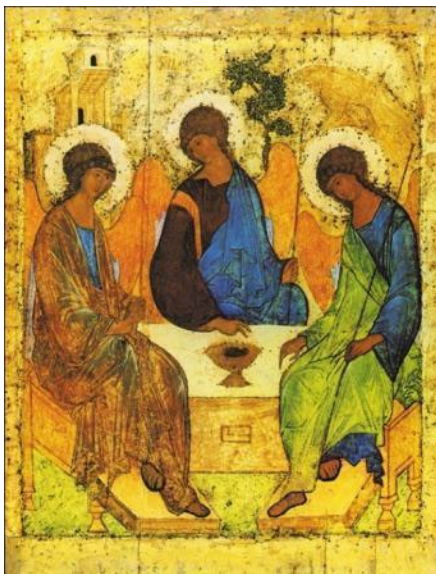


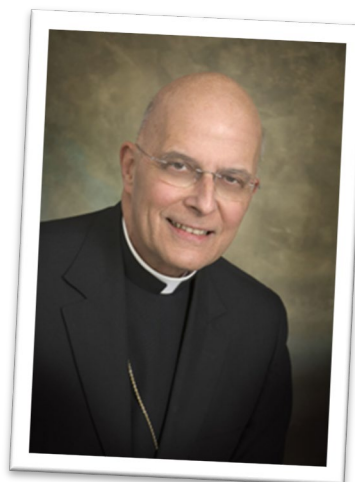


# THAT EVERY ABILITY MAY BELONG MONTH



## Roman Catholic Workbook

**LOOK INSIDE FOR**  
Liturgy Planning Aids • Bulletin Articles  
• Activities for Children and Teens



### **DEDICATION:**

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Father Henri Nouwen generously gave their insight and guidance to the *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* movement which was inaugurated at the 1996 *That All May Worship* Conference sponsored by Pathways.org in partnership with the Archdiocese of Chicago. Cardinal Francis George continued the ministry with the *Inclusion In Worship* movement, inaugurating the parish Inclusion Representative program and endorsing the annual *Inclusion Awareness Day* and the Pathways *Open Hearts Award* \$1,000 grants. The legacy of these spiritual leaders is carried on with the *That Every Ability May Belong* ministry. This workbook is dedicated to their memories.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Pathways.org is grateful to Cardinal Blase Cupich for his support of the *That Every Ability May Belong* ministry with its focus on belonging for parishioners and students of all abilities and the expansion of *Inclusion Awareness Day* to an annual *That Every Ability May Belong Month* celebrated in parishes and schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Special thanks to the Pathways.org *TEAM Belong Round Table of Advisors* for their continued guidance and support.

*ON THE COVER: Counter-clockwise from top left: automatic door opener at 2012 TEAM Belong Award winning Incarnation Catholic Church, Palos Heights, IL, ramp to the altar designed and installed by parishioners at 2006 and 2007 TEAM Belong Award winning Church of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Schaumburg, IL, Icon of the Trinity from the TEAM Belong Month Prayer Card available for downloading at [www.TeamBelong.org](http://www.TeamBelong.org), altar servers at 2008 TEAM Belong Award winning Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, Glenview, IL.*

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*“The parish is a beacon of faith and an advocate for justice and peace, reaching out in love to all ...”*

Blase Cardinal Cupich  
Archbishop of Chicago  
*Renew My Church*  
February, 2016

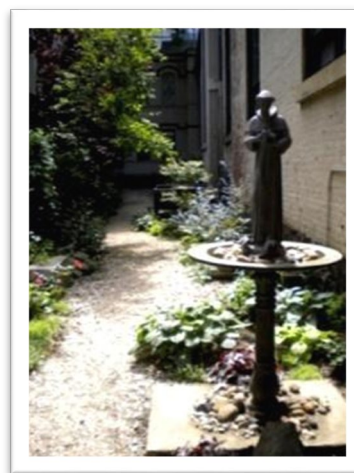
## INTRODUCTION TO TEAM BELONG MONTH

Your parish and school are invited to plan and observe *That Every Ability May Belong Month!*

One in four Americans have a disability, so every parish and school is touched by disabilities. Many communities of faith have made efforts to include parishioners and students of all abilities. *That Every Ability May Belong Month* is time set aside to focus your parish and school on the many ways we can move beyond inclusion to belonging for individuals who happen to have disabilities. We hope you will make this an annual event.

When we provide an accessible school and parish, we are allowing people with disabilities to be present. When we include, we are welcoming individuals with disabilities as outsiders into our select group of insiders. But when we go beyond inclusion to *belonging*, parishioners and students with disabilities are welcomed, invited, known and accepted as co-workers in the Kingdom.

Ensuring that belonging extends to individuals with disabilities and their families in our faith communities is the mission of TEAM Belong. Please join us in celebrating TEAM Belong Month so That Every Ability May Belong! We hope the activities and materials in this workbook will encourage your participation.



