

“Start with One!”
Planning for a *Sensory-Friendly Mass*
St. Matthew the Evangelist Catholic Church
9915 Hollister St., Houston, TX 77040

The Archdiocesan goal is to begin having Sunday Liturgies offered monthly by different parishes with “sensory-friendly” adaptations provided. A parish may choose to offer a *Sensory-Friendly Mass* as often as they would like; once a month, every other month, quarterly, yearly, or only once. Accommodations made at this Mass will allow for a more relaxed and inclusive experience for those individuals on the autism spectrum, or with other sensory sensitivities, and their families. These include an environment of supportive sisters and brothers in Christ, tactile fidgets, visual and auditory aids along with designated calming/alerting area(s), to the utmost extent that is possible. The goal is to provide Catholics with disabilities, and their families, the assistance needed to feel equally welcomed and included at the Lord’s table. Additional benefits may be that families feel at home and are encouraged to join the parish or that other individuals see how “all are welcome” and are inspired to join the parish.

Prior to the Mass:

- Archdiocese to visit St. Matthew’s about one month prior to the Liturgy to view church facilities and setting.
- Archdiocese to promote *Sensory-Friendly Mass* via Chancery Advisory, the *Herald* and email to individuals/parents; and offer website to obtain accommodation requests.
- Parish to consider similar submission via neighborhood newspaper: *NW Leader*.
- Archdiocese will provide a selection of sensory items (Mass flip books, pictorial Mass aids, wiggle seats, hand held plush Jesus, rosaries, etc.)
- St. Matthew’s will promote the Mass to their parishioners through:
 1. Bulletin announcements with details about the Sensory-Friendly Mass.
 2. Speaker at each Mass one to two weeks prior to explain what is happening, why and when: **5pm English Mass on Saturday, Aug 17, 2019.**
 3. Announcement after all Masses 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. Invitation for local parishioners, especially youth group members, to attend/assist is encouraged.

Day of the Mass:

- Subdued lighting: softer, slightly dimmed and subdued music: softer, fewer instruments.
- Signs noting restrooms in chapel and wheelchair accessible restrooms in the foyer of the main building.
- Hospitality Ministers to assist with doors, etc. as needed.
- Hospitality Ministers are vital. They will:
 1. Greet and open doors upon arrival; encourage return upon exit; provide “FYI” card noting future Masses/info, if applicable, and email address: InGodsImage@archgh.org, to provide feedback/request being added to Archdiocesan email list.
 2. Ask guests, “Do you need anything special during Communion?”
 3. Offer selection of soothers, flip books, etc., to be checked out (“lending library” basis) to persons with disabilities. Provided by Archdiocese, in conjunction with the parish, as they are equipped (e.g., Traveling Sensory Kit, assistive listening devices, large print Missals)
 4. Be at the doors during Mass to assist, as needed, with the doors, etc.
- More Mass parts will be spoken rather than sung to provide for a calmer atmosphere.
- Homily: shorter than normal Sunday Liturgy.
- Eucharist offered under both species; low-gluten option, if possible.
- Parish needs to make sure that wheelchair areas are clear of benches and other obstructions. For this Mass, chairs along the side walls will be removed to make more room for wheelchairs and those needing assistance.
- Anticipate more unexpected talking, noises, movements...from our guests.
- Provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, if possible. Advise Fr. Len Broniak, Archdiocesan Director of Deaf Ministry, at lbroniak@archgh.org, so that the Mass is promoted within the deaf community.

Be the One to “Start with One!”

SAMPLE SENSORY FRIENDLY 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 – brief for short attention spans/processing delays, inclusive language
- Profession of Faith (Creed)
- Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions) – include prayer for those with disabilities 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

Gathering space with light refreshments provided after Mass.