As we observe Black History Month in February, so we celebrate both Women’s History Month and Developmental Disabilities Month in March.

Each of these remembrances are important to us, especially as Catholic Christians who believe that we are all sisters and brothers, children of the one God who loves us into life.

How the celebrations came to be
Like Black History Month, Women’s History Month is a relatively recent observance.
- Both grew out of the gradual awareness that a considerable segment of humanity had for too long been written out of most history books.
- Both began with the efforts of a few individuals determined to right historical injustices.
- Both received official status first as a week’s observance, later as a full month.

Negro History Week was first celebrated in 1926, during the second week of February

Black History Month as we know it today was first observed in 1976, by order of Congress for the 200th birthday of our country.

National Women’s History Week was first observed in 1981, in the week coinciding with March 8, International Women’s Day.

Women’s History Month as observed today was first celebrated in 1987 and has been renewed by proclamation every year since.

The first National Developmental Disabilities Month was declared by Congress in March, 1987, and has been observed regularly since then, by annual proclamation.

In Ohio, it was first designated as MRDD Awareness or “Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Awareness”. As of last year, that has been changed to DD Awareness, or “Developmental Disabilities Awareness.”

Value and Dignity of all
At the heart of all three of these observances is our Christian belief that:

- every single person has value and dignity;
- by virtue of our baptism we are called to uphold that dignity in each person.

In the Rite of Baptism, during the anointing with the Chrism, the priest prays that:

“As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as members of his body . . .”

Called to be a prophet
By our baptism, we are called to a prophetic role in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ.

A prophet is not one who foretells the future, but one who:
- Sees a situation that is unjust, or sinful
- Calls this wrong to the attention of the people
- Reminds them of what is right, of what is God’s way
- Challenges the people to re/turn to the ways of God.

A prophet is what each of us is called, by Baptism, to be whenever anyone is being treated unjustly, is being marginalized or excluded in any way.

As persons charged with the proclaiming and teaching of God’s word, and called to be prophets of the Word, we look to these three observances as an opportunity to share that word with our learners.
“Have Life to the Full” In Service

Provide: Bible; paper and pencils for each person  
Begin with a proclamation of the Word from John 10: 10b  (Jerusalem Bible translation)

“I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Think for a minute about what it means to “have life to the full,” or, as it appears in some translations, to “have it in abundance.”

Jot down any words that come to mind (or draw an image, if you prefer).

Discuss: (five minutes maximum)
- Who are some of the groups of people that, for whatever reason, are denied a full life by our society/culture?
- What has been your experience of someone being excluded or disregarded?
- What is God’s answer to such a situation?

Consider: (four minutes maximum)
- What efforts might you and your learners undertake (or perhaps have already undertaken) to respond to the situation?

Close with the reading from Ephesians 2: 9-10  (Jerusalem Bible translation)

We are God’s work of art,  
created in Christ Jesus for the good works  
which God has already designated to make up our way of life.

Ideas for every age

- Use In-Service, above, with high school, RCIA or adult faith formation groups.
- Research persons with disabilities who nonetheless have achieved great things, e.g.,
  - Helen Keller, both blind and deaf;
  - Beethoven, who continued to compose music after losing his hearing;
  - Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein, both of whom were labeled “failures” in school because of learning disabilities;
  - Franklin D. Roosevelt, who continued as president after his legs were paralyzed by polio, etc.
- Do a presentation on the person’s life (use stories, artwork, drama . . .)
  - What can we learn from each of them?
  - What do their lives reveal about God’s gifts?
- Assign the sermons/chapters of Strength to Love by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. to individuals or small groups (depending on size of main group).
  - After reading (and discussing among themselves), ask them to express the core idea of their chapter to the rest of the group.
    - Write their own “sermon” or homily and present it orally.
    - Prepare a poster or montage or other visual art piece.
    - Make a short video.
    - Present a mime.
    - Use a song or hymn that is appropriate, etc.
- Research the significant women listed on the next page and why their lives are important. As above, report using a variety of modes of expression.
In the past we provided correlations of the information covered in Timely Topics to the RGCS. We will resume this along with a correlation with the National Certification Standards, in the hope that this will help leaders to see the formational function of this material.

Religion Graded Course of Study

Standard IV-A: Every person is loved by God first and is made in the image and likeness of God
Standard IV-B: One responds to the love of God by growing in relationship to God, others, self and all creation
Standard IV-C: The inherent dignity of each person
Standard IV-D: Discipleship as living out one’s baptismal call

National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity PCL 1.9; PCL 1.10
Standard Two: Identity PCL 2.6; PCL 2.8
Standard Three: Catholic Theology PCL 3.11
Standard Four: Pastoral Praxis PCL 4.11; PCL 4.12; PCL 4.16
Standard Five: Professional Practice PCL 5.15

ONLINE

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/womenshistorymonth/a/whm_history.htm
Historical background, numerous links, primarily for jr. high through adult learners

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr058.shtml
Curriculum-related activities, history, biographies, for variety of ages

www.infoplease.com/spot/womenshistory1.html
Wide range of related links: History & Timelines; Special Features; Especially for Kids; Prize Winners & Honorees; "Fun Stuff" Quizzes, and more.

**N.B. The link on “Health & Reproductive Issues” contains material that should be viewed through the lens of Church teachings.

BOOKS


Correlation to the Graded Course of Study & Certification Standards

Significant Women

Clara Barton Anne Frank Mary McLeod Bethune
Rosa Bonheur Jane Goodall Maria Montessori
Margaret Bourke-White Fannie Lou Hamer Anne Morrow Lindbergh
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Mary Harris (Mother) Jones Rosa Parks
Rachel Carson Barbara Jordan Sacajawea
Shirley Chisholm Helen Keller St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Dorothy Day Harper Lee Annie Sullivan
Henriette Delisie Edmonia Lewis Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha
St. Katherine Drexel Clare Booth Luce Sojourner Truth
St. Rose Philippine Duchesne Christa McAuliffe Babe Didrickson Zaharias

Women’s History Resources

OnLine

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/womenshistorymonth/a/whm_history.htm
Historical background, numerous links, primarily for jr. high through adult learners

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr058.shtml
Curriculum-related activities, history, biographies, for variety of ages

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Books

Resources

**USCCB Statements**


**Black History**

**ONLINE**


Discussion and activities for learners in middle school through adulthood.


English and Social Studies Guides with links to history, poetry, literature, music and biographies


Elementary school materials and activities

**BOOKS**


**Resources for Developmental Disabilities**

**ONLINE**

[www.publicimagesnetwork.org/index.html](http://www.publicimagesnetwork.org/index.html)

Special events statewide and nationally by organizations dedicated to serving people with disabilities

[http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/](http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/)

Resources and ways to be involved in inclusion initiatives in Ohio

[www.ncpd.org/](http://www.ncpd.org/)

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD), working for the full inclusion of all persons in the Church and in society; resources, monthly e-newsletter, Catholic perspective on disability issues


National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry (NAfIM), nonprofit organization of persons with/without disabilities working and praying together to realize justice for all persons in parish, social and civic life

**BOOKS**


