

Children with special learning needs in the regular classroom

Welcome to the workshop; Children with special learning needs in the regular classroom.

My name is Patricia Mowbray

Just before we go into the presentation I would like to tell you a little about myself. I am married to Glenn and we have four children. I studied teaching at the then Mitchell College of Advanced Education and majored in special education. My first position was with a catholic school in the western suburbs of Sydney. During my time there I held the position of Religious Education Coordinator. I have also had teaching experience in institutions as Marsden hospital, Parramatta, Bloomfield hospital Orange, special schools such as Glen Mervyn in Randwick, Careene in Blacktown and Bathurst special school both in a voluntary and professional positions.

Not long after my husband and I married we discovered that we were infertile. It was at this time we decided to adopt children with special needs. We left our decision in God's hands and between the years of 1985 and 1991 adopted our four children. Luke has Down syndrome and a mental illness. Peter has Down syndrome and congenital heart disease, Emmalee has learning difficulties and Paul has Down syndrome and congenital heart disease.

I resigned from teaching when we adopted Luke and joined the ranks of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). I have worked as a special religious educator or catechist in the Parramatta, Wollongong and the Canberra Goulburn diocese. During that time I have been asked to assist in the full participation of children with disability and their families in the life of the Catholic Church – especially with preparation and reception of the Sacraments.

I am the disability projects officer for the Catholic Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life. In 2001 I held a national consultation on the participation of people with disability and their families in the Catholic Church in Australia. The consultation led to the pastoral document 'I Have a Story'. I discovered that many people were looking for spiritual resources and support structures for people with disability and their families. To assist in this need for resources and support the National Network for Disability

and Spirituality was formed. This network provides support to parishes, organisations and families looking for resources to promote and encourage the full participation of people with disability and their families in the life of their faith community. One of the many requests from the network and consultation was for assistance in providing appropriate religious programmes for children with disability.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has recognised the significance of this ministry and has established a new council to advise the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life on disability issues within the Catholic Church of Australia. The council is called the Australian Catholic Disability Council or ACDC.

Before we start looking at disability issues, strategies and resources, I would like to thank you sincerely for the love, dedication and work you do with the children of the state and non government schools. My own children could not attend Catholic schools but their faith was and still is enriched by generous people like you. Many other parents of children with disability would also be very grateful for your generosity in sharing your faith so deeply. On their behalf I thank you for leading and guiding our children to the arms of our loving God. We are all very grateful for the wonderful way you impart the love of God to our children. Not just in your words or how you present a lesson but by who you are and the great love you have for your faith.

To start let's look at a very general definition of disability and learning problems. I found that the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the World Health Organisation presents the best definition of disability and I quote:

It is difficult to easily define what is meant by a 'disability', but in general terms it can be considered as a condition that in some way hampers or hinders a person in terms of their ability to carry out day to day activities. The extent to which a condition hinders a person will vary from individual to individual and the general range of disabilities varies from conditions that are mild (for example, the need to wear reading glasses) to severe (for example, some forms of brain injury). In recent times various definitions or classifications of disability have been agreed to.

Mild — where a person has no difficulty with self care, mobility or communication, but uses aids or equipment;

Moderate — where a person does not need assistance, but has difficulty with self care, mobility or communication;

Severe — where a person sometimes needs assistance with self care, mobility or communication; and

Profound — where a person is unable to perform self care, mobility and/or communication tasks, or always needs assistance. Sources: ABS (1999) and WHO (1999), (2001).

We also classify disability in the following categories: physical, intellectual, and emotional disability. There may be one condition or a person may have a combination of disabilities which is sometimes referred to as multiple disabilities.

Within our Christian communities you would find approximately 1 in 5 people with disability. You may not see them in church or turn up for scripture lessons but they do exist. There are many special schools and units around – many of you may be working in one. There are also many units attached to primary schools who cater for children with disability. Children with a disability are sometimes integrated into normal school and have an aide to assist them.

Learning disability is slightly different. A learning disability is usually discussed as difficulties in reading, writing and numeracy. The child with a learning disability may also exhibit behaviour problems due to frustration and non acceptance of those around him/her. Learning disabilities are sometimes referred to as the 'hidden' disability. The child may perform and look 'normal' in every aspect but struggles with simple reading and writing tasks. You have probably come across children with learning problems in your classroom.

Let's look at what the Bible teaches on disability.

