Praying with Children and Youth with Disabilities

Discussion Questions for Diocesan, Parish and Catechetical Leaders

1. Within your parishes/parish what are positive signs that children and youth with disabilities are participating in the prayer life of the Church Community? What are the challenges to this participation?
2. What are the opportunities to support families with children with disabilities so they can foster prayer within their homes? What are the opportunities available to assist these families in fuller participation in the Liturgical prayer of the parish community?
3. Can you identify examples of children and youth with disabilities who are or could be agents of catechesis and evangelization? Are there ways to foster this within your parishes/parish?
4. How could elements of Symbolic Prayer Catechesis and Awakening Spiritual Dimensions be used with individuals with profound disabilities within your parishes/parish or in other settings such as group homes or institutions in your parishes/parish?
5. In the USCCB Pastoral on Disability it states: “It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to people with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together.” Are there ways that the Liturgical Prayer of your parishes/parish could be more completely accessible to people with disabilities?

Discussion Questions for Families with Children/Youth with Disabilities

1. Discuss the ways you have noticed your child’s desire to pray or a realization of his/her capacity to pray.
2. Consider your family’s current daily or regular rituals of prayer. Are there ideas from the presentation that you could readily incorporate into daily family life? Are there suggestions of types of prayer that would be particularly helpful for your child with a disability?
3. What supports to prayer, resources or activities would help your family in teaching your child to pray and fostering ongoing practices of prayer?
4. In the Awakening Spiritual Dimensions model of prayer, symbols and the senses were used in prayer. Are their particular symbols or sensory experiences that you use or could use during times of prayer with your child?
5. Discuss your child’s participation in the Sunday Liturgy. What has been helpful in preparing your child with a disability for Mass attendance and what has been challenging? Is there a learning strategy, resource or accommodation that is particularly helpful to preparing your child for engaging in Mass?