



A newsletter from L'Arche-Montréal

**TO BE CLOSE TO THE
WEAK TRANSFORMS THE
PERSON WHO ACCEPTS TO
ENTER INTO A RELATION-
SHIP WITH THEM.**

March 2016

Work, for people with disabilities: a human need

Dear friends of L'Arche Montreal,

I would like to take this opportunity to share an existing reality with you, a reality which is becoming more and more of a preoccupation. It is the question of work for people with intellectual handicaps. You will agree with me that work is important for all people, understanding that all of us grow and develop in the exercise of work. A contemporary writer sums-up the importance of working with the following thought; "Work distances us from three great evils; boredom, vice and need.". Moreover, work does not only help to distance us from these evils but in fact valorises each one of us and contributes toward the development of skills on different levels.

At L'Arche Montreal, we are witness to the beautiful artistic creations made by the people at L'Alizé workshop on a daily basis. The uniqueness of this art that pours forth out of the creativity of people with intellectual handicaps and the assistants who work with them is striking. The proof is that on each occasion where the works of our artists are shown or exhibited they are honored at their just value. I invite you to visit our website to appreciate these works of art, and why not visit the workshop in person to get an idea of their work. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment these accomplished artists for their extraordinary talents.

It is true that lately, many people who have intellectual handicaps are losing their work because of certain changes that are taking place with the reorganization of social services. It is as though once again people with intellectual handicaps, who are already underfunded when it comes to social services, must take second place. This reality is difficult to understand, because these people have the same rights and needs as all of us. They benefit from the values procured with work as much as us. These people build up society just as much as we do. I dare to believe that this reality will quickly be taken into consideration so that the work for intellectually handicapped people may be valued. A society that gives such little regard for its weakest members, which does not value a certain category of people may lose its soul. Inasmuch as we share a common humanity, there is no place for discrimination.

To finish, I will not neglect to mention that we are all journeying toward Easter.

Our community is living this season with the focus on forgiveness and reconciliation, the theme suggested to us by L'Arche international. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two cardinal values in building up human society.

I invite you all to walk with us for the time leading up to Easter through these two profound values.

**I wish each and every one of you a joyful Easter celebration,
and may peace be with you.**

Alain Ouedraogo

Happy Easter!

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Daily life at home and... much more!

The parents of Danick, a newly arrived community member, share their story.

We would like to share the testimony given by the parents of Danick, who has recently arrived in the community.

We are the happy parents of Danick Myles who is a new member living daily life in la Passerelle, since November 2015.

We got to know l'Arche through people who introduced us to Alain at a café get-together. After that meeting, we met Souzy and Alain at the offices of L'Arche Montreal to let them know our



Danick at la Passerelle

expectations, our worries for Danick's future, as well as Danick's great desire to move into an apartment like his big brother Jonathan.

Souzy and Alain answered our questions and reassured us about some of our worries. We then had supper at la Passerelle with the residents, Josephine and Souzy, to get to know them better and see the home.

Everything went well and Danick liked his first encounter very much.

Danick gradually began his integration, and since November he has lived permanently at la Passerelle. For us, to see Danick feel so much at home and liking the people he lives

with, and to see how at-ease he is with Josephine, Rudy and the others, makes our joy all the greater.

We thank providence for having put l'Arche on our path as well as all the people who are involved.

Today, we cannot feel but reassured for the future, to see how l'Arche accompanies its residents both in the day to day, through illness, and at any other moments of their lives.

That Danick feels part of a family and is happy cannot but give us as parents happiness and security for the future, and to see the future in a reassuring light.

What Danick says when he comes home to be with us for the week-end makes it clear that he is just visiting us, and that Sundays he returns to his home! Such a phrase is so reassuring to us.

We can only give thanks for having found you on our path of life.

Francine and Larry Myles, Danick's parents



Danick, his parents and his brother

Sister Siham has been a volunteer in our workshop, L'Alizé, for the past two years. She shares with us her experience of what she is receiving from L'Arche.

Sister Siham has been a volunteer at the L'Alizé workshop for about two years. She shares her testimony about what l'Arche means to her.

