

Autism: Forming Faith through a Community of Inclusion

Presenter: Sue Swanson M.A., CCC-SLP

**Co-sponsored by Boston College
and the Archdiocese of Boston, Office of Religious Education**

*Generously supported by the Pyne Endowment Trust,
in memory of Professor Margaret E. Pyne, a lifelong advocate for persons with
disabilities.*

***February 26, 2010
Agenda***

Morning Session* (9:30-12:00)

- We are Sacrament for One Another
- Understanding Autism: Core Strengths and Challenges

Lunch (12:00 – 12:45)

Afternoon Session* (12:45-3:00)

- Honoring the Learning Profile of Persons with Autism
- Total Community Catechesis (TCC): a Model for Inclusion
- Creating an Individualized and Inclusive Faith Formation Plan for a Child with Autism
- Workshop Summary
- Questions

**Morning and afternoon sessions will include a 15-minute break*

Faith Formation Questionnaire

*To better meet your child's spiritual and faith formation needs
we ask complete this questionnaire.*

Thank you!

Name:

Parish:

Parents:

Date of Birth:

Email:

Age:

Phone

Home Address:

- 1. What are the hopes you have for your child's faith formation?**

- 2. How may we support your efforts?**

- 3. What are your child's strengths/gifts?**

- 4. Does your child enjoy being with others?**

- 5. What activities, toys and interests does he/she particularly enjoy?**

- 6. Sacramental Preparation Needs: *Baptism Communion Confirmation***

- 7. Attends Mass? *Yes/No:***
No challenges Some challenges Many challenges Cannot attend Mass because:

Sensory Needs

8. Some children are very sensitive to their environment. Lights may be too bright, sounds may be too loud, certain food textures may be aversive. Such sensitivities can interfere with a child's ability to be comfortable and alert in their environment.

Please describe any sensitivities your child may have:

9. What supports are particularly helpful for your child? (i.e., what soothes your child when he or she is upset? What "revs" them up so that they are able to be attentive?):

- a) Activities? (e.g., movement breaks, swinging, bouncing, deep pressure, chewing, quiet space):

- b) Objects? (e.g., swings, trampoline, squeeze toys)

- c) Learning Supports? (e.g., schedule, timers, first/then boards, other)

- d) Interpersonal Supports? (i.e., knowing the "signs" when the child is becoming upset; knowing how to support the child when he or she is becoming emotionally overwhelmed; knowing how to motivate the child to interact and engage with others)

- e) Are there behavior and/or sensory challenges at home? If so, please provide examples:

10: How does your child communicate with you? (The following examples are offered to guide you in describing your child)

- Communication is primarily nonverbal, gestures and/or some single words
- Communication is primarily gestures and short phrases

- Communication is primarily phrases and sentences where there is frequent “back and forth” conversation

11. Please list any allergies you child may have:

12. Preferred foods/ snacks/beverages:

13. What ways of care and support that the parish can provide you and your family?

14. Sometimes it is helpful to meet the child with autism in an environment that is most familiar and comfortable to them. Would you be interested in having a member of the parish faith formation team come to your home to become acquainted with you and your child?

15: Do you have any other comments/concerns that you would like us to consider?

Thank you! We look forward to supporting you, your child and your family in anyway that we can.

Criteria for Creating Meaningful Faith Formation Opportunities for Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders

1. Create faith routines that engage the child, relationally, experientially and affectively:

A. Relational- because children with autism experience specific difficulties socially relating to others, any and all *relating* is potentially sacramental and catechetical. For persons with autism this means that any positive developmental shift in the child's ability to relate to another person is a moment of grace if someone notices, accepts and celebrates the child's self-expression (see "The Sacramental Principle" handout). When a child with autism specifically demonstrates one of the following, it is a particular cause for celebration!

- *Social Interaction:* requesting a social routine, requesting comfort, giving praise, greeting and bidding good-bye, calling (a person's name to get their attention), requesting permission, showing off
- *Joint Attention:* Commenting, requesting information, providing information.

Remember that the above communicative acts may be communicated verbally or nonverbally.

