

The 2004 Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook

Creating Congregations
Where People of All Abilities Participate

**Sunday,
September 26, 2004**



A Project of the
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open
Doors Program
Pathways Awareness Foundation
150 N. Michigan Ave.
Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60601

Table of Contents

Introduction

An Invitation to Participate.....	3
Letter from Francis Cardinal George, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.....	4
Letter from Bishop William D. Bishop Persell, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago.....	5

Roman Catholic Congregations

Scripture readings.....	6
Homily Reflections, by Reverend Donald Senior.....	8
Presentation of Gifts	10
Prayers of the Faithful.....	14
<i>Saints with Disabilities Provide Lessons for Today</i> By Mary Jane Owen.....	15
Litany of Saints for Inclusion Awareness Day	18

Episcopal Congregations

St. Samuel Schereschewsky.....	20
Preaching with Dignity and Respect.....	21
Homily Hints.....	22

Presbyterian Congregations

Claiming Our Place at the Table.....	23
--------------------------------------	----

All Congregations

Ten Easy Ways to Communicate Welcome.....	23
Access Survey.....	24
Sources.....	25

Pathways Awareness Foundation

Dear Religious Leader:

Once again we are asking you to join us in celebrating Inclusion Awareness Day in your house of worship. We have designated September 26, 2004 as a day to celebrate how you make your congregation a place where people of all abilities can worship, minister and enjoy fellowship. If this date is not convenient for your faith community, we invite you to choose a date of your own.

This year participating in Inclusion Awareness Day is easier than ever. We are debuting an online version of the Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook on our revised and newly formatted website at www.pathwaysawareness.org. Click on Open Hearts, then Inclusion Awareness Day.

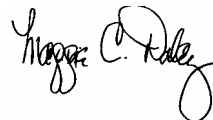
We wish to thank those who have contributed to the workbook, including Reverend Donald Senior of Catholic Theological Union for homily reflections and Reverend Deborah Seles, chair of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago Inclusion Task Force for tips on preaching with dignity and respect.

Pathways Awareness Foundation will again honor outstanding inclusive congregations on Inclusion Awareness Day by announcing our Open Hearts Award winners. We want to recognize the exemplary efforts that so many of you make to create caring congregations where people of all abilities participate. Open Hearts applications are accepted annually from February 1st to May 1st. We hope you will consider nominating your congregation next year. Thank you for joining us in celebrating Inclusion Awareness Day. We look forward to the day when people of all abilities can enjoy full and valued membership in all of our faith communities.

Sincerely,



Shirley Ryan
Chairman



Maggie Daley
President

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



Post Office Box 1979
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

August 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This fall, parishes in our archdiocese will again observe **Inclusion Awareness Day**. We are called to create faith communities where people with diverse levels of ability can participate. On **Sunday, September 26, 2004** I invite you to reflect on your progress on this important issue.

Everyone has gifts and talents to contribute to our parishes if we take steps to remove barriers to participation. Many parishes already make it possible for everyone to participate in worship and ministries. Others are just beginning to reach out to affirm and include parishioners of all abilities. I ask that you continue in your efforts to make ours a more welcoming and participatory church for every one.

Please join me in celebrating this important event. If your parish is unable to participate on September 26th, please set aside another weekend to reflect on how welcoming you are. Open your hearts, your minds and your doors so that all may worship, not only on Inclusion Awareness Day, but every day of the year. God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francis Cardinal George".

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

DIOCESE OF CHICAGO

65 EAST HURON STREET CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611-272

T 312 751-4200 FROM (815) 800 426-3894 F312 787-4534

www.epischicago.org

Summer, 2004

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In our common mission to change lives by reaching people with the love of God and through engaging each other in working for social justice, peace and abundant life, the awareness and inclusion of persons with disabilities is an important aspect of our life and work. October marks Disability Awareness month and Mental Health awareness month. It also contains the feast of Samuel Isaac Schereshevsky (October 14). Schereshevsky is noted for translating over 2000 pages of the Bible into Chinese dialects despite massive paralysis.

Our own diocesan Task Force on Ministry with People with Disabilities, in conjunction with an ecumenical group of committed lay and ordained people has provided for you materials to use to commemorate Disability Awareness month. In the past, parishes have received my permission to transfer the feast of Schereshevsky in order to highlight the ways people with disabilities contribute vitally to the life of the church.

