



Tips for communicating with people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

There will be times in your parish when people who are Deaf or hard of hearing are part of your congregation. Everybody wants to feel welcome and these are some tips for better communication.

- **Make sure you can be clearly seen and that your face is not in shadow. Face the light; do not have the window behind you.**
- **Talk directly to the person even if you are using a sign language interpreter to communicate. The communication is between you and the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing so talk to them in the same way as you talk to anyone else.**
- **Speak clearly, not too fast, but not over exaggeratedly slowly either. Try and be as natural as possible. Repeat things if necessary or re-phrase something if after repeating it the person has still not understood. Certain letters are much more difficult to lip read. The difference between “p” “b” and “m” on the lips is very small.**
- **Don’t shout – it doesn’t help. Shouting distorts your face and makes you look angry. You might be saying a most encouraging and positive thing, but if you shout, you will look angry.**
- **Make sure that you include a Deaf or hard of hearing person in any general conversation especially if something funny has**

happened. It can be very disconcerting for people to be laughing all around you and you have no idea what they are laughing about.

- Do not cover your face or mouth. If you speak while chewing gum, or biting your fingernails or covering your mouth in any way it makes lip reading impossible.**
- If you have long hair keep it off your face. For men with moustaches and beards, keep these trimmed so that your lips are clearly visible.**
- Don't give up! Even if you have to keep on repeating things or re-phrase something a few times before the person is able to follow, keep persevering. "I will tell you later" is the last phrase a Deaf or hard of hearing person wants to see someone say.**
- The Deaf Community are warm and welcoming. Deaf people have a good sense of humour and are wonderful story tellers. Deaf culture is different and Deaf people can be more direct in their comments than maybe you are used to. Enjoy this cultural difference.**