



National Apostolate for
Inclusion Ministry

Material on this tip sheet
is adapted and
reproduced from
Chapter 1, **Sacramental
Preparation Eucharist:
Individualizing Lesson
Plans**

© 1996 University of
Dayton.

Reprinted with
Permission for Internet
Dissemination.

P.O. Box 218
Riverdale, MD 20738
phone: 800.736.1280
email: qnafim@aol.com

www.nafim.org

*Promoting the Full Inclusion of People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in the
Life of the Catholic Church*

What Are Sacraments

By Marilyn Bishop

It may be helpful to realize that every religion in the world makes use of sacraments. A broad definition of sacrament is: "a sign or symbol of something which is sacred and mysterious." The religions of the world have many sacraments understood in that way. The signs and symbols of sacraments can be categorized into: sacred actions (praying, singing, eating, fasting, dancing, meditating, rituals, gesturing, etc.); sacred objects (pictures, statues, vestments, vessels, tools, writing, food, drink, etc.); or sacred persons (priest, victims, kings, saints, shamans, virgins, gurus, prophets, etc.).

There are other understandings of sacrament. For instance, there are sociological interpretations which say that sacramental rituals are usually social ceremonies. Parents often see the sacraments as rites of passage and this sometimes influences their desire to have their own child with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities included in the public church ceremony.

There are psychological interpretations which say that sacraments are designed to affect the thoughts and feelings of those who believe in them. Students with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities as well as the other students are influenced by the thoughts and ideas that are taught. They are also receptive to the manner in which they are taught.

There are theological interpretations which say that sacraments are symbolic expressions of sacred realities which are recognized and accepted by those who have faith. From this understanding of sacrament we approach the descriptions of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation in the related information sheets.

© 2010 National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry. All Rights Reserved. Exact copies of this Information Sheet may be made for personal use or for distribution in a diocese or local congregation provided the material is distributed free of charge. For all other uses, permission must be obtained from the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry.