
Pastor's Tip Sheet: Welcoming People with Disabilities

Adapted from the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry [\(NAFIM\)](#)

Facts:

- Families that have a person with a disability in them are members of your parish.
- Older families tend to bring their family member to parish activities or Mass.
- Immigrant families tend to not bring their family member to Mass.
- Younger educated families will expect equality in parish opportunities for their loved one with a disability in all areas: liturgical, educational, social and service/ministry.
- Group homes, residents and caregivers, in your parish boundaries, need outreach and welcoming from the parish.
- As with most people, persons with disabilities desire personal treatment, thus inviting and promoting community.
- As with most people, persons with disabilities desire to know parish members by name and parish members need to know them by name.
- As with most people, persons with disabilities are grateful for opportunities to be of service to others and are just as reliable and appreciative.

Pastoral Response:

- Be in contact with your Diocesan Office of Disability Ministry to coordinate Parish activities and ministries.
- Engage your parish council in discussing ways to make the parish more hospitable.
- Make a serious effort to identify all persons with disabilities, their families and support organizations in the parish.
- Make a special effort to invite these members of your parish to participate in parish activities and liturgies.
- Develop a hospitality plan that includes persons with disabilities, their families and their caregivers in the design.
- As appropriate offer liturgies for persons with disabilities using simpler language, e.g., the Lectionary of Masses for Children. Use the words such as “contemporary language Mass” rather than “children’s Mass” to include adults.
- Make a serious effort to recruit adults with disabilities to participate in your RCIA process, either as catechumens, inquirers or sponsors.
- Remove attitudinal and physical barriers (mobility, hearing, visual, physical sensitivities such as light, odor and texture, etc.) to allow fuller participation in parish life.
- Contact your Diocesan Office of Disability Ministry to locate resources in the city, county, state and Bishop’s Conference to support your families, caregivers and persons with disabilities.

Encourage your Director of Religious Education to include children with disabilities in the parish religious education program.

- Direct the DRE to consult with the Coordinator of Special Religious Education in the Diocesan Office of Disability Ministry in areas of special needs.
- Allow the DRE to purchase special materials, as needed, to accommodate the different learning styles of students with disabilities.
- Allow the DRE and catechists to take advantage of special training to enhance the learning experience of children with disabilities.

Make liturgies meaningful for persons with disabilities.

- Develop homilies that address more than one learning style.
- Identify a concrete image, or even item, for each Liturgy of the Word.
- Encourage persons with disabilities to minister as greeters, ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, servers, lectors, etc.