B. Experiential- depending upon the developmental level of the child create opportunities that primarily involve "seeing and doing". These may gradually include "listening and talking" but it is recommend that one start with the child's relative area of strengths. Always confer with the parents.

C. Affective- partner is emotional attuned to child, opportunity to name emotion, to assign positive and negative value to emotion within the context of the situation; routine is motivating, positive and meaningful; where over time religious emotions such as awe, joy, trust, gratitude, sorrow are evoked, named and meaningful

2. Create faith routines that reflect core catechetical and ministerial themes of Welfare, Word, Witness and Worship. Consider routines that may have a direct correlation to the liturgy of the Mass. For example, a home routine might comprise the child helping the parent bring the dinner food to the table. Over time the child may recognize the liturgical connection of the home dinner routine with the preparation of the gifts and the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

3. Create individualized routines that are appropriate for the child's developmental level and learning style. Position the child for success by ensuring that the appropriate interpersonal and learning supports are in place (*see Emotional Regulation Supports handout*).

Worksheet

Creating Meaningful Faith Formation

Opportunities for Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Foundational Information	
Name of Child	
Identify the context of the faith routine (home, Mass, faith community, CRE class, world, other).	
Identify and describe the routine.	
Is the routine developmentally appropriate for the child?	
What interpersonal/learning supports might be helpful?	
Key Criteria (Relational, Experiential, Affective)	
Relational: Who are the faith partners that will be a part of this routine (e.g., who will the child be directly interacting with)?	
Experiential: How is the routine experiential? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing • Doing • Listening • Talking 	
Affective: How is this routine affect-based? (i.e., what emotions might be evoked? Ex: happy, sad, angry, silly, proud, anxious, curious, hopeful, grateful, joyous, delighted, awestruck)	
Other Considerations	
What core catechetical and/or ministerial theme(s) might this routine reflect? (e.g., ministries of Worship, Word, Witness, Welfare)	
What parallel routine/ritual/practice correlates to the liturgy of the Mass (if applicable)?	

Total Community Catechesis

Groome, T., 2009

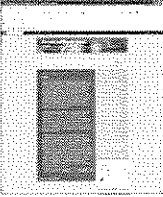
	Word	Worship	Welfare	Witness
Child Family				
Faith Community				
World				

Groome, T.
Course: TM 717: The Education of Christians; Past, Present
and Future; Spring, 2009
Lecture: Total Community Catechesis; 4-29-09

Autism: Forming Faith within a Community of Inclusion

Susan Swanson, MA, CCC-SLP
 Pyne Foundation Lecture
 Boston College and
 the Archdiocese of Boston
 February 26, 2010

<http://knowinggodthroughautism.blogspot.com>



GRATITUDE AND CREDIT:


Tom Groome Ph.D.
 Rev. Michael Himes
 Jane Regan Ph.D.
 Rev. Ed Vacek S.J.

"I Have Called You by Name"



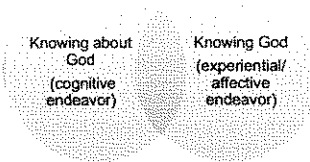
"People First Language"

The Sacramental Principle

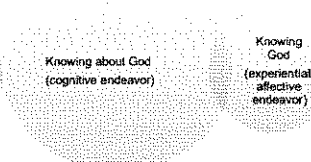


THE ABILITY TO RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR KNOWING GOD

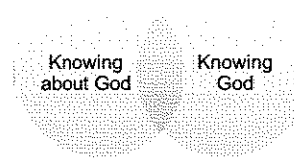
Different ways of knowing God

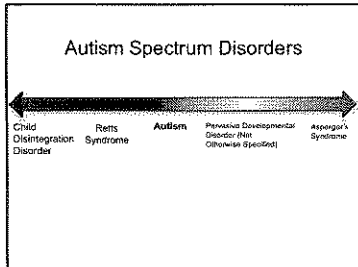


Different ways of knowing God



We Need Both





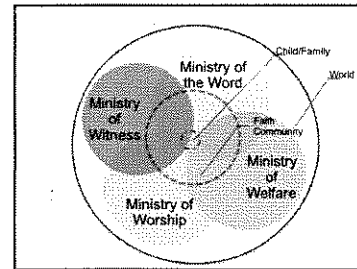
Transactional Supports

Learning Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waiting ▪ completion ▪ sequence of activity ▪ schedule 	Interpersonal Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ voice modulation ▪ physical proximity ▪ ability to be "in tune" with signals indicating dysregulation
--	---