*2012 TEAM Belong Award winning St. Charles Borromeo parish, Brooklyn, NY, created a Prayer and Contemplation Garden to offer solace to parishioners with emotional and physical health concerns.*

*“Most parishes and schools think, “We would never intentionally exclude anyone.” But the real question is, “Do we intentionally make individuals with disabilities feel they belong?”*

That Every Ability May Worship Webinar  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)



# THAT EVERY ABILITY MAY BELONG



*Ramp to the orchestra pit at 2017 TEAM Belong Award winning Regina Dominican High School, Wilmette, IL, signage clearly marking accessible entrances at Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, IL and greeters and ushers at Infant Jesus of Prague parish, Flossmoor, IL.*

“The value of belonging is in many ways the key to transformation of culture that needs to happen in our parishes. If belonging is the key, then it opens the door to faith.”

Father James Mallon  
*Divine Renovation p.149*

## INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The more familiar we are with people who happen to have disabilities the more comfortable we will be. Fear of doing the wrong thing can affect interactions between people with and without disabilities. Review the *That Every Ability May Worship* webinar and *The Ministry of Jesus as a Model for TEAM Belong* at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org). Then use the suggestions below to help overcome fears and raise your comfort level when interacting with people of different abilities.

### **The 4D Approach to Reacting To Disability Differences**

- **Detect**: You detect a disability difference and recognize your internal feelings and thoughts.
- **Decide**: You decide to circumvent the urge to freeze or escape and decide the most useful actions for the situation.
- **Do**: You behave according to your plan.
- **Debrief**: You reflect on what worked and what didn't and how to act next time.

Using these steps takes only seconds. When you feel unsure of yourself, the 4 D Approach will help lower your anxiety level and will help you interact more comfortably with people who happen to have disabilities. The more comfortable we are the more we will extend open arms to individuals of all abilities, creating a community of faith where every ability belongs.

*Jesus takes a man who is deaf aside, away from the crowds, and anoints him. Children's TEAM Belong artwork, St. George, Tinley Park, IL*



“Jesus’ ministry gives us a model for how to interact with individuals with disabilities.”

That Every Ability May Worship Webinar  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)

*Source: Nancy B. Miller and Catherine Sammons, Everybody's Different: Understanding and Changing Our Reactions to Disabilities. Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company.*

## THE STAGES OF BELONGING

There are many things we can do in our faith community to create belonging for individuals with disabilities.

The Stages of Belonging	
People of all abilities and their families are:	When:
1. PRESENT	We provide an accessible campus.
2. INVITED	We extend personal invitations to participate and provide accommodations needed.
3. WELCOMED	We educate so that everyone can accept the responsibility to offer hospitality to all.
4. KNOWN	We facilitate interactions to get to know one another.
5. ACCEPTED	We have respect for everyone in all their differences.
6. SUPPORTED	We ask, "What can we do for you?"
7. CARED FOR	We show kindness and genuine concern.
8. BEFRIENDED	We facilitate small group interactions <u>over time</u> to create friendships.
9. NEEDED	We provide ministry roles.
10. LOVED	We provide a valued place in the community.

*Adapted with permission from Erik Carter, Vanderbilt University, [www.erikwcarter.com](http://www.erikwcarter.com).*

## **REFLECTING ON THE STAGES OF BELONGING**

So often we think we have done our job if individuals with disabilities are present. But that is only the first step. So much more work follows to ensure that individuals who happen to have disabilities experience true belonging.

Are people with disabilities and their families ...	What are we doing well in this area?	What could we do better or differently in this area?
PRESENT		
INVITED		
WELCOMED		
KNOWN		
ACCEPTED		
SUPPORTED		
CARED FOR		
BEFRIENDED		
NEEDED		
LOVED		

What next steps should we take to address these areas well?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted with permission from Erik Carter, Vanderbilt University, [www.erikwcarter.com](http://www.erikwcarter.com).



# ACTIVITIES FOR THAT EVERY ABILITY MAY BELONG MONTH



*2002 Junior TEAM Belong Award winning artwork from St. Thomas Becket, Palatine, IL and St. Mary, Buffalo Grove, IL, adapted ambo at 2009 TEAM Belong Award winning Old St. Mary's, Chicago, IL, teen mentor and student, Open Doors Faith Formation Program, 2018 and 2015 TEAM Belong Award winning St. James, Arlington Heights.*

*"The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodations to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities."*

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops  
*Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments #6*

## TEAM BELONG MONTH ACTIVITIES

Use affirmation, belonging, communication and accessibility to create parishes and schools where people of all abilities belong. See these suggestions in each area to plan *TEAM Belong Month*. Resources and handouts are at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) unless otherwise indicated.