I encourage your review and use of these materials and enthusiastically support the work of the Task Force. We all benefit when we reach out to one another. The work of the Task Force and your work in highlighting Disability Awareness month will bring the gospel to people previously excluded.

Faithfully yours,



William D. Persell
Bishop of Chicago

Roman Catholic Congregations Scripture Readings

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

Reading I

Amos 6:1a, 4—7

Thus says the Lord the God of hosts:

Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, they eat lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall! Improvising to the music of the harp, like David, they devise their own accompaniment. They drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best oils; yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph! Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.

Reading II

1 Timothy 6:11—16

RCL: 1 Timothy 6:6—19

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confessions, to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

Gospel

Luke 16:19—31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he

was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your life-time while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' " He said, 'then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Roman Catholic Congregations
Homily Reflections
By Reverend Donald Senior, C.P.
Catholic Theological Union

Some years ago a friend of mine who happened to have a physical disability talked about an experience she had with someone who was completely oblivious to her situation as she struggled to open a door to the man's own store. "He was," she said with a wry smile, "severely able-bodied!" I've often thought about that phrase--chuckling a bit at its irony and well aware of its truth. Some of us can be so caught up in our own world that we are totally unaware of other people's hopes and needs.

This, I think, is the fundamental message of the scripture passages that are assigned for this twenty-sixth Sunday of ordinary time, particularly the gospel and the first reading. It also happens to be the powerful message of Inclusion Awareness Sunday.

The searing words of the prophet Amos (Amos 6:1a, 4-7) leave no doubt about the lack of awareness on the part of those Israelites who were content to lay upon their beds of ivory, feasting on lamb and wine while the poor of Israel and the whole nation were on the verge of collapse. Amos was a firebrand sort of prophet, called unexpectedly, as he says, from being a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores to speak the truth to Israel. The strong rhetoric of this reluctant prophet has inspired champions of justice for all of Jewish and Christian history. Martin Luther King drew on Amos' words in his famous "I have a dream speech" that ignited the civil rights movement.

And could any parable of Jesus be more pointed about the need for "awareness" than the famous story of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16:19-31? The rich man, who "dressed in purple garments (the scarce and expensive purple die was the mark of wealth in antiquity) and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day," steps right over poor and starving Lazarus who is on his doorstep. Only when it is too late does the rich man come to his senses and realize his terrible spiritual blindness. Luke's Gospel is very concerned about the poor and many of Jesus' sayings and parables in Luke are directed to those with resources—

forcefully challenging them to be alert to the needs of others. In God's eyes Lazarus is not someone to be ignored but a treasured child of God.

Although the Lectionary selections focus on the Bible's perennial concern about care for the poor, the point of Inclusion Awareness Sunday is broader than that. Here the concern is for "awareness" of the beauty and potential of others, no matter what their economic status is. Respecting others as human beings and sons and daughters of God, being aware of their needs just as we would want others to be aware of ours, and working for justice to insure that the gifts of every member of the community are appreciated—this is the underlying gospel message for Inclusion Awareness Sunday.

Presentation of Gifts

The Offertory Procession can be a very meaningful part of our worship service. In Guide for Ushers and Leaders, Lawrence E. Mick explains how:

“The presentation of the bread and wine for the Eucharist by the faithful is one of the most ancient customs in the church...Because the gift bearers represent the whole assembly, those asked to serve in this role should reflect the diversity of the assembly...Many parishes find it best to arrange in advance who will bring the gifts forward for each Mass. This allows people to anticipate their role and to prepare spiritually...Some parishes leave the altar uncovered until the preparation of the gifts and then have ministers place the altar cloth and corporal on the altar just before the bread and wine are brought forward. While the sacramentary does not explicitly provide for this, it seems an acceptable practice, either regularly or on special occasions. In such cases, it seems best not to include the cloths and other necessary items (chalice, book, water, etc.) in the procession. These items are used repeatedly and do not represent the offerings of the assembly in the way that the bread and wine and money do...One simple, major improvement in most parishes would be to spread the procession out a bit. Each person carrying something can move slowly and gracefully through the assembly, with the next person waiting until a significant space is created before beginning to move forward. This simple step would transform the movement from a rushed walk into a true procession. Since this procession is often accompanied by a song or by instrumental music, the pace of the procession might be linked to the rhythm and pace of the music...Carried out well, this brief ritual can be a powerful reminder to all present of why they have gathered and of what participation in this meal requires of them.”

