



NCPD

NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITY

••• *faith • giftedness • partnership*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 20, 2014

Vatican Conference on Autism
The Person with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Animating Hope

US Catholic Disability Organization
Presenting On Pastoral Care for Persons on the Autism Spectrum

Leaders from the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) will present their findings on best practices in pastoral care on Friday, November 21 ...sharing US stories of hope, challenge and innovative faith formation with Vatican officials in Rome

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The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD), an organization working closely with the US Bishops Conference, will share how US Catholic parishes and Catholic schools create communities of belonging for persons on the autism spectrum, including successful faith formation of persons who are nonverbal. This presentation will be part of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers Conference, "The Person with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Animating Hope." The three-day meeting will be held in November 20-22, 2014 in Rome. Press interviews with the US Catholic presenters are available.

NCPD advises (arch) dioceses, parishes and the US Bishops on matters of faith and disability, and works closely with the USCCB. Its Episcopal Moderator is Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and Vice President of the USCCB. More about NCPD is at www.ncpd.org.

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On Friday, November 21, NCPD will be part of a panel on pastoral care for persons on the spectrum, following presentations on the causes, research and therapies for persons with the diagnosis. For NCPD and other lay leaders, pastoral care begins with the conviction that persons with disabilities, like everyone else, are created by God and born with gifts to share. Their “giftedness” enables them not only to receive the Gospel message, but to be witnesses or “agents” of that message. Going beyond inclusion, NCPD will explain that its foundational concept is belonging, referencing that, in baptism, Catholics participate in an essential belonging to the Body of Christ, equal in dignity to one another.

For persons on the autism spectrum specifically, imaginative new methodologies and techniques have been developed by US Catholic leaders and Catholic publishers. Janice Benton, Executive Director of NCPD, will be presenting to the Vatican the findings of a survey by the NCPD Autism Task Force of US parents and their experiences of faith formation for their children with autism. Benton will relate how families are overcoming unusual challenges in partnership with their pastors, parishes and advocates.

For example, there are new sacramental preparation kits that use tactile and visual delivery systems, and many innovative programs are in use around the country to train pastors, seminarians, catechists and lay leaders. These are significant and noteworthy advances to advance access to faith for all persons living with different abilities. There is much more work to be done; NCPD praises the Vatican’s efforts raise up the needs of persons on the autism spectrum, helping to advance this specialized pastoral ministry.

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More about NCPD:

NCPD, founded in 1982, works collaboratively with the US Bishops Conference on matters of faith and disability, and is a leader in creating resources and programs for and with persons with disabilities. Their online resources are at www.ncpd.org.