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Making the Invisible Visible: Why and How to Invite Persons with Disabilities into the Life of the Church

Mary E. Carlson


Marquette University, mary.carlson@marquette.edu

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Making the Invisible Visible:

WHY AND HOW TO INVITE PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES INTO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH



What does it mean, at the banquet of the Eucharist, if disabled persons are disallowed, uninvited, or not included and are, therefore, invisible?

Persons with disabilities are often so marginalized in churches that, if, as in Matthew (25: 37-39) one asked, “When did I see you, Lord?” the answer would not likely be that it was in church.



Do you know who is waiting to be invited
to your congregation?




It is estimated that almost 1 in 5 Americans has a disability, and many of the temporarily-abled join as they age.

According to the National Organization on Disabilities:

- *85 % of people with disabilities say religious faith is important in their lives;

- *compared to people without disabilities they are 7 % less likely to attend church at least once per month;

- *and they are 10 % more likely never to attend church at all.



Is your congregation one that persons with disabilities are not included in?

Do we even know if those in our communities have friends or family who don't attend, but would like to?

The Call to Be Inclusive

*Although I write from a Christian perspective, the call for houses of worship to be made accessible for all has a basis in many Sacred Scriptures, including the *Koran*, the *Torah*, and the Christian *New Testament*.

*In the NT Gospel of Matthew alone, there are at least seventeen mentions of healings of various diseases or disabilities of body or mind.

With that many mentions of persons with disabilities or illnesses of body or mind, whom do you think that Jesus would choose to dine with?
Are they invisible in our congregations?




Eunice Kennedy Shriver by David Lenz, 2009
The Collection of the National Portrait Gallery

Sam and the
Perfect World by
David Lenz, 2005

Sam was among the first
Participants in the SPRED
(Special Religious Education)
In Milwaukee.

<https://youtu.be/zc9modndNMc>
www.spredmilwaukee.org





Do you know if you have a Sam,
just waiting to be invited to the banquet?

What are you waiting for? Now is the acceptable time to reach out!
Do not be afraid—you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

A sampling of some of the resources available:



<http://www.umdisabilityministries.org/resource.html>

Episcopal DisAbility Network:

“Ministry *by and with* persons with disabilities”

<http://www.episcability.org/>



The messiness of it all...My moment of truth with Helen.

marycarlson@Marquette.edu Marquette University
College of Education, Dept. of Ed. Policy and Leadership