

MARCH IS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

Embrace. Welcome. Participate.

All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church.

In 2017, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops revised the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*. The bishops remind us:

“All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church. When persons with disabilities are embraced and welcomed, and invited to participate fully in all aspects of the parish community life, the Body of Christ is more complete.”

This revision is an opportunity for the Catholic community to reflect and act on the call to make the Church more complete. Every person is created in the image and likeness of God and has an inherent dignity. Each member of the Body of Christ is unique, and therefore, families and parish communities are as well. We all have gifts and challenges, come in different shapes and sizes, and have varying needs. It is through this realization we come into community, centered on Christ, to

accompany each other on our pilgrim journey.

By virtue of our Baptism, we are called by God to grow in holiness and participate in the life of the Church. Persons with disabilities desire full and meaningful participation in our shared mission to be missionary disciples. That is why it is important to ensure that they and their families experience a true sense of belonging in their parish communities.

No matter where you have been on your journey, consider today a time of renewal. Pray, learn, reflect, and act. Use your gifts and talents to embrace, welcome, and invite all persons to full participation in the life of the Church and society. Accommodations and adaptations are necessary at times to ensure that all persons can use their gifts in service to the parish community. When we work together we are more complete.



PRAYER FOR INCLUSION

Creator God, we are your people. We look to the future with optimism and with faith in You, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people with disabilities.

We pray that every man, woman, and child may develop their potential and meet You in themselves and in one another.

May we enjoy a totally welcoming community, with You as our center, joined hand in hand with our sisters and brothers. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Based on the Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Personal:

In what ways do I recognize the gifts and talents of persons with disabilities?

How can I use my gifts and talents to make the Body of Christ more complete?

Family:

How do we celebrate the unique gifts of each member of our family?

How can our family support other families with unique challenges and needs?

Parish:

What can we do to increase awareness, accessibility, participation, and support in the Body of Christ?

Do we know what resources are available to ensure greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the life of the Church and society?

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Please take a moment to explore the resources available to individuals, families, and parishes to work towards the goal of full participation.

- Church Teaching Documents
- Ministry Models & Disability Specific Resources
- Accessible Design & Surveys
- Youth & Young Adult Ministry
- Religious Education & Catechesis
- Catholic Schools
- Marriage & Family Life
- Issues of Life and Dignity - Social Concerns