In Genesis we are told "God created human beings, making them to be like God". God made us all in God's image. Therefore if we are all made in God's image we have a responsibility to include all our brothers and sisters within our Christian life and our faith communities.

In answering the question of who is our neighbour, Jesus tells us the story of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan went out of his way to help a fellow traveller. He treats the injured man as a treasured neighbour even though he is a foreigner, of a different faith and not welcomed in the country. In this story Jesus teaches us about our common humanity where mercy and kindness are important. At another time Jesus tells us "When you give a banquet invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind"(Lk 14). Jesus is telling us to invite all to

the banquet of life. That is to include all, to give all an opportunity to participate. Paul goes on to say "In Christ there is no longer....Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female: for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal4).

St Paul's vision is that when we are baptised we are made full members of the Body of Christ. It is in this image of the body that St Paul describes us as believers of Christ. We are the body of Christ in which Jesus is the Head and we are the members. It is in this vision that we can see that all members of our faith are necessary and where everyone is indispensable. Everyone who is baptised is called and commissioned to spread the Good News, which is to evangelise. No one who is baptised is exempt or excluded from the challenge of evangelising our world.

Our mission as teachers of our faith is to provide opportunities for children with special needs to participate in our classrooms and then, if not already happening, introduce them to our faith communities. As you well know, it is often the children who evangelise the parents. Your position as educators of the faith is vital to our mission of evangelisation. This evangelisation also includes welcoming all back into our faith communities.

Pope John Paul II gives us this encouraging message "a new century, a new millennium are opening in the light of Christ. But not everyone can see this light. Ours is the wonderful and demanding task of becoming its "reflection".

After teaching his disciples to pray, Jesus said to them, "and so I say to you ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you."¹ People with disability have had many doors closed on them. Children with disability are often overlooked in regards to their formation and growth in spirituality and in their participation in the life of their faith and their local faith community. We need to look at how we can keep the door of inclusion open to children with disability in the regular setting.

With medical advances many more children with disability are being integrated into the regular classroom. Children with Down syndrome, autism, Spina bifida, Cerebral palsy are sometimes seen in the regular scripture class. Children with sensory disabilities such as visual and hearing problems are also seen within the regular setting. Probably the most common disability or challenges are children with behavioural challenges. Often these children are diagnosed with ADD or ADHD.

This workshop will look at some strategies and resources for children with disability. But first I would like to give you a brief introduction to the culture of disability and society's view on disability.

It is sometimes in the definition and perception of disability that stereotypes and oppression take root. Generally speaking, our society sees disability as a burden on humanity and a costly experience. There are some health insurers in America refusing to cover babies born with a disability who could have been identified by genetic testing. The insurers are calling this an elective disability and therefore uninsurable; suggesting or implying that having a baby with Down syndrome, Spina bifida, dwarfism or cystic fibrosis is a lifestyle choice similar to taking up smoking!² Genetic testing and awareness of one's genetic background is almost becoming a prerequisite for permission to start a family.

This attitude, however, is not new. The extermination and oppression of people with disability have been happening for many centuries. There is evidence that the Greeks abandoned their babies with disability on hillsides to die while early Chinese left their people with disability to drown in rivers (Anang, 1992). In Europe, Nero Commodus is said to have targeted bow and arrows on individuals with a physical. History also alerts us to the Spartans who killed people with disability as a matter of law; the endorsement by Martin Luther to kill babies with disability because they were 'incarnations of the devil'; the English eugenicists who eliminated people with disability under the Darwinian evolution theory of the 'survival of the fittest' and the Nazi Euthanasia Programme under Hitler to exterminate people with disability as they could not make any contribution to society. These persecutions recorded in western cultures are still evident today.³

Babies born with disability are sometimes starved of nourishment and medical procedures are sometimes denied. In our son's case we had to fight for the right for him to undergo open heart surgery. People with disability are denied access to organ transplants because they do not live productive lives.

Our son needs a cornea transplant, but he has been refused this procedure because he has a disability. To add insult to injury, people with disability are often given priority in the assisted suicide movement that is currently unfolding in our society.

Throughout history people with disability have been stereotyped. Our perception of people with disability is often bent by our own culture. Just

think of the stories from your own childhood and how many of the characters were people with disability. For example: Captain Hook; Tiny Tim; the Hunchback of Notre Dame; Mr Magoo; Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs; Dr Jeckle and Mr Hyde; Thumbelina; Giants; Dumbo; and Scar from 'Lion King'.

