

## POSITIVE WAYS TO MINISTER TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

### BASIC TIPS

- Provide barrier free access to your school, church, altar and restroom
- Offer assistance if a person appears to need it
- Ask how you can help before you act
- Be sensitive about personal contact, equipment is a part of their personal space
- Speak directly to the person, not to their companions or interpreters
- Don't assume what he/she can or cannot do
- Sit, in order to be at eye level when speaking with a person using a wheelchair
- Try to see the wholeness of spirit underneath physical appearances or unexpected behaviors
- Encourage people with disabilities to participate in a full range of parish activities
- Support families of persons with disabilities for they experience stress and isolation

### LANGUAGE TIPS

- Use "people first" language
  - Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person"
  - Say "wheelchair user" rather than "confined to a wheelchair"
 (A wheelchair allows a person to participate in society; it is liberating, not confining)
- Saying "It was good to see you" to a person who is blind is perfectly acceptable
- Avoid negative words such as "victim" or "sufferer"

### TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Speak clearly, using simple words
- Offer a consistent and structured schedule
- Use concrete, rather than abstract concepts
- Don't talk down to persons with disabilities
- Involve as many of the senses as possible in presenting information
- Be patient and allow the person to take their time to respond
- Signs and pictures are great aids to understanding spoken words
- Lesson plans need a variety of tasks, consisting of shorter lengths
- Provide instructions in a small step by step approach
- Art and music are positive additions to lessons that promote learning
- Ask a person to repeat their words, don't pretend you understood them
- Utilize peer tutors or buddy systems for needed assistance
- Relate information to the experiences and interests of the students
- Provide clues or hints for remembering new information
- Allow students to demonstrate acquired skills and knowledge in a variety of ways
- Pray, plan and prepare; then practice, review and repeat, repeat, repeat!
- Give what you naturally give to all the students – our love, praise, acceptance and especially, your faith

*"We can do no great things; only small things with great love."*

- Mother Teresa