



Trosly, May 2009

Dear friends,

Spring has arrived and I am happy. I love listening to the birds sing and contemplating the flowers pushing up through the earth. The work at Val Fleuri has been completed, and we have left the two temporary homes. Life is returning to normal. Father Gilbert came to bless Val Fleuri, now larger and renovated. We are happy to be back there together again. For me, life is calmer, I am in good health, I go to bed earlier, I get up earlier and I have a nap after lunch. Life is good! I like to stay in touch with Jean-Christophe and Christine, who are doing an admirable job of uniting us all in L'Arche despite our great diversity.

I must confess that the government's regulations laws are sometimes difficult for us in L'Arche: the wage plan, standards for homes, the need for professionals, etc. They can sometimes dampen the meaning and spirit of community living, the assistants' deepest motivations and the deepening of spiritual life. New core members in our homes, like many young people around the world, have a desire to become independent and have their own plans; their emotional life is stimulated by movies, etc. But not everything is negative; there is a positive vision of human growth in many new regulations: helping each person take responsibility for his or her life, discovering one's true desires, making choices, having plans and developing freedom. I think that our coordinators are wonderful: our international coordinators, zone and region coordinators and directors. They have all embraced these issues, which involve preserving, deepening and spreading the spirit of L'Arche, which is profoundly human. Obviously, in the end the responsibility for all of that lies with each of us, long-time assistants and members of L'Arche, and all those who are near. It is crucial that we fully experience and deepen together this spirit of prayer and of fun that we have been given.

The most important time is to help each person become more human and governed less by fear. It is about keeping an open heart, creating communities where we truly love one another despite our differences and where we become a source of hope for one another and where we celebrate life. It is also about discovering how faith in God and the Gospel can help us to become more loving, more giving and not bow down to the tyranny of normality: being strong and beautiful, fleeing from suffering and discarding the weak. The greatest value of L'Arche, like Faith and Light, is to show that weak people are not only important, but that they have a message for society and the Church. If we enter into a relationship of trust with them, they can transform us and become a source of unity among Christians, and among men and women of different religions or who have no religion. They truly have a prophetic role. L'Arche and Faith and Light will continue to go deeper into and spread the message so that we can all experience this road of life and of hope in our broken world.



a view over Jerusalem

My mission today is to experience this relationship and to allow myself to be transformed by the weak and most vulnerable in my community, and to talk about this relationship at retreats and conferences. I get joy from talking about this vision of Jesus, as contained in the Gospel.



the Samaritan woman's well

I went to Israel and Palestine to make 14 films on the Gospel of St. John as seen from the L'Arche perspective. I went with Odile Ceyrac, Valérie Bouchez and Olivier Pilet from the community of Chemin Neuf. These films will be produced on four DVDs by Chemin Neuf and sold at La Ferme in Trosly. I hope that my words and my interpretation of St. John will bring benefits to L'Arche and Faith and Light. The shots of Jerusalem and Galilee are profoundly beautiful; a feast for the eyes and heart. Chemin Neuf also wanted to make a DVD (26 minutes translated into 16 languages) explaining the profound meaning of these 14 films, and also to introduce the four DVDs, which will be in French only to begin with; they might be translated later on. The first of these four DVDs will be ready in July, and the other three will follow between July and January 2010. The DVD "Net for God", introducing these films, is ready for order now at La Ferme. (La Ferme de Trosly, B.P.21, 23 rue d'Orléans, 60350 Trosly-Breuil, France)

With its interfaith and ecumenical aspects, with all the pressures from the State, L'Arche is very fragile and vulnerable. The assistants, who have been trained in this secular world where the media have an enormous influence, have a hard time committing to the foolishness of L'Arche. We are living the incomprehensible mystery of people with disabilities who are often rejected. But God is watching over us, holding us in love and trust.

How can we believe that they are prophetic and a source of peace? How can we believe in a God who makes himself weak to the point of dying on a cross just to touch our hearts and lead us to a world where love is the last word? Is that not the message announced by our communities?

One last thing... I have just returned from a Katimavik in Trèves, Germany, for members of the L'Arche and Faith and Light communities in Germany, as well as for people from Faith and Light in Luxemburg, Belgium and Holland. It was a great celebration; a good news for us all and especially for the weakest among us. There were 150 of us at that celebration of prayer and of love. We were overjoyed to see old and new faces, and experience the unity between Faith and Light and L'Arche...



Katimavik in Trèves

In communion with you,
Jean Vanier

*Please send your email address to secretariat.jv@larche.org if you wish to receive this letter by email.
You may also subscribe to this letter on the website www.jean-vanier.org.*