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Pope Francis delivers his prayer message for the month of December dedicated to "people with disabilities" in a video released Nov. 28, 2023. (CNS screengrab/Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network)

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Making places more accessible for people with disabilities requires removing physical barriers and adjusting attitudes to be more open and inclusive, Pope Francis said.

The pope's prayer intention for the month of December is dedicated to "people with disabilities," and in his video message, he said, "programs and initiatives are needed that promote their inclusion." The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, formerly known as the Apostleship of Prayer, released the monthly pope video Nov. 28.

"People with disabilities are among the most fragile among us," he said. "Some of them suffer rejection, rooted in either ignorance or prejudice, which then marginalizes them."

"Civil institutions need to support their projects through access to education, employment, and places where they can express their creativity," he said.

But "above all else," the pope said, "big hearts are needed."

"It means changing our mentality a little and opening ourselves to the abilities and talents of these people who are differently abled, both in society as well as in the life of the church," the pope said.

"And so, creating a completely accessible parish does not only mean eliminating physical barriers," he said. "It also assumes that we stop talking about 'them' and start talking about 'us.'"

"Let us pray that people with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society and that institutions offer inclusion programs that enhance their active participation," he said.

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