



Pathways Awareness Workshop Says Understanding Brings Access, Inclusion

Representatives and clergy from parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago joined theology students on Friday for a workshop, *That All May Worship: Creating the Inclusive Community*, cosponsored by Pathways Awareness and the Emmaus program at Catholic Theological Union. Participants learned from the moving stories told by a panel of clergy and lay people living with disability.

Panelists included Elizabeth Browne, Betty Buino, Jim Giblin, Father William Eddy, Kaney O’Neill, Mary Stainton, and Anthony Suarez-Abraham.

“I have read a lot of material about people with disabilities, but hearing first-hand stories from the panelists was very powerful and really made this workshop a valuable experience,” said Betty Buino, member of Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity parish.

Small group discussions generated understanding and practical ideas for creating parishes that welcome people with vision loss, hearing loss, mobility differences, mental illness, and cognitive differences.

“I always ask myself ‘What would Jesus do?’ and he would invite everyone to the table—no exceptions,” said Carol Gaetjens, workshop attendee and member of St. Nicholas parish. “We as a church need to follow that model and recognize the unique

perspectives and talents that people with disabilities bring to faith life.”

The workshop was patterned after the book *Creating an Inclusive Worship Community: Accommodating All People at God's Table*, by Elizabeth Browne, Ph.D. The book provides a practical guide for parishes on removing barriers of attitude, communication, and architecture.

“This issue will become increasingly important, with veterans coming home from Iraq and an aging population,” said Buino. “There will be many more people in the coming decade who will benefit from these inclusive concepts.”

Held on the 12th anniversary of the death of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the workshop focused on an issue close to the Cardinal's heart. His personal commitment to creating inclusive faith communities prompted him to partner with Pathways Awareness in 1996 for the That All May Worship conference that initiated the Open Heart, Open Minds, Open Doors movement.

Over 200 parish inclusion representatives have been recruited to participate in the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors program, with the support of Cardinal Francis George. These representatives, approved by their pastor, volunteer to help make their parish more inclusive and welcoming to all members. Pathways Awareness coordinates the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors program, provides information and training for inclusion representatives, and sponsors events such as the recent workshop.

“The workshop encouraged me to continue working in my parish to achieve physical access and remove attitudinal and

communication barriers,” said Gaetjens. “You just have to keep at it, and meeting other pilgrims on the same road at events like this keeps me going.”

Pathways Awareness has also distributed over \$90,000 in grants through the Open Hearts Awards, a program that recognizes parishes for welcoming people with disabilities into spiritual, educational, and social activities. Pathways Awareness also produced the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors video, featuring Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and noted Dutch theologian and author Father Henri Nouwen explaining practical ways to include persons with disabilities into full membership in their faith community.

Recently, Pathways Awareness released the video on one DVD with English, Spanish, Polish, and descriptive versions. Henri Nouwen’s The Vulnerable Journey keynote address at the 1996 conference is also available.

For more information about Pathways Awareness or to order the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors DVD, the Vulnerable Journey DVD or CD, or for information about the book *Creating an Inclusive Worship Community: Accommodating All People at God’s Table* by Elizabeth Browne, Ph.D., call 1-800-955-2445 or visit www.inclusioninworship.org.

By Teresa Meyer