



**Faith and Light
International**

Press release

Paris, May 7th 2019

FAREWELL JEAN VANIER, FOUNDER OF L'ARCHE AND OF FAITH AND LIGHT IS IN THE LIGHT OF GOD

Jean Vanier, the founder of the communities of L'Arche and co-founder (with Marie-Hélène Mathieu) of Faith and Light, whose life was dedicated to welcoming the persons with intellectual disabilities, passed away on May 7th, at 2.10 am, at the age of 90 in Paris.

For the Faith and Light International movement, the announcement was made by Marie-Hélène Mathieu, co-founder, by Hoda Elturk, President of the Board of Directors and Raul Izquierdo Garcia, International Coordinator y Corinne Chatain, Secretaria General:

Jean had a life of immense fruitfulness. He has marked the history of L'Arche and Faith and Light, as well as the personal history of so many of us. We want to give thanks for all this. Jean sent us out on a mission, we will do our best to meet his deep desire that the good news may be announced to the poor.

It was at Easter 1971 that Faith and Light was born at the end of a pilgrimage to Lourdes - called Faith and Light - organized by Jean and Marie Helene, to respond to the suffering of a family that could not participate in the Lourdes pilgrimage, due to the severe intellectual disability of their children. Today the Faith and Light movement has 1420 communities where persons with an intellectual disability, their families and friends, especially young persons meet together at least once per month for a gathering of friendship, sharing, prayer and celebration. Faith and Light is present in 86 countries in the 5 continents.

A WORD LIFTING UP PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN HUMILIATED

Besides Faith and Light and L'Arche, Jean inspired the creation of many other associations and influenced thousands of people around the world, famous or anonymous. A tireless peacemaker, he has never stopped acknowledging the richness of the fraternity with the most fragile ones, and restoring to the persons with an intellectual disability their dignity and their place in society and in the Church.

JEAN VANIER LEAVES A MAJOR WORK

Jean published about 40 books, translated into 29 languages. He knew how to put at the service of the persons with intellectual disability the power of his eloquence, his intelligence, his spiritual strength in the religious or secular circles, professional or political in all corners of the world.

Jean Vanier has received numerous awards including (Commander of the Legion of Honor in 2017), Companion of the Order of Canada (1992), the Pacem in Terris Award (2013) and the Templeton Prize (2015).

(See press kit)

A LIFE WITH UNIVERSAL RADIANCE

Jean Vanier was born on September 10, 1928 in Geneva. At the age of 13, he joined the Royal Navy College in Dartmouth during the Second World War. In 1945, his father being the Canada's ambassador in Paris, and his mother, a delegate of the Red Cross, Jean participated in welcoming the survivors of the concentration camps in Paris. He was deeply impacted. His father, George Vanier, was named Governor General of Canada in 1959.

Jean left the navy at the age 23 "to follow Jesus and work for peace". In 1962, he obtained a doctorate in philosophy. In 1964, at 36, he met the world of disability: "I visited homes and discovered a vast world of suffering that I did not know about. I had known a world of efficiency in the navy or an intellectual world through my studies."

In August 1964, he invited two persons with an intellectual disability to live with him in a small house in Trosly-Breuil (Oise) which he baptised "L'Arche". They shared a simple daily life, made of mutual help and friendship. L'Arche quickly became too small to welcome volunteers moved by its conferences and persons with disability. The "homes" multiplied in France and throughout the world. Today, l'Arche Federation has 154 communities in 38 countries.

After preparing his succession, Jean retired more than 20 years ago from the executives of L'Arche and Faith and Light. An exemplary decision for a founder and a great mark of wisdom. He had since devoted himself to his mission of witnessing the fraternity with the humblest. He received many visitors from all over the world and from all backgrounds and conditions.

To accompany us in our sorrow and hope, here is a quote that Jean loved in a special way « Dying is not a lamp that switches off, it's a light that has been lit.»

Memorial website: [**JeanVanier.larche.org**](http://JeanVanier.larche.org)

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