



INCLUSIVE

COMMUNICATION SERVICES

CASE STUDY



THE CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

AT A GLANCE

Event Name

Catholic Mass at the [Church of St. Francis Xavier](#)

Location

[46 West 16th Street, New York](#)

Dates and Times

Weekly 11:30am mass on Sundays

Time Period

2020 - 2025

SERVICES PROVIDED & STATISTICS

Inclusive Communication Services (ICS) provided **American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters** to accurately interpret both spoken and musical content for Deaf attendees who use ASL.

- **Number of Interpreters:** 2 Interpreters
- **Services Provided:** The interpreters provide in-person and virtual services by working onsite as well as through a dedicated camera feed for the Youtube livestream.
- **Audience Size:** Congregation comprised of roughly 200 people
- **Deaf Consumers:** Numbers vary weekly with a regular holiday attendance

OBJECTIVE

The Church of St. Francis Xavier is a Jesuit Catholic parish committed to being a welcoming, inclusive community where all can participate fully in worship. Guided by faith and compassion, the church seeks to create a spiritual home where the marginalized are embraced and everyone can be refreshed, reconciled, and renewed.



As Romans 15:7 encourages, we are called to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you” - and for the Deaf community, that welcome often begins with language. Interpreting isn’t just a logistical service; it’s an extension of hospitality, a way of saying you belong here.



But it’s about the ripple effect. If people see ASL interpreters at church, maybe they’ll push for ASL access in other environments. Maybe they know a Deaf person in their life, maybe they’ll take an ASL class...and maybe that spreads the ripples.





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CHALLENGES

Over five years, we've grown alongside the Church of St. Francis Xavier. Challenges are part of building inclusive access.

- **Budgetary Limitations:** Only one interpreter was originally budgeted for, but ICS worked patiently with the church to gradually expand to a full interpreting team (offered at a discount), preventing fatigue and burnout while ensuring consistent, high-quality access.
- **Prep Material Needs:** Prep materials were not always complete. We implemented a system to share complete lyrics and prep materials every Thursday, ensuring interpreters have the information needed for accurate interpretation.
- **Interpreting Challenges:** Choral music, particularly with a soprano-heavy choir, can be difficult to hear and interpret in real time. By providing song selections and full lyrics early with the prep materials, allowing interpreters to prepare and deliver effective ASL interpretation for all musical pieces. We also worked to crafting a team that feels confident interpreting music and keeping pace with the flow of Catholic Mass.



When Isaiah writes, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations," **we take that as a reminder that true worship invites everyone to the table** - without exception, without barriers.



And as Ephesians 4:16 reminds us, the Church grows strongest "as each part does its work" - which includes Deaf members contributing fully, not on the margins, but at the heart of the faith community. Providing ASL access isn't a favor - it's a celebration of the whole Body of Christ.



BENEFITS

- **Reaching a Wider Audience Online:** Weekly masses are also streamed on the [SFX Church NYC Youtube Channel](#) with PIP (Picture-in-Picture) ASL interpretation, allowing the parish to reach a broader audience and extend access beyond the church walls.
- **Consistent Access:** Because the NYC community knows this ASL interpreted mass is offered every week, Deaf attendees can participate regularly and invite others to join. There's no need to make special requests because access is built in and widely known throughout the community.
- **Practice What They Preach - Leading with Inclusion:** St. Francis Xavier Church exemplifies its faith by providing full access and welcoming all brothers and sisters in Christ. By aligning with the Word of God and ensuring access to it, SFX strengthens its leadership, reputation, and credibility within the community.
- **Trusted Partnership:** By contracting with an accessibility partner, the church can easily request additional ASL interpretation for weddings, funerals, and special services like Christmas and Easter. Working with interpreters who already know the parish and a dedicated accessibility coordinator as the main point of contact ensures high quality consistency of services.