Presentation of the Gifts for Inclusion Awareness Day

1. Talk to your pastor, liturgy committee and music director about a special offertory procession for Inclusion Awareness Day. Request that the hymn, “We Come to Your Feast”, by Joncas, GIA Publications, 1994, be sung by the assembly for the offertory procession on Inclusion

Awareness Day.

2. Also talk to your pastor about leaving the altar uncovered and having the celebrant place the altar cloth on the altar during the 1st verse of “We Come to Your Feast”. Ask that the gifts of bread and wine and the collection then be presented in time to verses 2, 3 and 4. Request that the pastor inform all parish staff about the special offertory procession on Inclusion Awareness Day.
3. Invite members of your congregation with disabilities and their families to serve as gift bearers at each liturgy on Inclusion Awareness Day. Care must be taken when extending your invitation to participate. Emphasize that serving as a gift bearer on Inclusion Awareness Day is a way to celebrate their contributions to your faith community every day of the year. Start with parishioners you know, and personally invite them to serve as gift bearers. Perhaps members of your Inclusion Committee would be a good place to start. Ask if the gift bearers would feel comfortable carrying the bread, wine and collection basket (if the offerings have been collected) slowly and gracefully through the assembly to the altar, with space between each person, and in time to the verses of the hymn, “We Come to Your feast”. Provide any accommodations needed.
4. Once you have recruited your gift bearers and explained the procession, inform the ushers or those in charge of assigning gift bearers about the plans for Inclusion Awareness Day.
5. Have members of your inclusion committee assist with the offertory procession at each Mass.
6. After Inclusion Awareness Day write thank you notes to your pastor, gift bearers and others involved.

OR

Begin a permanent gift bearer program like the First Sunday program at St. Paul of the Cross, Park Ridge, Illinois.

Expert Congregation
St. Paul of the Cross
A Model of Inclusion in Ministry

Over the past several years, St. Paul of the Cross parish in Park Ridge, Illinois has made an outstanding effort to create a caring, inclusive congregation where all can participate.

The parish conducted a survey of needs resulting in changes to the physical plant. Church washrooms were remodeled for accessibility. An elevator, a canopied entrance ramp, and automatic doors were installed. To improve the acoustics in a large church, assisted listening devices were purchased and are available in the sacristy before each mass. 9.

The parish realized that inclusion is not just about bricks and mortar. It is about reaching out to welcome persons with disabilities into ministry, fellowship and worship. With this in mind, St. Paul of the Cross developed a program called "First Sunday" to enable parishioners with developmental disabilities to join the Hospitality Ministry.

On the first weekend of every month, five parishioners with cognitive disabilities serve as greeters and as presenters of the gifts. Mentors, volunteers from the Aquinas Guild, support each greeter and gift bearer by answering questions or giving direction. The mentors stand with the participants as they greet parishioners before mass and present the gifts right along with the First Sunday participants as part of the Offertory procession. The First Sunday program has fostered new friendships between the mentors and participants.

As a result of the parish's inclusion efforts, other parishioners with disabilities have come forward to serve in ministries. A man with severe arthritis has become an usher and two young women with cognitive disabilities have joined the choir.

By supporting the First Sunday participants, St. Paul of the Cross has experienced a renewed sense of community. The entire congregation benefits from this program. Parishioners receive a very warm and special greeting on the First Sunday. In turn, they are welcoming and sincere in the greeting they give to the First Sunday hospitality ministers.

TIPS FOR STARTING A MINISTRY WITH WORSHIPERS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AT YOUR HOUSE OF FAITH

1. Observe Sunday worship services for several weeks, noting the presence of worshipers with developmental disabilities and their families. Contact organizations in your area that serve people with developmental disabilities and inquire about group homes in your area.
2. Decide on an appropriate ministry for the intentional inclusion of worshipers with developmental disabilities.

Determine the supports needed for successful inclusion. St. Paul of the Cross decided mentors would make their program successful.

3. Put the necessary supports in place. St. Paul of the Cross chose one parish organization, the Aquinas Guild, to partner with them on their First Sunday program. The First Sunday program was presented to this group and mentors were recruited and trained.
4. Start small and invite several people with developmental disabilities from your faith community or from a neighborhood group home to participate in the ministry.
5. Continually monitor the program and make changes as necessary.
6. Celebrate your success on a regular basis. St. Paul of the Cross recognizes the participants in the First Sunday program each year on Inclusion Awareness Day. Special nametags were presented to participants in a recognition ceremony one year. Plaques were presented the next.
7. Recognize the transforming gifts that worshipers with developmental disabilities bring to your community. St. Paul of the Cross experienced a renewed sense of community with their First Sunday program.