People with disability are sometimes classified into two groups – Victim or villain.

What are our images and perceptions of people with disability?

In magazines, the only images of people with disability we tend to see are those in charity advertisements, and their disability is the main focus of the representation. Often we are encouraged to pity the person represented, or give them support in another way. Likewise in the movies; disability is seen as a great storyline - one to inspire pity in audiences and Oscar nominations from your peers. For example Tom Cruise in Born on the Fourth of July, Russell Crowe in A Beautiful Mind and Audrey Hepburn in Wait until Dark. These actors are applauded for their fine performances, as though the representation of disability were an exceptionally dangerous and skilful thing. This is fundamentally wrong - we can only accept the beautiful people pretending to be incapacitated. Is this the equivalent of white actors 'blacking up' to play Othello? ⁴

In her article 'We Don't Need a Fairytale World', Joanne Green writes,

From the cradle our children are taught about the value of physical beauty. Cinderella, for example, was the beautiful and morally good victim of her ugly stepsisters' brutality. In Grimm's account of sleeping beauty, (again, a child whose goodness was surpassed only by her beauty), the wicked fairy that caused all her trouble was, in fact, quite ugly and unacceptable even in the company of other fairies. Badness is described in fairytales by the presence of physical differences. Witches must be ugly, complete with warts and hooked noses. Trolls have to have hunched backs and sharp teeth. If a pirate is bad, he must be missing some part of his anatomy - a hook for a hand; a peg for a leg; a patch where an eye should be; virtually every bad character in children's classic literature is physically flawed in some visible way.⁵

From a young age we are exposed to attitudes and perceptions that distort our view of people who look, sound or speak differently from us. Society subtly teaches us that difference must be seen as a threat to the well being of the community and that this difference must be hidden or

eliminated. Today the message is a little more subtle but perhaps more extensive with our widespread media exposure.

Fiona Strahan, a frequent consultant for disability advocacy in Australia told these stories.

About a year and a half ago, I was in a department store with my adult niece and was approached by a talent scout who asked if I was interested in acting. Within seconds my mind catapulted me into the leading role of a complex, passionate interesting person, perhaps Trudi from *Stones of the River* or Cady from *Maybe the Moon*. Both fantastic roles for dwarf women. I came crashing to earth as he asked excitedly if I had seen a particular advertisement on TV for a hardware shop which had short-statured people dressed as elves dancing around being cute and silly. He handed me his card and encouraged me to give their agency a call. I don't think at this stage I had uttered a word or inhaled a breath!

Not so long ago the Australian Motor Vehicle Accident Authority ran a series of advertisements using Paralympians who were speaking to the camera about how you too could end up like them as a result of your own drink driving/speeding or being hit by someone else in that state. Some felt the message implied that there is something far worse than death - and that is using a wheelchair...that disability is tragic, and even an elite athlete doesn't want to be disabled. The implication is also that if you use a wheelchair then you too would rather be either not disabled or dead.

All these examples broaden the belief in our community that disability is something to be exploited and avoided, at all costs. ⁶

ACTIVITY: On your table there is an envelope. Have a look at the pictures and decide which category they belong in.

Victim; where the PWD is depicted as someone to be pitied.

Villain; the character has some physical difference and is portrayed as 'bad' or evil.

Valued; the picture depicts people with disability in a regular, appropriate and included setting.

Next time you produce a worksheet or activity I invite you to use pictures that also include people with disability. There are some in the workbook that you could use. There are many also available on the internet.

Another way in which our society perceives people with disability is through language. Language can be used to hurt, oppress and exclude people. Terms like retard, 'spaz', deaf and dumb, and deformed come with an explicit message. People with disability are oppressed by the use of disability terms to describe negative behaviour characteristics. For example; 'she can't see past her nose', 'limping along' and 'the blind leading the blind.'

It would be unacceptable to use racist words today and many steps have been taken to abolish and discourage the use of such words from our language. However, it's quite acceptable to call someone a 'moron' or an 'idiot.' Both these words were used as a medical definition of someone with an intellectually disability.

Some well meaning people express the view that we all have disability. Perhaps it would be better to say that we all have limitations as, to declare we all have disability of some form could shape attitudes that dismiss the real problems people with disability have and must face in their day to day living.

