

NCCB RESOLUTION

1988

The Pastoral Statement of U. S. Catholic Bishops on Handicapped People was issued on November 16, 1978. It offered great hope to persons with disabilities, opening the church communities to their full membership.

In the decade since we issued this pastoral statement, many parish and diocesan buildings, programs, and services have been made accessible; and increasingly more persons with mental and physical disabilities are participating in church life. Diocesan staff are also commonly available to assist parishes in becoming more hospitable.

On the occasion of this 10th anniversary we, the Catholic bishops of the United States of America, reaffirm and recommit ourselves to the guidelines, principles and practices set forth in our pastoral statement. We challenge our dioceses and parish churches in the United States to go beyond physical access to buildings and the provision of religious and social services. We draw attention to the many persons with disabilities who experience a call to pastoral ministry, to ordained priesthood, to membership in a religious community or to employment within the church.

We celebrate the dignity of persons with developmental disabilities who provide, along with their presence and some pastoral services within the church, their gifts of simplicity of heart. We affirm those persons with disabilities who were first in a given area of ministry, and we call all persons with disabilities to the fullness of their baptismal commitment.

We proclaim that if any disabled person is prevented from active participation, the church community is incomplete. We call upon church leadership throughout the country to encourage conversion of mind and heart, so that all persons with disabilities may be invited to worship and to every level of service as full members of the Body of Christ.