



National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)
415 Michigan Avenue, N.E. – Suite 240
Washington, DC 20017-4501

Executive Director: Janice L. Benton
Nancy C Thompson, D.Min. Chairperson
Francis Cardinal George, OMI, Episcopal Moderator

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Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Janice L. Benton
202-529-2933
202-529-2934 (tty)
202-529-4678 (fax)

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NAMED FOR THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITY

Washington, D.C. – May 25, 2004... The Board of Directors of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) is pleased to announce the selection of Janice LaLonde Benton as NCPD's new Executive Director. Ms. Benton brings to this position more than twenty-five years of experience in the field of ministry and advocacy with persons with disabilities.

Her work during her college years as a nursing home aide, catechist and camp counselor with children and adults with mental retardation; as well as her closeness to friends and family members with assorted disabilities, raised in her a concern for the rights of people with disabilities. After receiving a B.A. in Human Development from Wayne State University in Detroit, she moved to Washington, DC in 1979 to work with the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, where she was involved in advocating on key public policy issues including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and P.L. 94-142 (currently known as the IDEA). She assisted in setting up NCPD in 1982, after having served for two years on the precursor U.S. Bishops Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities. She worked for NCPD for twenty-one years, serving in a variety of capacities including Associate Director. She has worked the last eight months for ABLEDATA, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide information resources on assistive technology products, including a web site, database, toll-free hotline, and publications.

"I am delighted to be returning to NCPD as its third Executive Director," states Ms. Benton. "It was an honor to have worked with my predecessors, Sister Rita Baum, SSJ and Mary Jane Owen, TOP, as well as other pioneers in this ministry. Much good work has been done over the years to welcome and fully

include people with disabilities in their faith communities. But there remains much to be done to support dioceses and parishes in their efforts, and to work with our partner organizations to support their commitment to inclusion. The gifts of Catholics with disabilities often go unrecognized and underutilized. We must help everyone to find a home in his or her parish community. "

With this selection, the Board of Directors affirms its commitment to partner with dioceses, parishes, and organizations across the country. "Our mission is to partner with all entities within the U.S. Catholic church and with other organizations that represent the interest of persons with disability, to secure them greater access and inclusion in the Church and community," explains Dr. Nancy Thompson, Chair of the NCPD Board of Directors. "In selecting Jan, we see a person who will be able to lead and expand our efforts to promote justice, open doors and create access. She is well known for her expertise in nurturing partnerships and networks. Her efforts in the coming year will include outreach to our network of diocesan directors of disability ministry and to our partners, including the offices of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry, the National Catholic Office for the Deaf, the National Catholic Educational Association, and the Network of Inclusive Catholic Educators. We will also be planning a national Summer Institute to be held in June 2005 in New Orleans, LA. "

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NCPD was established in 1982 to advocate for welcome and justice for people with disabilities and their families within the Catholic Church and their communities.