### AFFIRMATION

- Designate a month as TEAM Belong Month. Plan parish and school liturgies and activities that showcase how you welcome and create a sense of belonging for parishioners and students of all abilities. (See *Liturgy Planning Ideas pp.14-23.*)
- With the pastor's blessing, ask your Parish Council and School Board to approve a *TEAM Belong Ministry*. Use *TEAM Belong Month* to recruit and commission members for the new ministries. (See the *TEAM Belong Ministry Handbook*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org), and the *Commissioning Ceremony*, p.17-18.)
- Invite parishioners and students with disabilities to inaugurate their liturgical ministries at a *TEAM Belong Month* liturgy. Provide accommodations, training and mentors well in advance so that the inauguration is successful and ministry continues beyond *TEAM Belong Month*.
- Make sure access and belonging are a priority for parish and school leaders with a *Ministry Audit*. Then make sure all parish and school events are publicized as accessible. (*Ministry Audit, Access Signs, Making Meetings Accessible*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)



*Processional at TEAM Belong Month liturgy, Prince of Peace, Lake Villa, IL, a 2006 TEAM Belong Award winning parish.*

## TEAM BELONG MONTH ACTIVITIES (CONT'D.)

### BELONGING

- Present the *That Every Ability May Belong Webinar*, available at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org), to parish and school staff and ministry leaders.
- Study the over 26 healing Scripture stories as models for our own interactions with people with disabilities. (See *the TEAM Belong Webinar and The Ministry of Jesus as a Model*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)
- Preach about the healing stories in the Gospels as a universal need for healing rather than in ways that target or oppress people with disabilities. (See Homily Hints, p.19 and *The Ministry of Jesus as a Model*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)
- Teach the *Stages of Belonging* to transform your parish and school into communities where everyone belongs. (See pp. 6-7.)
- Raise comfort levels so that everyone ministers alongside individuals with disabilities as fellow missionary disciples. (See *Interacting with People with Disabilities*, p. 5.)

*Trinity Volunteer Corps gift bearers, Old St. Patrick's, Chicago, a 2006 to 20011 TEAM Belong winning parish.*



*"We can help rid the world of stigmatizing attitudes by learning to circumvent automatic responses to disability difference."*

*Miller and Sammons  
Everybody Different:  
Understanding and Changing  
Our Reactions to Disabilities*

## TEAM BELONG MONTH ACTIVITIES (CONT'D.)

### COMMUNICATION

- Use articles in your bulletin, newsletters and website to teach about disability etiquette, belonging and announce school and parish efforts to create belonging for people of all abilities. (See pp.30-32 and *How You Can Make a Difference*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)
- Train clergy, parish and school staff, ministry heads, parishioners and students in disability etiquette so they feel comfortable reaching out in friendship to individuals of all abilities. (See *Know Your Disability Etiquette*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)
- Teach parish and school leaders, parishioners and students about the importance of modeling people first language when preaching, teaching and writing. (See *People First Language*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org))
- Plan children, teen and family activities that teach about belonging for all. (See pp. 24-29 and *Know Your Disability Etiquette*, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).)



TEAM Belong Month bulletin articles, educational handouts and prayer cards are available for downloading at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).

**What do you say when you meet a person with a disability?**  
**How about, "Hello!"**



## TEAM BELONG MONTH ACTIVITIES (CONT'D.)

### ACCESSIBILITY

- Walk through your facilities during TEAM Belong Month using the *Facilities Survey* available at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org). Note inaccessible areas, and with your parish leaders, make plans to remove those barriers to participation. Use the *Accessibility Plan Worksheet* at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) to prioritize your projects. Announce your plans at your parish and school *TEAM Belong Month* events.



*An accessible ambo allows open space beneath a height adjustable reading table so that wheelchair foot plates clear the supporting structure. Children and taller or shorter adults also benefit from an accessible ambo. Photo courtesy of Tortorelli Creations, [www.tortorelli.com](http://www.tortorelli.com).*

*“Since many people share in the ministry of the Word, the ambo should be accessible to everyone, including those with physical disabilities.”*

*United States Catholic Conference of Bishops  
Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship  
#61*

## TEAM BELONG MONTH ACTIVITIES (CONT'D.)

### APPLY FOR \$1,000 TEAM BELONG AND JUNIOR TEAM BELONG AWARDS

The TEAM Belong and Junior TEAM Belong Awards (submitted by children 5 to 18 years old) offer cash grants of up to \$1,000 for specific, planned projects that create access and belonging for individuals with disabilities in religious schools and houses of faith.

Annual deadline, application forms, a winning essay and a winning video are available at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) or call 1-800-364-1337 for more information.

We hope you will consider submitting an application for a TEAM Belong Award or inviting children or youth from your parish or school to submit a Junior TEAM Belong Award application. The story of your congregation's efforts to create belonging and your expertise from completing access projects could help others.



