



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Church calls for empowerment of people with disability

Media Release

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Australia's bishops have urged all Catholics to promote, empower and recognise the gifts of people with disability.

Bishop Don Sproxtton, Auxiliary Bishop of Perth and the newly-appointed Bishop Delegate for Disability Issues, said that as the Church prepared for Advent, it was appropriate to observe the International Day of People with Disability, held each year December 3.

This year's theme is "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" – inspired by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"The 2030 Agenda, pledging to 'leave no one behind', is an ambitious plan of action of the international community towards a peaceful and prosperous world, where dignity of an individual person and equality among all is applied as the fundamental principle," Bishop Sproxtton said.

"It is critical to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and includes active participation in our Church and faith communities to create enabling environments by, for and with persons with disabilities."

In his address to people with disability last year, Pope Francis said: "We are all different. There is no one exactly like another. Differences are a richness because I have something and you have something else and by putting the two together we have something more beautiful, something greater."

Pope Francis added that people must not be afraid of diversity, but see it "as the path to improvement, to be more beautiful and richer".

Bishop Sproxtton said people's faith calls and challenges them to take action to ensure communities are open and active in promoting opportunities that include people with disability.

"This includes work opportunities, empowering people with disabilities to take an active role in leadership and ensuring our faith communities are accessible physically and attitudinally, guaranteeing 'no one is left behind'," he said.

"In particular, we need to ensure that people with disability living in remote and rural areas, those who are new to our country and those struggling with the ever-increasing daily expense of living are supported and encouraged in the most practical and appropriate manner.

"This timely theme is an invitation and call to us to create and ensure a change in societal attitude that sees disability as a burden to humanity and a costly experience to society."

For more information and to access Church materials to mark the day, go to:

catholic.org.au/disability.