Contributor:

Karen Johnson

Inclusion Representative

St. Paul of the Cross

Prayers of the Faithful

Response: Loving God, hear our prayer!

That local, state and national leaders take action on behalf of persons of all abilities with the sense of justice and compassion that the Lord so clearly desires, we pray to the Lord...

That the leaders of our Church continue to embrace their responsibility to hear the cry for recognition from people of all abilities just as Jesus did, we pray to the Lord...

That our community of faith continues to reach out and find new ways to include people of all abilities in all aspects of parish life, we pray to the Lord...

That the family and friends who assist people with a disability be given the strength they need and the support of others as they encourage lives of dignity and independence, we pray to the Lord...

That those among us with a disability know the abiding faithfulness of God we pray to the Lord...

That those who have gone before us to be with God rejoice in that place where there are no tears, no doubt no pain, we pray to the Lord...

That the prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts be a holy offering to God, we pray to the Lord...

Loving God, you instruct us to lift our needs to you in prayer, may our prayers rise up to you like incense, help us to break down the human-made barriers that separate us from others, may we be inspired to reach out to people of all abilities by following the example of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ in whose name we offer these prayers.

Amen.

Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, Department for Persons with Disabilities

Saints with Disabilities Provide Lessons for Today

By Mary Jane Owen

A support group of head-injured individuals listened attentively to my examples of the positive aspects of my accumulated disabilities. But half way through my lecture I wondered if this were *really* true for these young people. Did they share my view? I asked for a few minutes of meditation. The result was the opening of a floodgate of passion as I listened to their stories of the discoveries of new ways of fulfilling their lives and the insights they had gained as a result of their severe losses.

The following day a leader of the Hemlock Society screeched angrily, "There can be nothing redemptive about human suffering and disabilities!" Sharing stories of the human spirit's ability to rise above the challenges to learn new ways of fulfilling personal potential did little to alter the negative views of this unhappy warrior in the battle for an "easy exit" from a life with disabilities and dependency.

The spiritual dimension of the gift of human vulnerability was clarified in 1991 during the 500th anniversary of the birth of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. This "lame" man's priestly journey from a gallant in court to development of various routes to holiness and sainthood grew out of his struggles in addressing his disabilities.

Could recognition of one's vulnerabilities and fragility and the willingness to accept the need for a new vision of the meaning of one's life be an essential part of the spiritual discernment which leads to greater communication with our Lord? And so began a personal journey of discovery for Ignatius.

St. Angela Merici established the Ursuline Sisters in 1535 to teach young girls outside cloister walls. She considered her blindness God's reminder she must never close her eyes to the needs of others. St. Lutgardis also considered her blindness a gift, since it reduced the distractions which might have tempted her.

Of course one of the most famous spiritual transformations was the result of the blindness which turned Saul into St. Paul. He noted his zeal in persecuting the church, acknowledging he had acted "ignorantly in

unbelief," and that Christians in Judea knew that one who "was formerly persecuting us is now preaching the faith he tried to destroy."

Blessed Margaret of Castello was not only born blind but also dwarfed and with severe scoliosis and is very special to those of us with disabilities who are not pleased that many suggest she is the saint of the "unwanted." True, she was abandoned by her noble family who thought her a monster but people with various disabilities identify closely with her and know they, like her, are truly wanted by the Lord just as they are. Through all the trials she faced as she wandered the streets of the city of Castello, she knew her Heavenly Father loved and would never abandon her. Ministering to the marginalized people of Castello during the harsh days when medieval eyes saw only the ugliness and grossness of their "crippled" contemporaries, she became an inspiration and guide to the homeless, the disabled and the despised of her time.

St. Teresa of Avila offers another vivid example of the changes in one's spiritual life which can follow physical challenges. She suggested that if her travails were an indication of how Christ treats His followers, "No wonder you have so few friends." As a teenager she was preoccupied with boys, clothes, flirting and acknowledged she was rebellious. She rather casually chose to enter a religious community but shortly after her profession became seriously ill and was never again well. Through all she affirmed, "Even if sickness distracts from thought all that is needed is the will to love."

