



National Apostolate for
Inclusion Ministry

To Order

**Awakening Spiritual
Dimensions**

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*Envisioning a Catholic Church Where People with Intellectual/Developmental
Disabilities Are Welcomed for Their Gifts and Their Presence*

Severe Disabilities

Awakening Spiritual Dimensions: Prayer Services with Persons with Severe Disabilities

By Rev. William L. Gillum, OSF, Cap., M.Ed.

Awakening Spiritual Dimensions is a religious education program and curriculum in the form of prayer services for people with severe disabilities. Father Gillum developed this program with the belief that severe disabilities are no impediment to the spiritual life. He presumes his flock can KNOW not only by their minds but in their bodies and hearts. This program grew out of his experiences as Chaplain at the McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, PA.

Using peaceful gifts of quiet music, aromas, the loving touch of blessing and a personal opportunity to reverence the bible, the Christian community is evoked. When a person with severe disabilities perceives he or she is loved by others, it is easy for that person to believe that God loves him or her. Father Gillum presumes his flock can KNOW not only in their minds but in their bodies and hearts.

Program

The Awakening Program has three components: gathering for fellowship; entry to the "sacred space;" individual welcome and the prayer session. Each of these components contributes to the solemnity and sacredness of calling forth the spiritual dimension within the person with severe disabilities. Once the routine has been established, the participants become attuned to the flow of the proceeding. By their growing reverential silence and sense of the holy the reality of God is learned by experience and celebration.

Prayer Services

Awakening Spiritual Dimensions includes a curriculum of twenty-five prayer services which can stand alone or be used as sacramental preparation for First Eucharist. The format for the prayer service is easily adapted for continued growth in faith learning and advancement in the life of the spirit. The opening prayer and intercessory prayers which flank the scripture and lesson can have a repetitive aspect to reinforce scripture and the lesson. The program has been used with ecumenical groups in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The program has also been used successfully with youth with traumatic brain injury in a reverse-inclusion class.

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