Learning Supports

Learning Supports

Sensory Supports

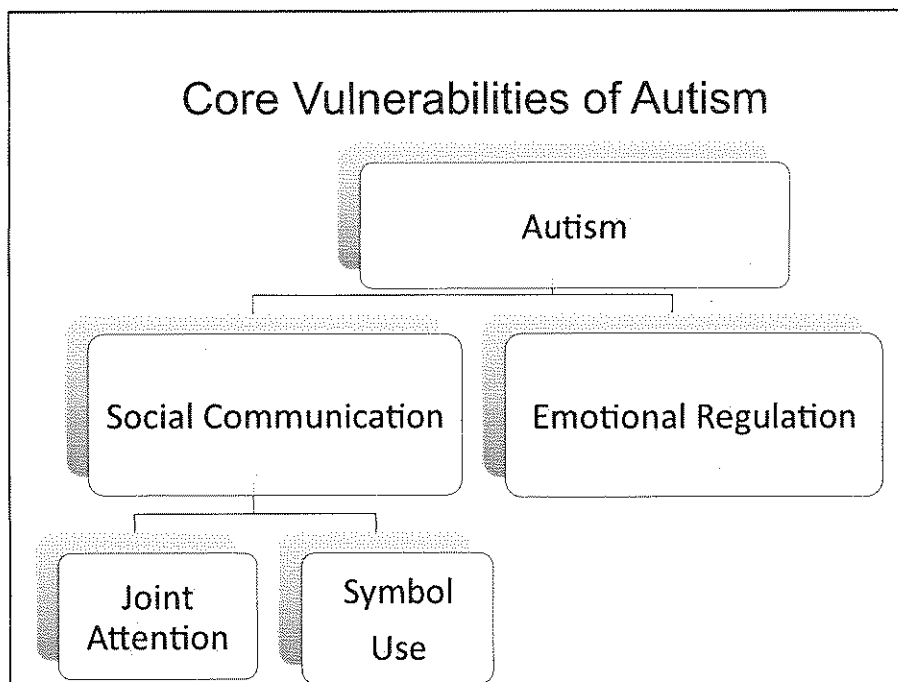
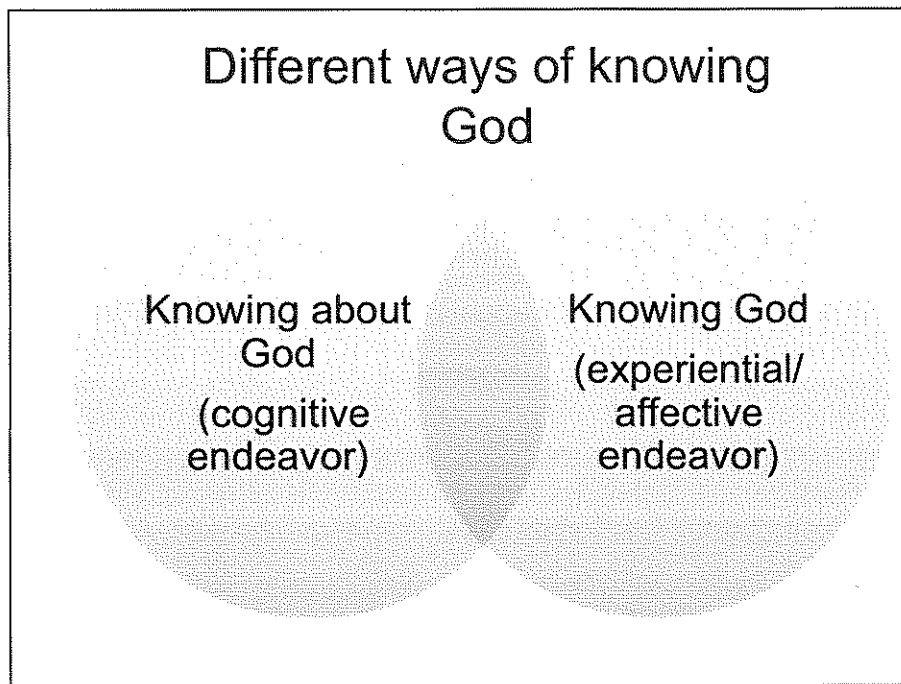


