



Homily given by Bishop Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Mass of Inclusion 2021

Advent Sunday 2C

Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral
5 December 2021

This past year has been filled with graces and challenges. I suspect that for many people, the natural inclination is to focus on the challenges, after all, who doesn't desire a stress-free life with just enough thrill to make things interesting?

The reality, of course, is often far from that utopian vision of life. For the 4.4 million Australian people with disabilities, one challenge that might be encountered on a daily basis is exclusion.

Exclusion has nothing to do with an actual disability or impairment, whereas it has everything to do with ignorance, intolerance, and injustice which all fail to recognise the dignity and equality of the human person.

Each year we celebrate this Mass as an outward and visible sign of our common life as sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends with disability or impairment are not objects of care, they are the protagonists of life.

On many occasions the person living with a disability also lives with physical or psychological suffering. In the Christian context, suffering only makes sense if it is seen in communion with the suffering of Jesus Christ, whose passion and death on the Cross led to his resurrection from the dead. Suffering is real, and we live in a society that often seeks to sanitize it, as if it has no place in the human condition.

As Catholic Christians, we reject any such practice that would attempt to reject or camouflage the plight of a person or their situation if they do not conform to a fabricated social norm or expectation.

Life is precious, and human life is the crown of all of God's creation. Our commitment must be to recognise and safeguard the vast diversity of human experiences, especially those of our sisters and brothers who experience disability.

How might we promote such a way of life? The voice of John the Baptist in today's gospel may well spur us to action when he says: "*Prepare a way for the Lord*". ^(Lk 3:4)

My brothers and sisters, Saint John's rallying cry is not some far distant historical event. The Baptist announces the imminent arrival of Jesus in every human life. Every person is made in the image and likeness of God, which carries with it dignity and equality.

The divine gifts of human dignity and equality include all people in the family of God. They require that all people, male and female, young and old, especially the vulnerable and those with disability, have an opportunity to be seen, recognised, welcomed, valued, and accepted, always with care and compassion.

My dear people, as we continue our pilgrimage of faith this Advent, might we be encouraged by the words of Saint Paul, whose prayer is that our "*love for each other may increase more and more*". (Phil 1:9)

We commit ourselves anew to develop attitudes and acts of solidarity, and service towards all people, regardless of their situation in life. (cf. Pope Francis, International Day of People with Disability, 2020)

The result will be a change of mind and heart so that we will think and love as Jesus does. We can begin today by no longer speaking about "them", but rather about "us". After all, our greatest grace is that we are all one in the Body of Christ. Amen