St. Theresa of Lisieux had a calling quite different from that of the flamboyant Teresa but is also recognized as an inspiring doctor of the faith. She wrote often of her frailties, noting, "Your little bird is happy to be weak and little." And again, "Jesus is pleased to teach me the science of glorying in infirmities. That is a great grace and I pray Jesus to teach it also to you, for there alone are found peace and repose of heart." She did not create a religious community or build monasteries but spoke to the weakness of God's people, "He has created the great saints who are like the lilies and the roses, but he has also created much lesser saints and they must be content to be the daisies or the violets which rejoice his eyes whenever he glances down."

There are so many: St. Alphais who witnessed the loss of her limbs through

leprosy; St Benedict Joseph Labre whose strange behavior and wanderings might be diagnosed today as mental illness as he sought a religious community that would accept him; St Servulus whose severe cerebral palsy prevented him from walking, or even sitting up unaided; St Maximilian Kolbe whose tuberculosis almost ended his life even before Nazi cruelty did; St. Seraphina who was in pain and paralyzed and who was carried about on a board; St. Giles whose leg was severely injured as he meditated in his cave retreat and could never walk normally again but who rejoiced in his weakness and St. Alphonsus Liguori in his wheelchair.

Who knows what potentially saintly roses and violets bloom next door? In June powerful leaders and simple people gathered at St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Parish in Wheaton, Md. as the 13-year-old Matthew Joseph Thaddeus Stepanek was laid to rest. He wrote in *Hope Through Heartsongs*:

In so many ways, we are the same.
Our differences are unique treasures.
We have, we are, a mosaic of gifts
To nurture, to offer, to accept.
We need to be.
Just be. . . .

Mattie lived with a wheelchair, a ventilator and a breathing tube; a Broviac tube was tucked into his heart. Would that woman from the Hemlock Society be repulsed by all the "intrusive artificial life support devices" essential to allow this small soul to share his vision of world peace and joy? Is a child with muscular dystrophy who leaves us with his special message, "Remember to play after every storm" united with our saints in the mystery of human vulnerabilities? I pray so.

A Litany of the Saints for Inclusion Awareness Day

Many holy men and women of the Church experienced disabilities that brought them closer to God and helped them to live the gospel message.

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have Mercy*
Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have Mercy*
Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have Mercy*
Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us*
God, the heavenly Father...*have mercy on us*
God, the Son, Redeemer of the World...*have mercy on us*
God, the Holy Spirit...*have mercy on us*
Holy Trinity, one God...*have mercy on us*
Holy Mary, Mother of God...*pray for us*
All holy men and women...*pray for us*

Moses, prophet of God's people...*pray for us*
Saint Alphonsus Liguori...*pray for us*
Saint Servulus...*pray for us*
Saint Maximilian Kolbe...*pray for us*
Saint Giles...*pray for us*
Saint Ignatius of Loyola...*pray for us*
Saint Angela Merici...*pray for us*
Saint Gerald of Aurillac...*pray for us*
Saint Lutgardis...*pray for us*
Saint Germain Cousin...*pray for us*
Saint Teresa of Avila...*pray for us*
Saint Alphais...*pray for us*
Saint Lucia Filippini...*pray for us*
Saint Benedict Joseph Labre...*pray for us*
Saint Francis de Sales...*pray for us*
Saint Theresa of Lisieux...*pray for us*
Saint Julie Billiart...*pray for us*
Saint Rebecca...*pray for us*
Saint Paul...*pray for us*
Blessed Margaret of Castello...*pray for us*
Blessed Seraphine...*pray for us*
Blessed Mary Virginia Merrick...*pray for us*

Lord, be merciful...*Lord hear our prayer*

Open our hearts to the needs of others...*Lord hear our prayer*
Open our minds to the beauty and potential of others...Lord hear our
prayer
Open our doors to bring all peoples together in trust and peace...Lord hear
our prayer

Let us pray...

God, source of all holiness, you have enriched your Church with the gifts of many saints whose lives were touched by disability. By following the example of our brothers and sisters, may we come to realize that in accepting our vulnerabilities we are drawn closer to You through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

Adapted from the Litany of the Saints, English translation of The Roman Missal copyright 1973, ICEL.