*St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Chicago, IL, used a 2014 TEAM Belong Award to provide assistive listening devices for parishioners who have difficulty hearing during liturgies.*

*2019 TEAM Belong Award winning St. Nicholas of Tolentine School, Chicago, IL, applied for and received a grant for C Pen Readers to assist student's reading needs.*



# LITURGY PLANNING FOR TEAM BELONG MONTH



*Stained glass window panels, Adoration Chapel, Incarnation parish, Palos Heights, IL, a 2012 TEAM Belong Award winning congregation.*

*“Liturgy, if you really want to understand it, is the place where people in their brokenness and weakness meet and discover that right where they come together in mutual vulnerability, there Jesus Himself is.”*

Henri Nouwen  
The Vulnerable Journey video  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)

## HYMNS FOR TEAM BELONG MONTH

A Place at the Table	Murray/True
All Are Welcome	Haugen
City of God	Schutte
Holy Is God	Lawton
I Need You to Survive	Walker
One Bread, One Body	Foley, S.J.
One Lord	True
Open Doors*	Martin
Plenty Good Room	Traditional Spiritual, arr. Glover
Sing a New Church	Nettleton/Dufner
Ubi Caritas	Browning
We Come To Your Feast	Joncas
Who Is the Alien	Lori, True

\* Download the sheet music ([assembly](#) and [choir versions](#)) of the song “Open Doors” by Sandy Martin at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).

## INTRODUCTION TO WORSHIP SERVICE DURING TEAM BELONG MONTH

TEAM Belong Month reminds us to open our hearts to recognize the gifts of every person. Today we celebrate and renew our commitment to becoming a place of *belonging* where everyone’s gifts are valued. When we create belonging we go beyond accessibility and inclusion to welcoming parishioners and students with disabilities as fellow missionary disciples ministering together alongside one another.

*Contributor: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Winnetka, IL*

*“Whether our disabilities are visible or not, we all have them.”*

Henri Nouwen  
The Vulnerable Journey video  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)



## OPENING PRAYER FOR TEAM BELONG MONTH

Loving and Gracious God, we gather together in the welcoming spirit of your love. As you have fashioned each one of us according to your image and embraced each of us with your generous love, may we in turn open our arms and hearts wide in welcome to each other. In our gathering today may we experience the joy and beauty of authentic fellowship where all are accepted and all belong.

In this hour of worship, turn our hearts to you. Touch us with your Spirit and teach us your truth. Open our hearts to respond to your words and transform our lives into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Amen.

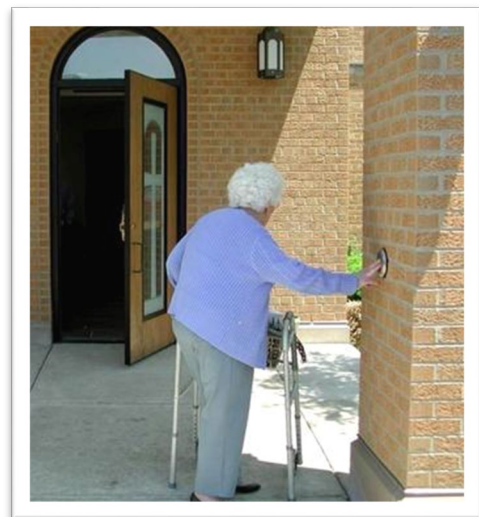
*Contributed by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, IL*

## OPENING PRAYER: OPTION TWO

Gracious God, you have fashioned each one of us according to your image and embraced each of us with your generous love, may we in turn open our hearts wide and welcome each other. Because you value and accept each one of us, may we also come to accept and value all those you have created. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*Contributed by Sacred Heart Church, Winnetka, IL*

*Automatic door openers at 1998 and 2001 TEAM Belong Award winning Infant Jesus of Prague, Flossmoor, IL, assist parishioners who use walkers and wheelchairs as well as parents with strollers, ministry coordinators moving materials and maintenance staff moving equipment and supplies.*



## TEAM BELONG MINISTRY COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

Use the following prayer service to commission your TEAM Belong Ministry during TEAM Belong Month. A TEAM Belong Ministry comprised of dedicated individuals, including members with disabilities, can make long-lasting, appropriate changes in your parish and/or school.

Presider: Gracious God, you sent Jesus to establish your kingdom and invite all people to experience the fullness of your life. Send your Holy Spirit to be with us as we commission these ministers. Give them the grace to be models of hospitality to parishioners of all abilities, like Jesus your Son. We ask this in Your name.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, God has given you the grace to say “yes” to the invitation to serve the *That Every Ability May Belong* ministry. You now have the opportunity to serve Christ and our parish in a special way.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to provide accommodations so that we can welcome and include parishioners of all abilities into our parish family?

*Ministers:* Yes, I do.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to educate our parishioners to be a supportive presence so that parishioners of all abilities feel welcome to participate in parish life?

*Ministers:* Yes, I do.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to foster gospel values and promote the dignity of the human person so that our parish may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ?

*Ministers:* Yes, I do.



*TEAM Belong Ministry banner at Prince of Peace, Lake Villa, IL. A 2006 TEAM Belong Award was used to purchase assistive listening devices.*

## COMMISSIONING CEREMONY (cont'd)

Presider: Glory and praise be to God, who has called each of you by name, and who has brought you to respond now with such generosity and love.

