

# April is Autism Awareness Month

*We are one Church, with a single Shepherd.*



**In April, we recognize the gifts of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and show how our faith leads us to create communities where all are welcome.**

## **Everybody Belongs...**

In Baptism, we become *equal in dignity* as necessary members of the Body of Christ.

Because everybody belongs, we provide supports and accommodations so that all may worship. To find out more about access to faith for anyone with special needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), please contact us.

**Archdiocese of Washington**

**Department of Special Needs Ministries**

specialneedsministry@adw.org or 301-853-4560

## **More on Autism Spectrum Disorder**

**(Courtesy of [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org))**

- It is a complex disorder of brain development
- Autism affects a person's communication, social interaction and behavior
- Some persons are nonverbal; with training and technology, they may be able to communicate effectively with others
- Rates continue to rise; latest estimates range from 1 in 50 to 1 in 88 persons
- Persons with autism are likely in most every community
- Autism is 5 times more common in boys

## **Catholic Resources**

**CatholicswithAutism.org**

(Faith Formation Tools, Prayers, Mass Petitions)

**ADW Video Trainings on Autism**

<http://site.adw.org/special-needs-resources>

**ADW Resource Guides**

<http://site.adw.org/disabilities>

**Loyola Press- Sacramental Prep Kits**

<http://www.loyolapress.com/special-needs.htm>

## ***Creating Communities Where All Are Welcome: Some Tips for Parishioners***

***Every person bears God's image, every person is a unique gift from God. And everyone has a need to express their spiritual nature, nurtured by faith in Jesus.***

- Practice Christ-like hospitality. Autism can be an isolating disorder for the whole family.
- Use *people first* language—"A person with ASD"
- Some persons may be more aware of lights, sounds, scents. Be respectful of their sensitivities.
- Some individuals may need extra space in the pew or to take a break. Sometimes a tactile object can provide centering and calming.
- Persons who are non-verbal can receive the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. They can show their spiritual understanding through gesture or respectful temperament.

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*We are all made in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, have inherent value and worth. The limitations of what we might be able to do are extrinsic to the measurement of our inherent human dignity.*



**Donald Cardinal Wuerl**

Archbishop of Washington

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The Department of Special Needs Ministries works in collaboration with the Office for Catechesis at 301-853-5368. For a Catholic education for a student with ASD, call the Office of Special Education at 301- 853- 4569.

### **Department of Special Needs Ministries**

- [specialneedsministry@adw.org](mailto:specialneedsministry@adw.org)
- 301-853-4560
- [www.facebook.com/specialneedsministry](http://www.facebook.com/specialneedsministry)
- <http://site.adw.org/special-needs>