



# NCPD

NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITY

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## **National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) and Loyola Press Announce Winners of *Opening Doors* Award**

(November 18, 2013, Washington D.C) The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) announces the recipients of the Loyola Press *Opening Doors Award* for 2013, spotlighting two distinct parish ministries. This National Award, including a \$1,000 gift to each parish to further the local disability ministry, was presented for the first time, at NCPD's recent national conference, *Partnership 2013: Where Faith and Disability Meet*, in Houston, Texas. The *Opening Door's Award* highlights the importance of parishes recognizing the gifts and needs of persons with disabilities.

Janice Benton, Executive Director of NCPD, in announcing the selection of All Saints, a large, urban parish in Dallas, Texas, said "All Saints sets a standard that other parishes should strive to achieve as they make efforts at welcoming persons with disabilities into a parish community. The parish's willingness to embark on new initiatives to meet identified needs and to call forth the gifts of persons with disabilities captured the attention of the selection committee."

All Saints parish guaranteed physical access to its facilities by removing physical barriers to the sanctuary and at the altar. These modifications enable persons with mobility impairments to serve in various roles on the altar. All Saints also established its Disability Ministry, with the strong support of the pastor, resulting in initiatives to establishing a medical equipment loan program that later expanded to the diocesan level, building a friendship and support group through its Disability Ministry that meets ten times a year, and creating a mental health initiative.

The Loyola Press *Opening Doors Award* for 2013 also recognized the importance of nurturing the faith in Mission Dioceses. The award to St. Joseph's parish of Moorhead, Minnesota in the Dioceses of Crookston, applauds the efforts made in a smaller community to meet the access needs of its parishioners.

St. Joseph's installed cut-out pew spaces for wheelchair users, made two entrances accessible with no steps to traverse, and installed a closed loop hearing enhancement system for parishioners with hearing impairments. For nine years, St. Joseph's has included children with disabilities in the parish life experience through the formation of a Committee for Children with Special Needs. This Committee made it possible for individuals with disabilities to be confirmed and formed in their faith, using a curriculum for teens through young adults. Parishioners host several events providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in parish life.

“Without the persistence of a dedicated group of parishioners, St Joseph would not be the welcoming community that it is today and would not be gifted with certain members of its community that are surely an integral part of any parish,” said Janice Benton.

The NCPD website, [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org), features highlights from *Partnership 2013: Where Faith and Disability Meet*. Visit the website to discover innovative efforts of hundreds of individuals, parishes, and partners. Best practices will be shared for opening doors for the full and active participation of all Catholics into full participation into the life of the Church. Some of the topics are bioethics, mental illness, autism, sacramental preparation, family support in a multi-cultural environment, and much more.

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For more than thirty years, rooted in Gospel values that affirm the dignity of every person, NCPD has worked collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society. NCPD was established in 1982 to foster implementation of the Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities. Passed unanimously on November 16, 1978, this prophetic document calls for welcome of the now over fourteen million Catholics who live with disabilities. NCPD is guided by the policy statements and resolutions passed by the NCPD Board of Directors. This mission of inclusion for persons with disabilities moves forward through a national network of diocesan level leaders called by their bishops to address access and inclusion within parishes, as well developing partnerships with other organizations.