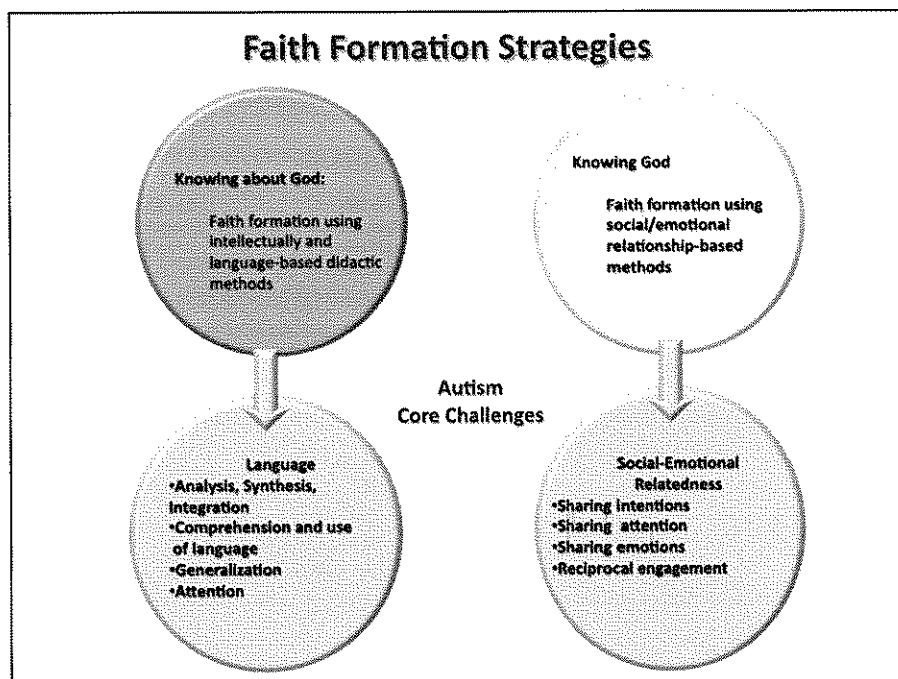
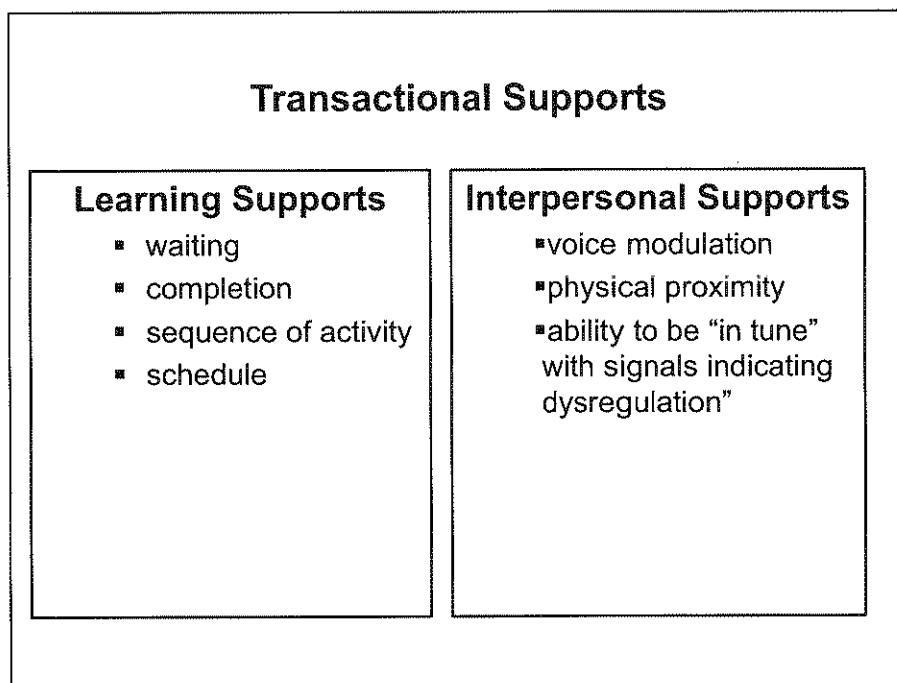
Total Community Catechesis

