

## World Autism Awareness Day

Sue Lubowitz, OPC Service Chairperson

*"Each human being is a person; no one is anonymous. Each one of us knows and loves, is known and is loved, with his or her own face and name, according to God's thought." Pope Francis*

The United Nations designates April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day to raise awareness and improve the quality of life for individuals with autism. The theme for 2025 is "Celebrate Differences" or "Celebrate the Spectrum".

Resources and information can be found at:

<https://celebratethespectrum.com/#:~:text=World%20Autism%20Day%20April%202%2C%202025%20%2D%20Celebrate%20the%20Spectrum>

Autism is a lifelong neurological condition that manifests during early childhood, irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status. Autism impacts more than 135,000 individuals in Ontario, representing 1 in every 50 Canadian children and youth. The term Autism Spectrum refers to a range of characteristics.

Autism is mainly characterized by its unique social interactions, non-standard ways of learning, keen interests in specific subjects, inclination to routines, challenges in typical communications and particular ways of processing sensory information. It not only influences the lives of autistics but also their friends, families, and communities.

Appropriate support, accommodation and acceptance of this neurological variation allow those on the Spectrum to enjoy equal opportunity, and full and effective participation in society

As members of the Catholic community, we are called to create spaces of inclusion and acceptance, where all individuals feel valued and welcomed. This means fostering environments that accommodate diverse needs and celebrate the unique contributions of each person, regardless of their neurodiversity.

In the Gospels, we find countless examples of Jesus' radical embrace to those on the margins of society – the outcasts, the marginalized, the misunderstood. He invites us to follow in his footsteps, reaching out with love and compassion to those who may feel excluded or overlooked.

On World Autism Awareness Day, let us recommit ourselves to the principle of inclusion, empathy and understanding. Let us strive to create communities where individuals with autism are empowered to thrive, their voices heard and their talents celebrated.

