



### **Welcome to *Opening Doors!***

Happy New Year from the Commission on Persons with Disabilities! Wow! What a year it has been! We have come a long way. Most of the commission goals are complete and/or ongoing. Our November 2018 workshop for parish advocates was a success. *Liturgical Accessibility* and *Caring for Caregivers* were our main topics and the parish advocates were given ideas and resources to bring back to their parishes to share.

#### **Acceptance**

Have you ever wondered what a person with a disability would ask for? Most of us are familiar with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3-12, where Jesus gave us the Beatitudes. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1718) says: *The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it: We all want to live happy and be included.*

## BEATITUDES OF ACCEPTANCE

- Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech, for you help me to know that if I persevere, I can be understood.
- Blessed are you who walk with me in public places and ignore the stares of strangers, for in your friendship I feel good to be myself.
- Blessed are you who never bid me to “hurry up” and, more blessed you who do not snatch a task from my hands to do it for me, for often I need time rather than help.
- Blessed are you who stand beside me as I enter new and untried ventures, for my uncertainty will be outweighed by the times I surprise you and me.
- Blessed are you who ask for my help and realize my giftedness, for my greatest need is to be needed.
- Blessed are you who help me with the graciousness of Christ, because I sometimes need the help for which I cannot ask.
- Blessed are you who , in all ways assure me that what makes me an individual is not my particular disability, but my beautiful God-filled personhood which no disabling condition can confine or define.
- Rejoice and be glad, for you have helped me believe in myself as valued and gifted person and your understanding and love have opened doors for me to enjoy life to the fullest.

(Author unknown) Equal Access Ministry, Diocese of Toledo

### I. ***Did You Know?***

Language is powerful. How you approach someone in parish hospitality is important. Words can portray respect and sensitivity or they can sustain negative stigma. When meeting a person with a disability, see them as a person first, then with a disability. Talk to them directly and not the person that may be with them. Ask if they need assistance first before assuming they do. Use a normal tone of voice. It is okay to ask a person to repeat what they said if you do not understand them.

When it is necessary to refer to a person’s disability, here are some acceptable ways to be descriptive and respectful.

Person with a disability  
Mother who is blind  
Student with vision loss  
Parishioner who is hard-of-hearing  
Eucharistic minister who is deaf  
Teacher with a seizure disorder  
Lector with paraplegia

Catechist with cerebral palsy  
Server with a learning disability  
Neighbor with mental illness  
Teenager with a brain disorder  
Usher with an intellectual disability  
Greeter who uses a wheelchair  
Priest with mobility impairment

Equal Access Ministries, Diocese of Toledo

### **Accessibility Tool Available**

The Commission on Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Building Office and Catholic Mutual Insurance, has published a survey tool/document for reviewing accessibility at parishes. This is a tool for the Parish Disability Advocate to use in highlighting pressing accessibility needs to parish leadership including the pastor and maintenance supervisor. You may download the Accessibility tool [here](#).

## **II. What's Happening!**

- **On December 21, 2018**, Kathy Livaudais gave a presentation on Teaching Students with Autism at the Rosary Child Development Center.
- **Dancing Drum Workshops-** Drumming Workshops for Individuals with Exceptionalities. These 45-minute workshops will focus on exploring the sounds of the drum, playing rhythm patterns to build motor skills, and experience the joy of making music together. Limit 15 students per workshop and you must RSVP to reserve a spot. See location, date, and time below.

**January 6, 20, 27, 2019, 2:00-2:45 p.m.**

East Jefferson YMCA 504-888-9622 | 6691 Riverside Drive | Metairie, LA 70433

**January 5, 26, 2019, and February 2, 2019, 2:00- 2:45 p.m.**

West St. Tammany YMCA (985-893-9622) | 7165 Francis Rd. | Covington, LA. 70433

**March 9, 23, 2019, and April 6, 2019, 2:00-2:45 p.m.**

Belle Chasse YMCA (504-392-9622) | 8101 Hwy 23 | Belle Chasse, LA 70037

- The Quarterly Mass (to highlight persons with disabilities in the liturgy) is scheduled February 3, 2019, at 10:00 AM at St. David, 5617 St. Claude Ave., New Orleans. Please call Janet Pesce at 504-455-6801 if you would like to participate. All are welcome.
- "Save the Date" for the Spring Formation Workshop on May 4, 2019, 9:00 AM-12 Noon at Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Gym, 2241 Mendez St., New Orleans. All advocates are encouraged to attend. You may bring a guest.

Pictures from Parish Advocate Workshop November 10, 2018 on *Liturgical Accessibility and Caring for Caregivers* presented by Erin Jeffries, Coordinator of Ministry to Persons with Special Needs, Archdiocese of Indianapolis.



### **III Question Corner?**

Q: What if the lector uses a wheelchair and the altar (where the ambo is) isn't accessible?

A: This scenario occurs frequently at the quarterly CPD Masses. Depending on the church set up/lay out, the lector, and the priest's desires, different accommodations can be made.

- A microphone can be provided (hand-held from the choir or borrowed from the priest).
- The lectionary (book) can be held or the copied reading placed on a music stand.
- In addition, as always, the CPD is there to help!

You can submit your questions or information you would like to see in Opening Doors e-Newsletter to [klivauda@bellsouth.net](mailto:klivauda@bellsouth.net). Please use Opening Doors in the subject line.

We encourage you to share some of what is in *Opening Doors* with your parish by publishing some info in your church bulletins.