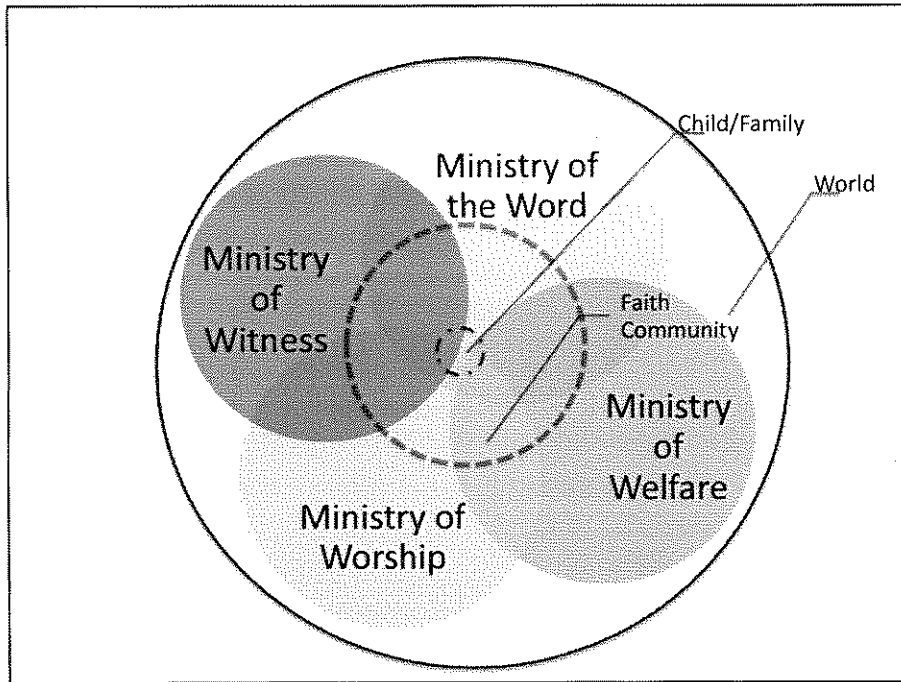
Groome, T. 2009

	Word	Worship	Welfare	Witness
Child	•••	•••	•••	•••
Family	•••	•••	•••	•••
Faith Community	•••	•••	•••	•••
World	•••	•••	•••	•••

Groome, T.
Course: TIM 117: The Education of Christians: Past, Present and Future, Spring, 2009
Lecture: Total Community Catechesis, 4-29-09







Recommended Reading for the Formation of Faith for Persons with and without Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities:

Carter, Erik. *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks, 2007.

Elliot, Matthew. *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006.

Groome, Thomas. *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.

Groome, Thomas. *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991.

Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Himes, Michael. *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003.

Himes, Michael. *Doing the Truth in Love: Conversations about God: Relationships and Service*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

Hotz, Kendra and Matthew Mathews. *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Regan, Jane. *Toward an Evangelizing Church*. Washington, D.C: National Catholic Educational Association, 2003.

Regan, Jane. *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.

Roberts, Robert. *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

Vogt, Herbert. *Sacramental Theology*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

Recommended Autism Reference

Prizant, Barry, Amy Wetherby, et al. *The SCERTS Model: A Comprehensive Educational Approach for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2006.