



Jubilee 2025



Jubilee of People with Disabilities

26 – 27 April 2025

This weekend, we come together to celebrate the Jubilee of People with Disabilities, giving thanks for the unique gifts and strengths of every individual. We honour the resilience, courage, and determination of those living with disabilities, recognising the profound ways they enrich our communities and remind us of the inherent dignity of every person. We also acknowledge the unwavering support of families, caregivers, and advocates who stand alongside them.

Today, we celebrate the diversity and beauty of all God's creation, and we renew our commitment to building a world of inclusion, understanding, and love, where every person is valued and empowered to thrive.

Prayers

Example prayers of the faithful

For people with disabilities, that they may be treated with dignity, respect, and love, and that society may work to remove all barriers to their full participation in all aspects of life. **E te Ariki**

...

For families and caregivers of people with disabilities, that they are blessed with strength, patience, and joy in their service. **E te Ariki...**

Other prayers for People with Disabilities

Lord Our God, you make every person in your divine image.

You know our needs and you fulfil our desires. You protect us when we are fragile and give us courage for each new day. Help us to understand the power and wisdom of human vulnerability. Open our hearts to accept our weakness in your strength.

Give us the courage to break down the barriers that separate us from one another. Enable us to reach out lovingly to all your children, so that, together, we may all participate fully in parish life and worship.





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Make us grateful for the talents and abilities that all people can share with the Church. Guide our actions to create truly welcoming communities that are open to the gifts of each individual, celebrating our interdependence with respect for all life.

Help us to appreciate all those, living with disabilities, who contribute their time and talents, even in the face of obstacles or misunderstanding.

We look to the future with optimism and with faith in you, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people with disabilities.

We pray that every man, woman, and child may develop their potential.

We offer you these prayers as one flock, following the same shepherd, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

From <https://sanangelodiocese.org/prayer-for-people-with-disabilities>

Beatitudes for Friends of People with Disabilities:

Blessed are you who take the time to listen to difficult speech, for you help me to know that if I persevere, I can be understood.

Blessed are you who never bid me to “hurry up” and take my tasks from me and do them for me, for I often need time rather than help.

Blessed are you who stand beside me as I enter new and untried ventures, for my failures will be outweighed by the times I surprise myself and you.

Blessed are you who asked for my help, for my greatest need is to be needed.

Blessed are you who understand that it is difficult for me to put my thoughts into words.

Blessed are you who, with a smile, encourage me to try once more.

Blessed are you who never remind me that today I asked the same question two times.

Blessed are you who respect me and love me as I am, and not like you wish I were.

From <https://access-life.org/>





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Watch the Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for the month of December 2023: 'For people with disabilities' - <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-11/pope-francis-december-prayer-intention-people-disabilities.html>

Reflection on the Jubilee of People with Disabilities

Read the following reflection out during Mass/within your faith communities over the weekend of 26 – 27 April 2025, or distribute for personal reflection.

'What do you want me to do for you?' Many spiritual masters and wise teachers see this simple yet profound question as the basis of all our human interactions. Michael White, one of the founders of the Narrative Theory approach to counselling, views human encounters as an opportunity to build a scaffolding of understanding between two different individuals. As unique individuals, we are all different.

Miguel Ruiz's *Four Agreements* also challenge how we relate to each other every day. The third agreement, 'Don't make assumptions,' is probably one of the hardest to follow. This is because virtually everything we do or say is based on our knowledge of previous experiences. Yet in Mark's Gospel story about a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, Jesus did not assume anything. Though it was plain to see that Bartimaeus was blind, Jesus asked him how he could help. 'What do you want me to do for you?' How often do I see someone who seems to need help and automatically do something without asking if they need assistance?

Do I act to make myself feel good, or do I ask, 'Can I help you?' In this time of the Church's celebration of the Jubilee of People with Disabilities, we can reflect on our motivations for trying to help another person. Do I empower people to decide for themselves if they need help, or is my usual modus operandi based on my assumption that they do? Assumptions are usually at work when I label another person. This person is disabled; this person is blind; this person is Deaf; this person is Māori; this person is Pākehā; this person is Chinese, etc. The moment I label someone is the moment I stop seeing them as a person.

In 2014, the Disability, Spirituality and Faith Network, Aotearoa New Zealand Inc., published a book titled *Creating Welcoming Churches – A Disability Resource for Faith Communities*. This very useful resource aimed to help churches become more accessible for people experiencing disability. Since then, it has become more common to see churches with wheelchair access and designated areas for wheelchair users. However, while there have been notable physical changes to church buildings, actual participation and ministry by people experiencing disability is often lacking in our Church services.

With greater immigration in recent years, our faith communities have become much more ethnically diverse. We are also striving to incorporate more Te Reo Māori in our Masses and





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liturgies. There is also a growing awareness of our second official language, New Zealand Sign Language. These linguistic advances are not matched by the experiences of disabled people in our Masses and liturgies. During the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, disability advocates questioned why the Paralympics were staged after the Olympics. Why couldn't they be staged together?

This illustrated a lack of awareness within the Olympics organisation. If the world of sport is not ready for this kind of integration, what about the Church? Will we see someone in a wheelchair reading at a Sunday Mass? Or a person with Down Syndrome giving out communion? Do we have a Braille copy of the Prayers of the Faithful for a blind person to read? In celebrating the Jubilee of People with Disabilities, Jesus' question, 'What do you want me to do for you?' could be the beginning of a scaffolding of understanding on a deeper level than just physical access.

David Loving-Molloy
Chaplain for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Suggestions for celebrating this Jubilee in your communities

- **Use the provided prayers of the faithful or write your own**
Tailor prayers to highlight the dignity, strength, and gifts of people with disabilities. Recognise their value as part of God's creation and pray for continued efforts to remove barriers and create a more inclusive community for all.
- **Share a reflection during mass or in faith communities, with options for private reflection**
Offer the provided reflection during Mass or within your faith events. Provide printed copies for private reflection and place them in accessible areas for all to read and reflect upon.
- **Host a special mass or service celebrating people with disabilities**
Organise a Mass or service specifically focused on celebrating people with disabilities, with prayers and reflections that speak to their strengths, resilience, and faith. Invite individuals with disabilities and their families to participate actively in the service, whether through readings, music, or sharing personal testimonies.
- **Recognise and appreciate the contributions of people with disabilities**
Celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disabilities within your community. Whether through volunteering, leadership, or personal triumphs, take time to acknowledge their work and impact, both publicly and privately.
- **Provide accessible opportunities for volunteerism and leadership**
Encourage people with disabilities to take on leadership roles and participate in volunteer opportunities within your community. Ensure that these opportunities are





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accessible and provide any necessary accommodations to enable their full participation. Highlight the contributions they make to the community, especially those that may often go unnoticed.

- **Provide resources and support for families of people with disabilities**
Organise an event or support group for families of people with disabilities, where they can gather, share experiences, and receive resources or guidance on navigating the challenges they face. This could include information on legal rights, accessible services, and emotional support for caregivers.
- **Feature stories of people with disabilities in community newsletters or bulletins**
Share stories and profiles of individuals with disabilities in your community newsletters or bulletins. Highlight their accomplishments, talents, and the impact they have made in your community. This helps to build recognition and appreciation for their role within the wider community.
- **Make your communities a welcoming and accessible place for all**
Ensure that your church, community spaces, and events are accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. Assess physical, sensory, and communication barriers and work to eliminate them, fostering an environment of inclusion and welcome for all members of the community. Encourage parishioners to participate in creating a more accessible and inclusive environment through awareness, support, and advocacy.

