

# The Mission of St. Thorlak

## Why "Spiritual Skills" For Adolescents and Young Adults with ASD?

Failing to recognize the need to develop spiritual skills at a more complex level can lead to a disconnection from one's spiritual life altogether – which we call "spiritual starvation."

Here is an illustration of what we mean. Children with ASD are generally well formed in social matters, in simplistic form. A sample social skill set:

<u>Saying "I'm Sorry"</u>
- How to apologize
- When to apologize
- What to say when apologizing
- Nonverbal cues (facial expression, posture) to use

<u>Accepting An Apology</u>
- When to ask for an apology
- How to ask for an apology
- What to say when someone apologizes
- Nonverbal cues (facial expression, posture) to use in accepting an apology

## Contemplative Prayer + Contemplative Action Living with Autism

We can all agree these are vital skills for children to learn in their formative years.

What about their adolescent years, and beyond? This is when, in spiritual terms, more complex questions arise than these skills can answer, such as:

- What is forgiveness?
- How do I forgive someone who has hurt me?
- How can I forgive myself for making mistakes?
- How can I tell the difference between a mistake and something done deliberately?
- How does apologizing relate to forgiveness?
- How does forgiveness affect my relationship with God?
- Does God forgive me for my mistakes, and for my deliberately hurtful actions?

The answers to these questions all lie within easily accessible sources, such as The Catechism of the Catholic Church, our dedicated youth ministers, our pastors and deacons, and countless books by Catholic authors, both contemporary and classic.

**HOWEVER, we cannot assume that young people with ASD know that these resources are available to them. We need to remind them that, as they reach adolescence, they must now seek more complex understanding – and, that they are capable of comprehending things beyond the comfort and repetition of their primary lessons. We repeat:** Failing to recognize the need to develop spiritual skills at a more complex level can lead to a disconnection from one's spiritual life altogether – which we call "spiritual starvation."

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Twitter.com/PatronOfAutism

mission.of.st.thorlak@gmail.com



Þorlákur helgi

Saint Thorlak, Patron of Autism, Pray For Us!