

CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) on February 24, 2020, issued the following statement regarding the results of the independent inquiry into abuse charges against Jean Vanier, the late founder of L'Arche International.

It is with a heavy heart that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) learned over the weekend of the shocking results of an independent inquiry, undertaken at the initiative of L'Arche International, to investigate allegations of abuse by its founder Jean Vanier. The inquiry uncovered disturbing allegations by women (non-disabled) who were abused emotionally and sexually. This news is all the more difficult and incomprehensible given that Mr. Vanier had a profound influence on the way people with mental and physical disabilities are perceived and treated today, and his writings have had a positive influence on people's lives within many different cultures and languages. Nonetheless, any harm that was done cannot be excused.

Victims of abuse suffer unspeakable harm and long-term consequences. The message of the Bishops of Canada to all victims-survivors is that abuse is an appalling manipulation of trust and is always to be condemned. In any form, it is unacceptable. The Bishops commend the courage of and pray for all victims-survivors who come forward with such painful experiences in order to seek justice and healing. Similarly, they laud the bold steps of L'Arche's leadership in initiating an independent inquiry into this question in an effort to seek greater clarity.

It is likewise crucial to acknowledge the overwhelming impact of the findings of this inquiry on the worldwide network of L'Arche communities; communities devoted to helping the intellectually disabled and their families based on the principles of love, friendship, community, and the dignity of the person. The Bishops of Canada pray for the success of the important task that now lies before the leadership of L'Arche to rebuild trust through their rigorous safeguarding policies and practices in order that the organization's mission to the disabled may continue in Canada and abroad. As sins and injustices are denounced, there is also an urgent duty to remember and acknowledge the life-giving, selfless and compassionate ministry which the members, volunteers, and leadership of the organization have brought to the lives of so many and for decades.

For more information about the results of the independent inquiry as they become available, please visit the websites of L'Arche International and L'Arche Canada.