In the past two decades the voices of people with disability and their families have started to be heard both in society and in our faith communities. Some changes have taken place in our churches but we still have a long way to go. Many of our churches are still inaccessible, very few of our church documents are available in Braille, inclusion in our Christian schools is still very low, many of our attitudes towards people with disability participating in our services is very poor and our own theology of disability is somewhat lacking. Our language within liturgical celebrations is often oppressive and the emphasis on some scriptural passages can lead to the misunderstanding of the gospel messages and a mixed message about people with disability.

As educators we need to be a people of compassion and relationship; a place where we all feel welcomed; a place where love abides and thrives.

Now I would like to give you a few facts regarding disability and how it impacts on your scripture classes.

In 1998, eighteen per cent of all children aged less than eighteen years of age lived with a parent who had a disability.⁷ In some cases; children are responsible for the day to day care of these parents. Some of these parents are illiterate and have very few opportunities to mix with their peers. Often they struggle with parenting, hygiene and relationship

issues. The biggest fear these parents face is losing their children to foster care if they make a mistake. You may have some children in your classes that are carers for their parents or siblings. This is why our job as special religious educators is so vital. We may be the only ones to offer these children any spiritual guidance and nourishment in their life as they struggle with some very difficult and challenging situations.

Today, there is an increase in incidence of parents being blamed for not terminating pregnancies of identified genetic disability and they are strongly advised not to reproduce in the future without genetic counselling. Society is declaring and proclaiming that the only life worth living is that which it deems as fully human, productive and capable.

The divorce rate among parents of children with disability is usually higher than the norm. It is estimated that there are 40,000 sole parent carers in Australia. Also, 30.6% of children with disability live in single-parent families, compared with an estimated 18.1% of children without disability.⁸ Long periods in hospital, ongoing illness, sleep deprivation, financial strain, behaviour problems and lack of support put marriages under a great deal of stress. I have known couples to separate because respite was so difficult to come by. After separating they could share the care of their child with disability. They didn't like the arrangement, but at least they had a break from a very demanding situation. One parent of a child with disability told me, if another person tells me that I have a place in heaven I will scream. Why don't they give me a hand now while I try and survive this hell on earth?

The 'hell on earth' she was referring to wasn't the child; it was the lack of understanding from her parish, the rejection from the parish school and the exhaustion in caring for her two other children, her husband and her child with disability that required ongoing medical care.

As the child with disability grows older many parents seek spiritual education and participation in scripture classes or church services and liturgies. Inclusion of children with disability is low within the private schools system and most children with disability attend government schools. Again, SREs are vital in providing spiritual formation and nourishment for children and their families. Parents express views of disappointment and disillusionment that they receive little support from the private education sector – especially Christian based schools. They question the authenticity of Christian beliefs that promote life issues before birth, but seemingly forget about the family after birth. What

does it say to society that we do not, in the majority of cases, provide opportunities for spiritual development education for children with disability? Often parents are faced with well meaning people telling them that their children don't need to go to church, receive the Sacraments, and attend scripture classes because they are 'angels' already. This takes away the humanness of the child and suggests that perhaps this soul does not need the nourishment, graces and blessings of participating in scripture classes or services and liturgies. We need to support parents of children with disability. When we are supportive it is a clear message to society that we value and respect all life.

Often the forgotten member of the family living with disability is the sibling. The sibling of a person with disability is sometimes overlooked and they, at times, feel forgotten. Siblings need support in many ways. We need to especially provide pastoral care for these children and young adults as the message they receive and perceive from the Christian community now may influence their decision on life issues at a later stage in their life.

People with disability are among the most oppressed people in our world. Our society values competition, perfectionism and individualism.

We must become a loving and inclusive people where life is celebrated and limitations supported. We as SRE can and do, take the lead in forging a new value system in our society where everyone is valued, welcomed and precious, instead of reflecting the current culture of death so prevalent in today's world.

There are a few strategies we can use that can be helpful.

Without being too intrusive ask the parents about their child, about the disability and about what they like and dislike. Sometimes it is helpful to ask the parents what they hope their child will receive from the class. This helps to keep goals achievable and realistic. If, for example, the parent is looking for community participation for their child then excellence in bookwork is not so important. However, if the child shines in bookwork then it would be important to use bookwork as a teaching tool. It is also a good strategy to ask the child what they hope to receive from the class. This may not happen for a while but as the child feels more relaxed and confident they will be happy to tell you what they want to learn.

