

## **Things You Can Do to Help People with Disabilities Feel Welcome in Your Parish:**

- Treat all people as people first, as you would like to be treated.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability, not only to the nearby family members, companion, interpreter or the canine companion.
- Offer to shake hands when introduced to a person with a disability. Persons with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb may shake hands. Shaking with the left hand is okay, too.
- Place yourself at eye level, in front, for easy conversation with a person in a wheelchair, with crutches or with a walking frame.
- Offer assistance and wait until the offer is accepted. Then ask for instructions.
- Be patient and wait for the person with difficulty speaking, rather than speaking for the person. You may help by asking short questions that require short answers, a nod or a shake of the head.
- See the wholeness of spirit beneath the surface of someone with a disability and overcome the tendency to turn away or ignore the person.
- Treat adults with developmental disabilities as adults, not as children. Use first names only when using the same familiarity for all persons.
- To get the attention of someone who is hearing impaired, lightly tap their elbow or shoulder, or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips.
- Guide a person with visual impairments by giving verbal clues to steps, curbs, escalators or doors.