

Ten Commandments for Welcoming Persons with Disabilities to Church

1. Treat a person with a disability as you would anyone else. Relax when communicating. Rely on natural courtesy, consideration and common sense. Avoid getting flustered or irritated if misunderstandings arise. Repeat yourself if you sense misunderstanding, or ask the person to repeat himself or herself if you do not understand.
2. Address the individual, not an assistant, interpreter or family member.
3. Treat adults with disabilities as adults rather than as children, regardless of the disability.
4. Speak at a normal rate, without exaggeration or overemphasis.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions about the person's disability.
6. To facilitate communication, have pads of paper and pencils available in all meeting rooms and other gathering places on parish property. Use them when helpful.
7. Allow people to do things for themselves when they want to, even if it takes longer or results in mistakes. Do not always "do for" the person.
8. Offer assistance, but do not impose if help is not desired.
9. During all gatherings or meetings, allow time to attend to personal needs and rest. Be patient.
10. Respect the individual's personal space and auxiliary aids. Do not lean against or push a wheelchair, pet a service animal in a harness, move wheelchairs, crutches, white canes or other assistive devices out of reach of a person who uses them.