

# Champion Rights of Disabled

Following is the text of Pope John Paul II's recent address to a group of disabled persons on pilgrimage from the Diocese of Verona.

How can I express the joy that your visit brings me, my dearest brothers and sisters who have come from Verona, led by your Bishop Giuseppe Amari, to bring me evidence of your affection and devotion.



I am grateful to you for this gesture of cordial affection which stirs up in my heart a deep and lively echo. I greet you one by one, and with you, besides your relatives, I greet the priests and faithful of the parish communities who have accompanied you and who kindly lend you their assistance. My thought extends likewise to all the other disabled and sick of the Diocese of Verona who were not able to join your pilgrimage, but who are certainly present in their affection and with their prayer.

I wish to tell everyone of the high regard with which the Church looks upon your condition and the great esteem she has for the contribution you are able to make toward her activity for the coming of the Kingdom of God into the world.

I was pleased to learn that your diocese, in connection with the International Year of the Disabled Person proclaimed by the United Nations, has scheduled a series of initiatives in social and parochial life of those who are hampered by a certain form of disability.

In expressing my appreciation for this concrete demonstration of human and Christian sensitivity, I wish to reaffirm the inspiring principle of every action of the Church in this field, namely, that the disabled person is a full-fledged human subject whose innate rights remain sacred and inviolable.

Therefore it is right that we promote as much as possible his inclusion in the living fabric of social relationships, since every marginalization cannot but negatively mark his human development and the achievement of his potential, often very rich, which bespeaks human development.

The ecclesial community must bear witness by word and deed to this conviction, which is strengthened in her by the light of faith. In fact, faith teaches us to see in every person the image of God, which shines brightly behind the veil that the handicap can spread over you.

To the person, therefore, in every case, belongs the primacy over other values, particularly over values of the economic order.

I am certain that in renewing the traditions of Christian concern for the needy, in which it has always been distinguished, the Diocese of Verona will be able to conceive adequate forms of intervention to overcome the isolation in which the disabled persons and their families often seem to be confined. Thanks to the generosity of everyone, isolation will give way to sharing and the result will be a mutual enrichment and a common growth, from which will spring a greater joy for each one.

I hope and trust that today's audience will bring new thrust to the commitment that the whole diocese has taken upon itself in its pastoral area, by arousing in both the disabled and the able bodied the will to find new forms of encounter and collaboration.

Dearest brothers and sisters, a long road is before you: embark on it confidently. With you walks the Lord, who has willed to identify himself with every needy and suffering person.

In invoking constant divine assistance upon you and your good intentions, I gladly impart to all of you the conciliatory Apostolic Blessing, which I extend with all my heart to your relatives and to all the sick that you will find when you return to your parishes. May Our Lady accompany you, and protect you always.

(After a pause at the door, the pope gave the following parting message.)

I embrace every one of you and your families. I am grateful to you for the gift you have brought here: the gift of your suffering, a gift of sacrifice and prayer.



Particularly in these past months we have had a true and real solidarity with the suffering. I recommend myself to your prayers and sacrifices; always, not only today, but for all the days of my life and yours. Again I thank your parishes, the priests and Sisters and families who have brought you here. I want to thank specially the young people, who are so numerous, who sing, and sing well, and who bring real joy to the suffering and to all of us. I thank you again, not only for the suffering and the sacrifice you bear, but also for this joy that you have brought to Castel Gandolfo.

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