Presider: Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing:

Blessed are you, Lord, God of mercy, who through your Son gave us a marvelous example of charity and the great commandment of love for one another. Send down your blessings on these your servants, who will devote themselves to this ministry. When they are called on in times of need, let them faithfully serve You and our parish family. Guide their efforts as they welcome parishioners of all abilities into active participation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*Contributor: Santa Maria Del Popolo Church, Mundelein, IL.*



*A well lit, exterior ramp makes 2011 TEAM Belong Award winning St. Patrick Catholic Church, Lexington, VA, accessible while enhancing processions on Corpus Christi, Palm Sunday and the Easter Vigil.*

## HOMILY HINTS

One in four Americans has a disability—physical, mental, or sensory. Disabilities can occur at any time in life and they increase with age. Most likely every fourth person you greet at church this weekend will have a disability. As the Body of Christ, we are called to welcome all of our members, especially those who are most vulnerable. The task today is to help all of our members to acknowledge our own vulnerabilities—whether hidden or exposed—and see how much we need one another.

Understanding that we all have vulnerabilities and honoring the vulnerability in others is at the heart of our Christian faith. The problem is vulnerability is rarely welcome in our competitive culture. Messages from every quarter encourage us to be the best, the brightest, the greatest, the swiftest, the most powerful, the most beautiful, or the most intelligent.

It's clear from Jesus' ministry that we are called to be compassionately aware of the needs of others. Today as a parish we can become aware of physical or attitudinal barriers that may be preventing some of our members from sharing their gifts and we can make plans to address these issues. Our celebration of TEAM Belong Month should remind us that we are the Body of Christ and every member has a contribution to make.



*2018 and 2015 TEAM Belong Award winning St. James Catholic Church, Arlington Heights, IL, reaches out to welcome parishioners of all abilities with a newly renovated accessible church and with the Open Doors RE Program that welcomes children of all abilities and their families.*



## PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Add one or two of these prayers to your intentions during TEAM Belong Month:

**Leader:** God, Creator of all, help us to recognize that each of us has abilities and each of us has limitations. And yet we all have a part to play in bringing about Your Kingdom. With a spirit of compassion and solidarity, we ask you to increase our awareness of both the gifts and the needs of those around us.

We Pray to the Lord

**Response:** Lord Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** Compassionate Father; help us to become truly welcoming communities where everyone can find a place at Your Table. Open our hearts to the gifts of every person and help us to acknowledge the vulnerabilities we all have.

We Pray to the Lord

**Response:** Lord Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** Father of Mercy, Help us to emulate the virtues of compassion and justice lived by St. Teresa of Calcutta. Help us to welcome the most vulnerable among us to share their gifts at the altar.

We Pray to the Lord

**Response:** Lord Hear Our Prayer

**Leader:** That world leaders work to foster dignity, respect and civil rights for citizens of all abilities.

We pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, Hear our Prayer.

**Presider:** Loving and merciful God, you care about each of us. Hear our prayers today that one day we all may be united with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL OPTION 2

Belonging...fitting in...being invited... It is often so important to us...for ourselves...that we close the door or block the way for others...others just as eager as we are to be welcomed and invited. For a spirit of openness, hospitality, and welcome in all of our relationships, We pray to the Lord.

**Response:** *Lord, open our hearts.*

How easy has it become for us to be accomplices of the popular culture? How often do we give our unwitting approval by simply standing back and accepting things the way they are – poverty, injustice, war, and violence? For the courage to step forward...working for equality, prosperity, and peace for all. We pray to the Lord.

**Response:** *Lord, open our hearts.*

As we celebrate TEAM Belong Month in our church community, may we continue to build a home where the welcome of hospitality will always be true and honest ...because all are welcome...everyone's gift is respected...each unique ability is honored... and being church together...in the circle of our Creator's unconditional embrace...is our constant passion. We pray to the Lord.

**Response:** *Lord, open our hearts.*

Whether first or last...stranger or neighbor...friend or enemy...we all stand at the gate, often so paralyzed by our fears, insecurities, and misgivings...that we cannot imagine a way into God's family. May we be calmed and strengthened by our faith in God's desire for us to live remarkable lives of Belonging. We pray to the Lord.

**Response:** *Lord, open our hearts.*

*"...the Church is the house of all God's children, open and welcoming."*

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1186

## TALKING POINTS FOR TEAM BELONG MINISTERS

Parish and school TEAM Belong leaders can use the following talking points during TEAM Belong Month.

- “This month we are celebrating TEAM Belong Month and the many ways we create belonging for parishioners and students of all abilities every day of the year.”
- “My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I have volunteered to act as the TEAM Belong Minister for our parish/school.”
- Outline your plans for this ministry. This may include the formation of a committee, surveying parishioner and student needs, providing accommodations so that all abilities can serve in liturgical ministries, attend classes, etc.
- Explain access features already in place in the church such as large print missallettes and assistive hearing devices and accessible entrances and adapted curriculum in the school.
- “Our parish and school are working hard to create belonging for parishioners and students of all abilities. Please contact me if there are ways we can reach out to you and your family so That Every Ability May Belong. Thank you.”



