

Planning an Awareness/Sensory Friendly Mass

St. Matthew the Evangelist Catholic Church

9915 Hollister St., Houston, TX 77040

OBJECTIVE:

Archdiocesan goal is to eventually offer Sunday Liturgy once a month with different parishes as the host. A parish may host a Liturgy as often as they would like; every other month, once a quarter or even once a year. This could also be just a one-time commitment. The goal is to offer Catholics with disabilities the opportunity to feel included, welcomed and invited to the Lord's Table. Added results may be that families feel encouraged to join a parish or for others to see how "all are welcome" and may want to join that parish.

Before the Mass occurs:

- Archdiocese will visit St. Matthew's about one month before the planned Liturgy to look over church facilities and setting.
- Archdiocese will promote Awareness/Sensory Friendly Mass throughout the area.
- Archdiocese will provide all information and special Mass guides.
- St. Matthew's will promote the Mass to our own parishioners through:
 1. Bulletin announcements with details about the Awareness/Sensory Friendly Mass.
 2. Speaker at each Mass one - two weeks before to explain what is happening and when it will occur (5 pm English).
 3. Announcement after Mass the week before as a reminder.

Archdiocese/St. Matthew's will meet and train Liturgical Ministers on proper procedures. This will include Ministers of Hospitality, EMHC, Music Ministers, and any other key individuals. Archdiocesan volunteers (from

the Ministry with Persons with Disabilities) will be at the Mass to provide support.

Day of the Mass:

- Subdued lighting - softer, slightly dimmed.
- Subdued music - softer, fewer instruments.
- Signs noting restrooms in chapel and wheelchair accessible restrooms in the foyer.
- Hospitality minister at the doors during Mass to help with doors.
- Welcoming Ministers are important. They will:
 1. Greet and open doors upon arrival
 2. Ask guests, “Do you need anything special during Communion?”
 3. Offer “soothers” and “flip books” to those with special needs. (All provided by Archdiocese.)
- More mass parts will be spoken rather than sung to provide for a calmer atmosphere.
- Homily - shorter than a normal Sunday Liturgy. If possible, include inclusivity, vulnerability as possible themes.
- Eucharist offered under both species.
- Parish needs to make sure that wheelchair areas are clear of benches and other obstructions. For this Mass, chairs along the side walls should be removed to make more room for wheelchairs and those needing assistance.
- Anticipate more unexpected talking, noises... from our guests.

SAMPLE AWARENESS MASS OUTLINE

INTRODUCTORY RITES

- Greeting
- Penitential Act – form C
- Gloria - spoken
- Opening Prayer (Collect)

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm – prefer spoken
- Second Reading
- Gospel – spoken or soft music
- Homily – short for short attention spans, inclusive language
- Profession of Faith (Creed)
- Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions) – include prayer for those with special needs and for those who care for them

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

- Preparation of Gifts (Offertory) – Family with a member with a disability?
- Offertory Prayer
- Preface
- Preface Acclamation (Holy, Holy, Holy) - spoken
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Memorial Acclamation – spoken
- Doxology (Amen) - spoken
- The Lord’s Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Fraction Rite (Lamb of God) - spoken
- Invitation to Communion
- Prayer after Communion
- Announcements – including, “Do we have any visitors...”
- Concluding Rite w/ Blessing & Dismissal

Nothing offered after mass. No reception.

