

LIFE: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Blessed Margaret of Castello is the patron saint of both pro-life movements and disabled people. If unintentional, the pairing of these patronages is appropriate.

The Catholic Church believes that all life is sacred and deserving of dignity from conception to natural death, and all life in between. The principle of human dignity is an essential piece of our Catholic faith. The Church both defends the life of those who live with disability and welcomes them into the life of the Church.

How do we as individuals and members of society treat people with disabilities?



The unborn child: It is estimated that abortion following any prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome results in a 30% reduction in overall Down syndrome births. Women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome through amniocentesis (the most reliable prenatal diagnostic tool) generally seek an abortion 90% of the time.

End of Life: The Death with Dignity Act allows terminally-ill Oregonians to end their lives through the voluntary self-administration of lethal medications, expressly prescribed by a physician for that purpose. Only patients with six months to live can use the law. A majority of patients, however, say that losing autonomy is a reason they want to use the law. They consider themselves a burden to their family.

"When most people choose to end their life, we offer prevention but when ill, dying, older and disabled people talk about doing the same, they are often met with understanding and encouragement."

Life in between: Passed 27 years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.

"The diversity that is due to a person's disability can be integrated into his respective unique individuality, and relatives, teachers, friends and the whole of society must contribute to this. Thus, for disabled people, as for any other human being, it is not important that they do what others do but that they do what is truly good for them, increasingly making the most of their talents" (*Pope St. John Paul II, 2004*).

What Can You Do?

Pray

[Prayer for Awareness](#)

Educate

Take the initiative to help educate your parish on issues surrounding disability awareness. Contact the [Office for People with Disabilities](#) for more information on how to do this!

Act

Pay attention during the state legislative session for any attempts to expand the scope of the Death with Dignity Act. Bring such advocacy opportunities to your parish.

Accompany

Parents expecting a child often need support during their pregnancy and after the baby's birth. Can people in your community find this support in your parish? Learn about the [Gabriel Project](#).