

## International Day of Persons with Disabilities

*"Nothing, however, can detract from our certainty that no disability – temporary, acquired or permanent – can change the fact that we are all children of the one Father and enjoy the same dignity. The Lord loves us all with the same tender, fatherly and unconditional love." Pope Francis, 2022*

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held each year on December 3, aims to raise awareness and promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities across all aspects of life. According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older—about 8 million people—experience disabilities that limit their daily activities. Approximately 2.6 million people in Ontario have a disability. The theme for 2025 is:

**Fostering disability inclusive societies for advancing social progress.**

This day emphasizes the importance of removing barriers to ensure that all Canadians can fully participate in society. Barriers can be physical, like buildings without ramps, or less visible, such as complicated language that limits understanding. By addressing these obstacles, we can create more inclusive communities and workplaces, promoting accessibility and diversity. Since 2017, the rate of disability in Canada has increased by 5 percentage points, largely due to an aging population and a rise in mental health-related disabilities among working-age youth and adults. In 2022, the most common disabilities were pain-related (62%), followed by mobility (39%), flexibility (40%), and mental health (39%) disabilities. Other types, such as seeing, learning, memory, and developmental disabilities, have also seen increases in prevalence.

The Provincial Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada actively participates in this observance by advocating for the full of inclusion and dignity of persons with disabilities within the League and society.

In September 2025, Pope Leo XIV approved new regulations to promote the hiring of people with disabilities in the Vatican workforce, ensuring that their condition does not preclude their suitability for work and requiring reasonable accommodations. Previously, Pope Francis had stated explicitly that "no one can refuse the Sacraments to people with disabilities".

As part of the 2025 Jubilee Year, the Vatican held a specific “Jubilee of People with Disabilities” in April 2025, featuring Masses, catechesis, and testimonies to ensure they feel a true sense of belonging in the Church.

Additional resources for the Jubilee of People with Disabilities and other celebrations can be found online at the USCCB Jubilee Year web pages: at <https://www.usccb.org/committees/jubilee-2025> This resource packet is for anyone who finds it beneficial. It can be used and/or adapted by councils. It might also serve as a catalyst or inspiration for the creation and development of local or year-round resources for persons with disabilities in your community.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops prepared a leaflet to commemorate the International Year of the Disabled (1981) and is still available as a parish resource. It can be found at <https://www.cccb.ca/document/at-worship-with-the-disabled/>

When we lift up and recognize the most vulnerable members of our communities with joy and appreciation, we highlight their dignity and worth in a beautiful way for others to welcome them personally as well.

May the Holy Spirit, who fills believers with all good gifts, help us to reach out to persons with disabilities through friendship, care, and working to be sure that our church includes them in everything that we do and to break down barriers to inclusion in society.

**Sue Lubowitz**  
**Service Chairperson**  
**Ontario Provincial Council of**  
**The Catholic Women’s League of Canada**