*2011 Children's Junior TEAM Belong Award winning drawing, St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL. The parish also applied for and received grants in 2013, 2017 and 2018 for architectural plans to make the altar accessible and assistive listening devices for the church and social hall.*

## COMMUNION REFLECTION

Invite members of your parish or students from the school or religious education program who happen to have disabilities to speak after communion about what belonging to your faith community means to them

## JUSTICE PRAYER

Forgive us, Lord, if we unwittingly share in the conditions  
or in a system that perpetuates injustice.  
Show us how we can serve your children  
and make your love practical by our works of compassion and service.

*From "Justice Prayer" by Mother Teresa  
Contributed by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, IL*

## CLOSING PRAYER

O Lord, thank you for the blessings of the gifts and talents of each of our parishioners. Teach us to meet the challenges of developing an understanding and appreciation for who we are and how you intend for us to use our strengths in our Church and community. Help us to value one another's differences. Amen.

*Contributed by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, IL*

## PRAYER FOR AWARENESS

God, Creator of all, help us to recognize that each of us has abilities and each of us has limitations. And yet we all have a part to play in bringing about your Kingdom. You love each of us profoundly. In the spirit of gratitude and solidarity, we ask you to increase our awareness of both the gifts and the needs of those around us. Help us to become truly welcoming communities where everyone belongs can find a place at Your Table. We ask this in Your name, Amen.



# INVOLVING CHILDREN AND TEENS IN TEAM BELONG MONTH



Clockwise left to right: Everybody is *Thumbody* Precious in the Eyes of the Lord activity, *Different Gifts, Same Spirit* Lesson Plans and Mary Virginia Merrick, Servant of God, whose contribution to the Church endures to this day in The Christ Child Society Chapters.

*“God created you with unimaginable gifts and it is the affirmation of others that make that gift possible.”*

Father Henri Nouwen  
Open Hearts, Open Minds Open Doors video  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN TEAM BELONG MONTH

The activities below can be used at a reception after masses or in school and religious education classes.

### EVERYONE IS “THUMBODY” PRECIOUS IN THE EYES OF THE LORD

*Both children and adults enjoy this activity.*

Materials:

Large sheets of banner paper

Stamp pads in various colors (or create your own using sponges and food colors)

Black, thin tipped felt markers

Disposable wipes to clean thumbs

Spread the large sheets of banner paper on tables. Write *Everyone is “Thumbody” Precious in the Eyes of the Lord* in the center of each banner in large letters. Invite everyone to coat their thumbs lightly on the stamp pads and press their prints onto the large banner paper to make a head and a body. Use the markers to add your features to your thumbprint portrait. Sign your name below your portrait. Clean off thumbs with wipes. When each paper is covered with thumbprint people and signatures, display the banner for all to see.



### CHILDREN’S DISPLAY AND/OR JUNIOR TEAM BELONG AWARD APPLICATION

Invite children to prepare and display videos, artwork or essays with photos about how parishioners and students of all abilities belong at your parish. The *Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit* lesson plans available from Loyola Press or at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) can be used to facilitate this activity. Choose the best work and submit with a completed nomination form to Pathways.org for a Junior TEAM Belong Award grant of up to \$1,000 to help fund an access or belonging project at your parish or school.

## LEARN ABOUT THE GIFTS OF BLESSED MARY VIRGINIA MERRICK

Blessed Mary Virginia Merrick, founder of the National Christ Child Society, used a wheelchair most of her life. Read and discuss the information below with elementary students or contact The National Christ Child Society for the 10 page book “Miss Mary” by Erin Gibbons. Use the word search as a student activity after you discuss Mary’s contributions to the Church.

### MARY’S STORY



Mary Virginia Merrick used a wheelchair from the time she was a little girl. That did not keep her from helping others. Mary heard about a new baby in her neighborhood whose mother did not have enough money for baby clothes. Mary asked her friends from her parish to help her sew baby clothes for the new baby. Soon Mary heard of more babies who needed her help. Mary and her friends began to sew hats, blankets and gowns for many new babies in need.

Mary also heard about children who did not receive Christmas presents because their families could not afford them. She suggested the children write letters to the Christ Child, the *Giver of All Gifts*. Mary and her friends raised money to buy toys for the children. They placed tags on the gifts that said “From the Christ Child.”

Mary prayed often and she spent her time helping others. Mary’s work grew and one day Mary’s bishop asked her to start an organization to continue her efforts. Mary called her organization The Christ Child Society. Today Christ Child Society chapters all across the United States give hundreds of babies and children baby clothes and gifts. Some day we hope Mary will be named a saint because of her good works, holiness and generosity.

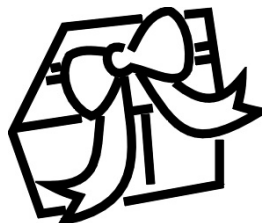


For more information about Mary Virginia Merrick, Servant of God, and the National Christ Child Society, visit [www.nationalchristchild.org](http://www.nationalchristchild.org).

