



## DIOCESE OF WINONA - ROCHESTER

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Dear Brothers and Sisters living with disabilities in southern Minnesota,

I welcome you to the Roman Catholic faith communities of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. Whether you are a long-time practicing Catholic or a person seeking God, you are welcome in our parishes.

The Church is not just a building. First and foremost, the Church is the people of God. Every baptized person has been called by Jesus Christ for abundant life and mission. As adopted sons and daughters of the Father, and brothers and sisters to Jesus, this is our deepest identity. That identity makes us strong. We each bring many different gifts to the table, and diversity is what makes our communion rich as we journey together.

I am very aware that people living with disabilities have not always been welcomed and included as fully as they desire and deserve at worship and in our parish life. While there are many examples of inclusion and participation, there is work to be done to improve our hospitality to those with disabilities, and enable their fuller participation in the life of the Body of Christ. As Pope Francis recently said on the International Day for People with Disabilities—as friends of Jesus, “the Church is truly your home! We, all of us together, are Church, because Jesus chose to be our friend.”

We are committed to adapting, as we are able, to help people living with disabilities participate fully in the entire range of sacramental life. Please do not presume you cannot participate or attend. You are deeply welcomed!

I ask you to let your local pastor or parish staff know precisely what you need in order to participate fully in the Mass, and in the life of the Church. The needs of people living with very different disabilities are not always obvious, and we want to support you in your growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ. If we do not know initially what is needed to help you participate, we will find out. Articulating your needs will not only help us serve and respect you, it will help so many others!

May we all find the joy of the Lord together, in prayer, fellowship, and the Eucharist.

Sincerely in Christ,

*+John M. Quinn*

Most Rev. John M. Quinn  
Bishop of Winona-Rochester