The teachers at the school may also be a valuable resource. It may be helpful to meet with the teachers and discuss strategies and specific

challenges at the beginning of the year. Most teachers are happy to include spiritual development and education within the child's individual learning plan – especially if the parent has requested it. Ask the parent to include spiritual education within the child's individual learning plan or suggest that the school or teacher may like to include your input in their reporting to the parent.

The most common challenges you may come across are hearing and sight disability. Hearing impairment can also include auditory impairment. This is when a child may not be able to discriminate between your voice and background noise. It's not so much a hearing disorder as a problem that is with how the brain interprets different sounds. A child with this problem might be easily distracted and only respond to half of a request.

For example. Turn to page 14 then put your pencils down. A child with this problem may only hear the first part, turn to page 14, or the second part, put your pencil down. You can see the sort of problems this disorder can cause both to the student and the teacher.

The same applies to visual perception and discrimination disorders. Glare, words running together and being unable to read along a line of words causes many problems for children with this disorder.

Another more common problem in the classroom is behaviour problems. First, let me say that there are no naughty children out there. There are children confused, abused, struggling with learning and children that just need to be noticed. In my experience children that are the most disruptive are those with problems medically, at home or at school. Again, parents are your best resource. Ask parents how they are at school. Does the child take any medication or are they allergic to anything? Is the child missing out on something to come to scripture class?

Another strategy is to take a look at the child's book work. Untidy work, using dark colours, and being distracted easily are all good signposts that the child is struggling with learning. If you can, see what the child is good at. For example, does the child like to read out aloud? Do they prefer drama to colouring in, etc?

On this point of reading aloud; never surprise a child by asking them to read aloud. Always ask for volunteers to read. Then, slowly establish who has reading problems and who needs confidence to read aloud. When children feel comfortable and not threatened in a class situation they are likely to participate and share more and with you.

Discover strong points in the child. God has given us all gifts in a particular area. Perhaps at the beginning of the year ask your class what they are good at and build your lessons around their gifts and talents. Does the child like to draw? If so, the child could make some resources for you. Remember, it's all about being part of the church community not completing all the activities in the book.

Henri Nouwen a Dutch theologian states "It's not in doing, but it being that's important."

Positive experiences in the classroom will give the child confidence to participate in their faith community.

Problems at home or at school are difficult. Perhaps, you could set aside some time for the child to speak to you while the other children are busy with an activity. Often these children feel unloved and rejected by everyone. Praise and asking them to do special jobs can help here.

With a child who is very disruptive, you need, (and I know how difficult it is) to be patient. Wait until the child does something appropriate and then praise the child. When appropriate, ignore behaviour that is disruptive. Having firm class rules helps establish boundaries for children. I have found sending 'happy notes' home often helps with a child who is disruptive. But it takes time to establish trust. Again some children that are disruptive have a gift in some area. Try and encourage that gift in the classroom. Adapt the programme to suit. *For example*, instruction to child, "you can do half this page and then look at the bible, or do another activity."

You may need to adapt the workbook you are using. There are some examples of adapted pages for children with learning difficulties in the workbook.

You may like to also use hard covered books, Velcro worksheets and games to supplement or replace the workbook.

Another area that is often overlooked is children who are gifted. These children finish their work quickly and often look for more work to do. They are enthusiastic but can become bored easily. You can provide extension work for them by having some activities 'up your sleeve'. Another idea is for them to help make resources. Another strategy is to ask the child to help out as a 'buddy' partner for one of the other children. However, it is

vital that you talk to both children about this plan and respect what decision they come to.

The child who is gifted will most likely tell you what they are interested in in regards to their faith. Challenge them by suggesting they do a short presentation on their chosen topic.

The good news is that as SRE you are already probably providing inclusive opportunities for children. As SREs you are flexible and creative in your teaching methods. Children with special needs just need your love and creativity.

Some questions you might like to reflect on at another time are

-What is my attitude to people with disability in general?

-How do I feel about having a child with disability my class? What is my greatest fear?

- Am I willing to try again if the first strategy fails?

These are important questions to answer for your planning during the year and for each lesson.

When we answer these questions we may see that behind our reluctance to have a child with special needs in our class is a feeling of fear. And that's OK. We sometimes fear situations when we don't know what will happen; we may have questions like - will we be able to cope? And how will this affect the other children? All very valid questions and my first suggestion would be to pray. Pray about your situation and then try the following:

1. *Take a risk* and advertise your scripture classes as being open to all and catering for all needs; especially if your faith community has a special school or unit in its vicinity.