# MARY VIRGINIA MERRICK WORD SEARCH

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



U	R	E	P	R	D	H	H	G	Q	U	P	B	B	I
H	Y	H	X	S	A	I	N	T	T	C	X	H	U	S
B	Z	B	A	B	Y	C	L	O	T	H	E	S	D	C
Y	W	H	E	E	L	C	H	A	I	R	L	H	J	H
W	J	O	C	Z	R	V	I	R	G	I	N	I	A	R
B	G	U	G	H	M	M	A	R	Y	S	U	K	A	I
L	G	S	T	L	E	N	C	H	A	T	S	G	U	S
A	O	E	A	E	R	I	O	S	Q	C	A	I	T	T
N	W	R	E	T	R	N	U	V	T	H	B	F	O	M
K	N	F	E	T	I	Q	R	S	X	I	C	T	Y	A
E	S	X	H	E	C	T	A	B	I	L	I	M	S	S
T	S	N	C	R	K	B	G	W	T	D	D	C	O	H
S	L	E	K	S	Z	F	E	H	A	O	Z	M	X	A
P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	Q	G	L	N	T	B	R
K	V	D	L	D	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	X	E	E



## SEARCH FOR:

MARY  
VIRGINIA  
MERRICK  
COURAGE  
WHEELCHAIR  
GIFT  
SUPPORT

NEED  
BABYCLOTHES  
HATS  
BLANKETS  
GOWNS  
SHARE  
LETTERS

CHRISTMAS  
PRESENTS  
TOYS  
CHRIST CHILD  
TAG  
SAINT

## INVOLVING TEENS IN TEAM BELONG MONTH

### TEEN GREETERS

Invite teens to greet and distribute TEAM Belong Month prayer cards or a TEAM Belong Month bulletin with a special cover and articles about belonging for parishioners of all abilities. Train teens to be sensitive to and respectful of parishioners and students of all abilities before they serve as greeters.

#### **Sensitivity Training**

Read *Reflecting on Belong* (p. 21), *Know Your Disability Etiquette* and *How You Can Make a Difference* ([www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)) with confirmandi or the teens in your youth group. Discuss ways the students can convey belonging for parishioners and students of all abilities. Practice making eye contact, greeting and handing out prayer cards.

#### **Distribute Prayer Cards or Special Bulletins**

Download the bulletin cover or the TEAM Belong Month prayer card at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org). Create a special bulletin or print the prayer card on card stock and cut apart. Have teens sign up to serve as greeters. Supervise them as they greet and distribute prayer cards on TEAM Belong Month.

### STUDENT DISPLAY

Ask teens to create posters about creating belonging for people of all abilities at parishes and Catholic schools. Use the high school *Different Gifts, Same Spirit* lesson plans ([www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) or from Loyola Press) to facilitate this activity. Display the students work in the vestibule of the church.



*Cross bearer, St. Nicholas, Evanston, IL, 2000, 2005 and 2006 TEAM Belong Award winning parish for projects to improve accessibility at the parish.*



## INVOLVING TEENS IN TEAM BELONG MONTH (CONT'D.)

### JUNIOR OPEN HEARTS AWARD APPLICATION

Use the high school lesson plans (available at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) or from Loyola Press) at your school or parish youth group meeting. Discuss everyone's gifts. Have the students do a walkthrough of your parish plant or school, noting inaccessible areas (use the Facilities Survey, [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)). Discuss ways the parish or school could be more accessible. Ask students to create a video or an essay with photos explaining how they would use a \$1,000 grant to improve access and belonging at their school or church. See the video by students from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School, Phoenix, Arizona at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org). With the approval of the pastor or principal, apply for a Junior TEAM Belong Award grant.



*Teens from Our Lady of Light Catholic Church, Cubero, New Mexico, used the Different Gifts, Same Spirit Lesson Plans to educate parishioners about access. They applied for Junior TEAM Belong Awards for grants for an accessible entrance, concrete parking spaces, brighter interior lighting and pew cut outs at their mission church.*

*“Embodying God’s compassion, especially for those most forgotten, was far more important to Jesus than cultivating a self regarding holiness.”*

Bishop Robert Barron  
Opening Hearts, Minds and Doors  
[www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)

