



Memo

Date: February 14, 2022

To: All priests, deacons, religious, seminarians and parish bulletin editors

From: Maggie Rousseau, director, Disabilities Ministry

Re: Developmental Disability Awareness Month and World Down Syndrome Day

March is designated as Developmental Disability Awareness month and March 21st is World Down Syndrome Day (WDSO). In addition, WDSO is a global awareness initiative that has been backed by the United Nations since 2012. The date itself has been selected for a very clever reasons: It is held on the 21st day of the 3rd month, which represents the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome, which leads to Down syndrome. This movement started to raise awareness and support for those living with Down syndrome and recognizes how they have played a vital role in our communities, and continue do it.

Recognition of those with developmental disabilities is a respect life issue. The incident rate for abortions of babies with Down syndrome is horrible and sinful. Learn more [here](#). Persons with Down syndrome have a 50 percent chance of developing dementia in later years. As church, it begs us to ask how can we support?

Support begins at the pulpit. All priest and deacons are encouraged to speak during their homilies in the month of March about Jesus' ministry to persons with disabilities. In addition, parishes are encouraged to include persons with disabilities in the celebration of the Eucharist during the month of March. Positions can include: extraordinary minister; lector; altar server; greeter; music ministry and many more.

Please add the following prayers of the faithful to your Masses on Sunday, March 20:

For the Church ... may it teach by its example to welcome and love all individuals and families, especially those living with disabilities, we pray to the Lord ...

For the leaders of nations ... that they may enact and uphold laws that protect the dignity of all human life entrusted to their care, especially those who are most vulnerable, we pray to the Lord ...

For those around the world who live with developmental disabilities ... that they encounter God's divine peace, joy and companionship in the moments of every day, we pray to the Lord ...

For families supporting loved ones with developmental disabilities at all ages ... that they may be guided by the love, strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord ...

For the faithful departed, for those with down syndrome who have been denied life, and those who have died because of dementia ... may the Lord in his infinite mercy welcome them into his heavenly paradise this day and forever, we pray to the Lord ...

Finally, all parishes are asked to remember all those individuals and families living with disabilities, especially those with Down Syndrome, on Monday March 21, at all parish Masses.

Every life is a gift from God and should be celebrated. All persons and their families living with disabilities are often seen as recipients of grace, but they all have grace to share. They bring extraordinary gifts to God's table.

For more information, please contact me at mrousseau@archatl.com.