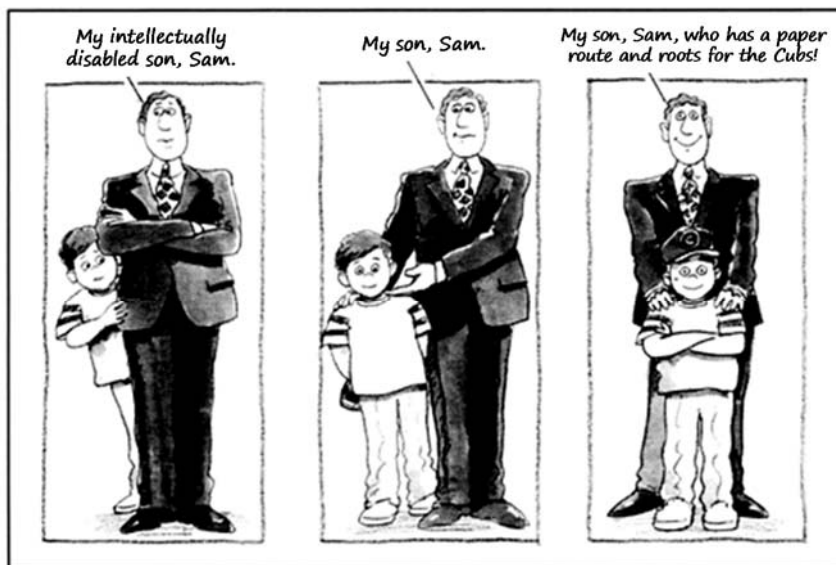


Language: A powerful tool for parish hospitality

Words can sustain negative stigma and myths or they can communicate respect and sensitivity.

When you meet a person with a disability, choose words that say what you mean--that you see them first as a person with many abilities. Talk to the person directly, instead of their companion or interpreter. Ask if assistance is needed, rather than assuming it is. Use a normal tone of voice. We tend to raise our voice to compensate for any perceived disability. If the person cannot hear or understand you, they will let you know.

It's fine to ask a person to repeat or rephrase when you don't understand them. Nodding your head when you really don't understand leads to miscommunication and insincerity.



From Barriers to Bridges, National Organization of Disability, 1996

When it is necessary to refer to a person's disability, here are some acceptable ways to be descriptive and respectful:

- Person with a disability
- Mother who is blind
- Student with vision loss
- Parishioner who is hard-of-hearing
- Eucharistic minister who is deaf
- Teacher with a seizure disorder
- Lector with paraplegia
- Catechist with cerebral palsy
- Server with a learning disability
- Neighbor with mental illness
- Teenager with a brain disorder
- Usher with an intellectual disability
- Greeter who uses a wheelchair
- Priest with a mobility impairment

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