Episcopal Congregations

St. Samuel Schereschewsky

By Rev. Deborah Seles, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago Inclusion Task Force

The Episcopal Church calendar is rich in the stories of people whose lives are cause for celebration and commemoration. Two feast days remember lives of people who lived with disabilities. October 14 is the Feast of Samuel Isaac Schereschewsky, a bishop of Shanghai who, in the late 19th century translated scripture into the Wenli dialect after he developed paralysis from a muscle disease (Lesser Feasts and Fasts, pg. 394-395). During October, parishes have transferred the feast to a Sunday to commemorate Inclusion Awareness and the service of Schereschewsky. In August, we commemorate the lives of Thomas Gallaudet and Henry Winter Syle, leaders in providing education and worship for the deaf community. (Lesser Feasts and Fasts, pg. 342-343).

Preaching with Dignity and Respect

By Rev. Deborah Seles, Chair, Episcopal Diocese

When preaching on Inclusion Awareness Day, it helps to remember key factors:

- Use people-first language (see below).
- Stress mutual ministry. People with disabilities can minister to others.
- People with disabilities are not super-human.
- We all rely on one another to live our lives.
- Don't be afraid to preach about lament being a legitimate form of prayer.
- Stress the gifts that might be missed when we exclude certain groups of people, i.e. the call to inclusion benefits the entire church not only people with disabilities.
- Watch language that belies able-bodied bias such as "confined to a wheelchair". Many people who use wheelchairs experience them as a liberating mobility device rather than confinement.
- Watch cultural stereotypes in biblical stories: i.e. uncleanness and sinfulness being reflected in physical or mental disabilities.

Episcopal Congregations

Homily Hints

By Reverend Deborah Seles Episcopal Diocese of Chicago Inclusion Task Force

Mark 5:25-35 (and Matthew 9:20-23, Luke 8:43-48)

These texts can be preached by exploring how the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and Jesus crossed social boundaries to seek the kingdom. The woman sought Jesus' power and was not content with her role as one the society defined as unclean. Jesus would have been considered unclean by her touch yet did not rebuke her for her boldness and recognized her faith. These verses contain an important message about the role of advocacy and the need for strong faith. Too often people with disabilities receive the message from our society that they should not bother the larger community with their concerns. But Jesus recognized her faith and was present to her although he was on his way to heal Jarius' daughter.

John 13:5-14

The scene of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper is often preached to encourage Christian charity. A liberation approach to this text focuses on the dialogue between Peter and Jesus: it is only when we first allow Jesus to wash us that we can serve others. Therefore, in a real way, these texts stress mutual ministry and everyone's need for healing. Jesus tells Peter that unless he puts aside his false pride and allows Jesus to wash him, he can have no part with Jesus. When sudden disability forces us to confront our vulnerability, we do well to remember that there is grace in accepting help. We can help others only to the degree that we have been cleansed by the same water, only because God Incarnate has washed each of us.

Presbyterian Congregations

Claiming Our Place at the Table: Please visit www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc

Ten Easy Ways to Communicate Welcome

1. State the desire to be intentionally inclusive in the faith community's mission statement.
2. Use "people first" language in homilies, sermons, and bulletin articles.
3. Use access symbols in newspaper advertisements, event announcements and signage to publicize accessible features already in place. See access symbols in this folder.
4. Include the words "All are welcome. Please call (insert phone number) so that we can provide accommodations for your participation" in all event announcements.
5. Personally invite congregants with disabilities to participate in ministries, clubs, religious education programs, and events and arrange any accommodations to make participation possible.
6. Make large print prayer books, missals, Bibles, bulletins and hymnals (such as this 14 point bold type) available.
7. Provide homilies on audiotape or in large-print and promote their availability in the bulletin.
8. Keep individuals with visual impairments informed by announcing information from the bulletin at the end of the worship service.
9. When new members join your congregation ask, in a sensitive and dignified way, if any accommodations would enhance their participation in the faith community.
10. Invite congregants who cannot regularly attend services or events to contribute to the faith community through a "ministry of praise". Contact them on a regular basis and ask them to pray for a particular intention of the faith community.

Access Survey
By The National Organization on Disability

Please Visit:

<http://www.outcome-engineering.com/nod/default.asp>

Sources

Mick, Lawrence E. Guide for Ushers and Greeters. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997.

Special thanks to:

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago

William D. Persell, Episcopal Bishop of Chicago

Reverend Donald Senior, C.P., President, Catholic Theological Union

Reverend Deborah Seles, Director, L'Arche, Chicago

Mary Jane Owen, Director, Disabled Catholics in Action, DCIA@verizon.net