2. *Getting to know you.* Get to know the student through the parents and, if possible through other service providers like physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and the school they attend. These professionals are often happy to assist and give you ideas.

3. *Evaluate and Plan.* Does the child need access to the classroom? Does the class need to be rearranged so that the child can see/hear or move around more easily? Do you need to adapt the programme? Like larger

print, using Compic signs, sign language, FM audio, letting the child bring in their laptop computer. Parents and teachers can be your greatest resource here.

4. *Introduce.* Before the child becomes part of your group talk to your children and their parents, if required. Be careful of privacy issues and emphasis the gifts of the child rather than the disability. Answer whatever questions you can.

5. *First steps.* The first day will be the hardest but remember that our main aim is for the child to belong to the group. Don't worry if not too much work is completed. Let the children interact but in an ordered fashion. Try to encourage the other children to go slowly so as to not overwhelm the child with disability.

6. *Watch, resolve and seek.* Watch what is going on with the other children, resolve any problems quickly and seek help if the problem seems too much. Overall, don't give up. You will see amazing things happen in your class.

Let's just tie these strategies up into three neat stacks.

1. Attitude; be open to all. Many faith communities already have wonderful programmes for children with disability. I know that already some of the scripture classes here have facilitated changes to accommodate children with special needs. Keep in contact with your local schools. Teachers at your school are a wonderful resource and can help with opportunities for children to participate within classes.
2. Encourage your pastoral council within your faith community to include people with disabilities in their planning. Families and individuals living with disability are the best resource you can have for future planning for your faith communities.

Does your church lend itself to having people with disability assisting with liturgies and services? Are people /families with disability encouraged to join in the faith community's life by doing special jobs during services and liturgies?

Does your parish/faith community have a strategy of locating and welcoming families living with a disability?

All these questions relate to our attitude to people with disability. An open heart means open doors.

Be correct; Use correct language like Sonia has Down syndrome not Sonia is a downs. Tony uses a wheelchair not Tony is a spastic, Sue has an intellectual disability not Sue is a retard. Fred has a hearing impairment not deaf Fred. Remember that disability is only one part of the person, the person is first and foremost a human being made in the image of God, then comes the disability.

3. Physical structure. Rearrange your classroom if you have a child using a walker or wheelchair. Is there access to your classroom? Are there parking spaces for people with disabilities to use? What materials do you need? Is your faith community accessible? Once inside the church can people using walking frames, wheelchairs and canes use the pews, able to use the lectern, able to receive Communion and return to their seat without too many obstacles? Does your church have audio loop, large print hymn books? For example; we can afford to do simple things like taking out a seat and a kneeler so that there is space for a wheelchair to manoeuvre. Building a simple wooden ramp so that a child in a wheelchair can read at a church service or Mass or putting in an audio loop so that people wearing hearing aides can participate more fully.

As the Body of Christ there is much we can do to promote the value of people with disability.

Bill Williams, a theologian with cystic fibrosis, who died in 1998, wrote,

If we disappear from your sight, it may be because our courage failed. We decided not to burden you, and ourselves, with our presence. But, I've been with people who are not made anxious by my brokenness, and I've seen the difference. It is, in fact, the best definition of ministry I have ever heard; I nearly wept when I heard it, it so defined what I needed. Engrave this on your forehead, if you wish to do good:

Ministry is a non anxious presence.

You can tell such grace by its care, by its attentive ear, by its pace. When it reaches out to heal you, it is to give relief to you, not itself - and when it prays with you, it lets you declare your own burdens, rather than declaring what it finds burdensome about you.⁹

Footnotes

1 Luke 11: 9-10

2. Tormey, S. (2005). Conceiving Perfection. Canberra's Child Vol 2 No 6. pp. 10-11.

3. Kisanji, J. Attitudes and Beliefs about Disability in Tanzania. [Online].

4. Strahan, F. Encounters with the Media - Seeking a New Aesthetic. [Online].

5. Green, J. (1993). We Don't Need a Fairytale World. Wide Smiles Summer Issue.

6. Strahan, F. Encounters with the Media - Seeking a New Aesthetic. [Online].

7 Children with Disabilities in Australia. (2004). Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Canberra.

8. Children with Disabilities in Australia. (2004). Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Canberra.

9. Williams, B. (1998). Naked Before God. Morehouse Publishing: Harrisburg. pp. 32-33

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www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/disability

