is to say there was a good six inches of dust on it in dry weather, and an equal amount of mud if it rained.

I cannot help saying that I was much scandalized by the little respect shown by the people for their religion. They came to church laughing and chaffing each other as if they were about to see some show or entertainment. Especially was this the case with those on the outside of the church, who leant on the top of the fence and spoke to each other much louder than I preached, continually introducing the name of God in their conversation in a manner I could not tolerate. I warned them to stop talking three or four times as gently as I could, but as this did no good, I was obliged to complain to some officers, who compelled them to keep silent. After Mass a good man told me that I must be more tolerant with the people on the coast if I intended to live with them.¹¹

La Petite Rivière, January 1701. The parish church was some hundred yards away from the town, and so covered and hidden by trees and bushes we could hardly find it. The cemetery in which it stood had no enclosing wall, and was nothing but a dense jungle of bushes which had to be cleared whenever it was necessary to dig a grave. The walls of the church were built of forked poles with palisades of split palmist for two-thirds of their length, and the roof was thatched with cane trash. All the rest of the church was open and consequently there were no doors or windows. Never in all my life have I seen a church more filthy or untidy.

Père Cabasson, our Superior-General [who was visiting] was so shocked that he fell into a holy rage. . . . He made Père Bediarides and myself say Mass, and reserved *La Messe Paroissiale* for himself, so that he might tell the congregation himself what he thought of their church. We then consumed the consecrated particles in the ciborium, for the Superior resolved that he would not allow the *Saint Sacrament* to remain in the church till it was in a more decent condition.

The settlers who came to Mass were surprised at the scolding they received from the Superior-General, who threatened to interdict their church. He spoke to them with such good effect, however, that at the end of the service they promised to build a new and better church, and to put the present one into as good condition as possible on the following morning.¹²

¹¹ *Memoirs*, 146-148

¹² *Ibid.*, 115-156

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