



Press Release: July 27, 2015

Catholic School Students with Special Needs Star in Video for Pope Francis' Visit
<http://bit.ly/ccsevideo>

(Kensington, Maryland) – Local Catholic school students with special needs star in a short video showing Pope Francis the sites of our nation's capital as he and the country prepare for his upcoming papal visit.

Pope Francis said earlier this year when speaking to children with disabilities, "Each one of us has a treasure inside ... What I want to ask of you is that you do not hide the treasure that each of you has." In the video, our treasured children show Pope Francis the treasures of our nation's capital.

The video may be viewed on our YouTube channel: <http://bit.ly/ccsevideo>. It features 10 children with intellectual disabilities, along with their siblings and school 'buddies,' welcoming Pope Francis to Washington DC and visiting several monuments and other sites to show him around since the Pope has never visited the United States.

At the Catholic Coalition for Special Education (CCSE), we know how important it is for children with disabilities to be fully included in our Catholic schools. CCSE is helping to transform the lives of families and students with disabilities who can now benefit from a quality, **inclusive education** while nurturing friendships that can last a lifetime, and at the same time benefit from spiritual and moral instruction. And, it's important for the schools, teachers and students, who benefit from being part of a more open and just society. Research indicates that typically developing students derive academic benefits from involvement and relationships with students with disabilities. This exposure provides learning opportunities and rich, rewarding experiences they otherwise might not have. It is a win-win for all. **All** students benefit from an inclusive education.

CCSE's mission is unique and its innovation has gained national attention. The Catholic Coalition for Special Education is a non-profit that assists Maryland and DC Catholic schools in educating students with intellectual disabilities. CCSE is transforming schools into inclusive communities through grants, program support, technical assistance and professional development. Demand for its services continues to far outweigh what CCSE is able to provide.

CCSE also offers spiritual and practical support to parents who are on a journey to raising a child with a disability. A couple days after visiting Washington, Pope Francis will attend the World Meeting of Families to promote the role of the family in society today.

CCSE is what Pope Francis preaches: inclusion; support, love and hope for those who often are relegated to the margins of society. Children with special needs have worth; they are treasured.

The mission of the [Catholic Coalition for Special Education](http://www.catholiccoalitionforse.org) is to ensure that children with special needs are able to attend and receive an appropriate education in their local Catholic elementary schools and high schools. In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI "no child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which in turn nurtures the soul of a nation." CCSE provides grants and technical assistance to help Catholic schools in Washington, D.C. and Maryland achieve this goal.

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*"Whoever receives
one child such as
this in my name
receives me"*

(Matthew 18:5)

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