

# Ministering to Parents Who Receive an Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis



When a child receives a prenatal diagnosis of a potential genetic or developmental disorder, his or her parents face a variety of challenging questions — many of which cannot be given an answer. How will my child function? Is she going to make it? How will this diagnosis impact his quality of life and that of our family? Will I be able to take care of a child with disabilities? Amidst the overwhelming uncertainty, parents may be advised in a number of different directions by a practitioner, one of which would be to terminate the pregnancy. In this case, it is not uncommon for parents to consult a pastor for guidance before making a decision. When ministering to parents who receive a potential adverse prenatal diagnosis, an individual providing pastoral care should be sure to do the following:

1. **Listen.** Allow the parent(s) to speak openly about what they are going through. Encourage them to verbalize how they are feeling, what they are thinking, and what they have done/what they think they might do.
2. **Understand.** Try to understand their concerns, the fears and anxieties they have, how they feel toward the child's life, the options they are considering, etc.
3. **Counsel.** Assure the parents that, despite any possible fetal anomaly and difficulties faced as a result, the life of the child is infinitely valued, known, and loved by God. Affirm them for their courage in the situation and for desiring

the best for their preborn child. Encourage them with the fact that the Lord is close to our loved ones with disabilities, and, through our encounters with these individuals, we can come to know Him in a special way. Assure the parents that God has made them capable of heroic sacrifice in giving a child with disabilities a life filled with love.

4. **Assist.** Let the parents know that they are not alone. Although the possibility of a genetic or developmental anomaly can be frightening, the church will accompany the family — spiritually and logistically, to the best of its ability — as they navigate a new and changing life.

Help the parents of a child who has received a difficult pre-natal diagnosis get plugged in with a support group of experienced individuals to walk with them in navigating the challenges a potential disability may present before and after birth.

**Keep in mind:** Pre-natal diagnoses are not 100% accurate. Even in cases in which an accurate diagnosis is highly probable, it would be impossible to accurately predict the way a disorder might impact functioning. Regardless, a child with disabilities is just as much a person worthy of life and love as a typically developing individual.

## Miriam's Blessing

- Provides comprehensive support to parents who receive a difficult prenatal diagnosis
  - Trained peer mentors provide support and presence before and after birth
- Contact: Lisa Everett  
leverett@diocesefwsb.org | (574) 234-0687

## Informing Life

- Provides information and support for parents of a preborn child with a physical or genetic abnormality
- Get-togethers and events for families with children who have Down Syndrome or other disorders

McKinley Town & Country Shopping Centre  
2248 Miracle Ln., Mishawaka, 46545  
(574) 334-7734  
info@michianadownsyndrome.org

## PreNatal Partners for Life

- Connects parents with resources and support for carrying a child to term with an adverse diagnosis
  - Connects parents with support for raising special needs children after birth
- PO Box 2225  
Maple Grove, MN 55311  
(763) 772-3868