# TEAM BELONG MONTH BULLETIN MATERIALS



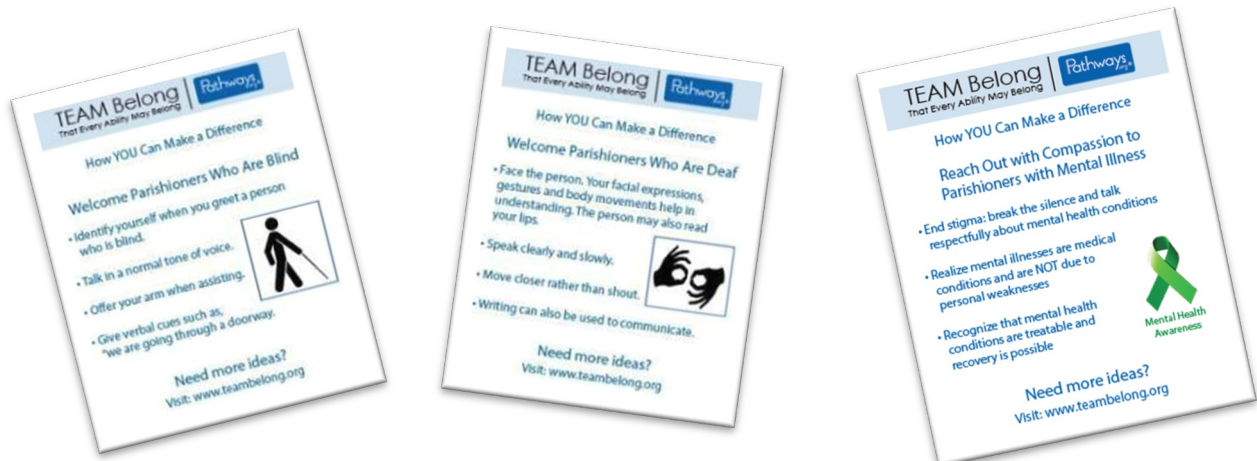
*"The leaders and the general membership of the Church must educate themselves to appreciate fully the contribution people with disabilities can make to the Church's spiritual life."*

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops  
Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities #13

## TEAM BELONG MONTH BULLETIN ARTICLES

### EDUCATIONAL SERIES

Download the series of [educational](https://www.teambelong.org) pieces at [www.TEAMBelong.org](https://www.teambelong.org) and run in bulletins, on websites or in newsletters to help spread awareness about how every parishioner and student can help to create a more welcoming community of faith where every ability belongs.



### BULLETIN ARTICLES

## That Every Ability May Belong MONTH

That Every Ability May Belong Month focuses on awareness, hospitality and belonging in our faith community. Our participation in TEAM Belong Month affirms our commitment to making our parish and school places where individuals of all abilities, even the most vulnerable, belong and can share their gifts.

TEAM Belong Month is just one way we can make our community a place of belonging for all. To have a real and lasting impact, we must extend our efforts beyond this special month. We ask each of you to personally take action to welcome parishioners and students of all abilities into our parish family. Together we can create a community where everyone knows they truly belong, ministering alongside one another as fellow missionary disciples.

*“Hospitality ... is the responsibility of the entire community,”*

*Father James Mallon  
Divine Renovation p. 103*

## BULLETIN ARTICLE TO INAUGURATE YOUR TEAM BELONG MINISTRY

### TEAM BELONG MONTH INAUGURATES NEW MINISTRY

Today, during TEAM Belong Month, our parish extends a warm and heartfelt invitation to parishioners to join a new ministry, TEAM Belong: That Every Ability May Belong. The goals of the ministry are:

- **Accessibility**—surveying the needs of our parish community and providing the necessary accommodations so parishioners of all abilities belong in worship, ministries, social events and leadership roles
- **Communication**—utilizing print, internet, verbal and nonverbal communications to convey that all are welcome to participate
- **Affirmation**—personally inviting parishioners with disabilities and their families to participate in parish activities.
- **Belonging**—going beyond mere accessibility to creating a sense of belonging for parishioners and students with disabilities.

If you are interested in joining this ministry or if you have any needs or concerns, please contact (name of TEAM Belong Minister) at (phone number) or (email address). Our first ministry meeting will be on (day and date) at (time) in the (location). All are welcome to attend. For more information about this ministry visit [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).

*Contributors: Incarnation, Palos Heights, IL and Prince of Peace, Lake Villa, IL*

*“The parish is the door to participation for persons with disabilities, and it is the responsibility of the pastor and lay leaders to make sure that this door is always open.”*

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops  
Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities #18



## TEAM BELONG HANDOUTS

### FREE MATERIALS TO DOWNLOAD AT [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)

- Access Symbols
- Accessibility Audit for Ministries
- Accessibility Plan Worksheet
- Blessing a New Access Feature
- Facilities Survey
- How You Can Make a Difference
- Ideas for TEAM Belong Awards
- Know Your Disability Etiquette
- Making Events Accessible
- People First Language
- Reflecting on Belonging
- Survey of Needs
- The Stages of Belonging
- Affirmation, Belonging, Communication and Accessibility Handouts
- 10 Ways: Affirmation, Communication and Accessibility
- *Different Gifts, Same Spirit* Lesson Plan Series (also available from Loyola Press)
- *Open Doors* song and sheet music for the assembly and choir
- TEAM Belong Month Prayer Card, Poster/Bulletin Cover
- TEAM Belong Award application packets
- Universal Design: Design for All

### FREE PUBLICATIONS AT [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org) :

- *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* video available for viewing at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)
- *The Vulnerable Journey* video by Father Henri Nouwen available for viewing at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org)
- *Open Hearts, Open Minds* [Idea Guide](#) booklet
- *Opening Hearts, Minds, Doors: Embodying the Inclusive and Vulnerable Love of God* by Bishop Robert Barron