Twice a week, I am joyfully welcomed by my friends at the L'Alizé workshop. A warm relationship has been built between us through manual activities we do together, such as knitting and praying the Rosary. Everyone is able to be him or herself in an atmosphere that is both familial and reciprocal.



Sister Siham and Jadwiga

Some people touch me more particularly, such as Kathy, who I have gotten to know over time. She often talks to herself out loud, saying things like,

"Kathy! Don't do that. Oh, my God!" She is gifted, she sings well, and repeats what we say in French even if she doesn't fully understand the language. When preparing to welcome Mari's parents, who are Japanese, I taught Kathy a Japanese refrain, "Thank you Lord, thank you." She sang it very well. I congratulated her saying, "Bravo Kathy!" She gave me a hug that was deeper than any I have ever felt from anyone. It was the joy emanating from a simple and tender heart.

Gaëtan is someone who is very generous. Even though he is in a wheelchair, he insists on going to the dépanneur to buy gum. Not for himself, but simply to share with others!

There is also Michel, a person who radiates joy. When I teach him a new activity and he succeeds at it, he is very proud of himself. On the other hand, when he doesn't succeed, he remains optimistic and says to me, "We're here to learn." And it's true!

I became a volunteer with the goal of helping others, but day to day I realize that I receive as much if not more than what I give. Thank you for this beautiful experience!

Sister Siham El Khoury

A place for volunteers



Sister Siham

Engagement of assistant

A testimony by Marie, who shares with us her choice to become a house assistant, after living in one of our homes while pursuing her studies.



Annie and Marie

The following is a testimony by Marie, who shares with us her choice to become an assistant in one of our homes after having spent time as an assistant while she was a student.

Last spring, a friend of mine spoke to me about her idea of becoming an assistant at l'Arche. Listening to her, I said to myself, "Well, why not me too?" I had one more term at university in speech therapy, with very few classroom hours to do. During the course of my studies, I had courses and stages with the handicapped, but I was interested in discovering daily life with intellectually handicapped people, living "being" more than "doing". In September, I was welcomed at the home l'Arc-en-Ciel, where I learned a lot. Everyday life is very routine and our tasks are very ordinary, but it is in this context that we learn to live together and to love. I recently heard, "community life is a school in love." At l'Arche, it is to learn to love the Core members and the assistants. Jean Vanier speaks of community as a place of festivities and of forgiveness. Sure enough, I quickly saw that daily life has the rhythm of festivities, occasions to get together which are significant for all the members of the community. Life at l'Arche is also an opportune context to learn to live forgiveness and mercy. Several times I was surprised by the capacity of certain people, Core members or assistants, to ask for forgiveness and to forgive. I have so much to learn from them. It is thanks to forgiveness that the home can live in peace and have the experience of real love. In the same sense, living at l'Arche raises questions in me about vulnerability and strength. What relationship do I have with the Core members? Can I also recognize my weaknesses and accept them? I have decided to prolong my commitment to l'Arche because I am still learning! I will end with a quote that echoes my questions, *"Our world which is based on efficiency and strength needs to discover the path of weakness. There is a dynamic element to weakness. God's logic is not our logic. The wisdom of God is not the wisdom of men. The great wisdom of God is; 'do not be afraid of weakness, do not be afraid! It is in your weakness, in the heart of your fragility that you will discover the presence of God.' 'That is the Christian mystery.' André Daigneault, Au coeur de la misère, la miséricorde, p115*

Marie Delaisse

News of Jean Vanier, through excerpts from his December, 2015, letter.

In mid-December, I was in Bethlehem. It was an immense joy to find that since my last visit there, three years ago, our community has grown - a joy again to meet Kathy, Mahera, Amira, Haythem, Sara, each one. The community is now located in a large house close to the Basilica of the Nativity. A beautiful community, exploding with joy, even though the situation in the country remains very difficult. It was obvious how happy everyone was to be together, Muslims and Christians, in an atmosphere of mutual support, simplicity of life and productive work. Today Bethlehem is surrounded by a huge wall, eight meters high and over 500 km long. On both sides of this wall live men, women and children who are afraid. Very close to Bethlehem is Jerusalem, a city of hope in spite of war and division. This is the heart of a torn humanity, a city where people weep and live in fear, where there are signs of death but at the same time, signs of hope and resurrection. Out of Bethlehem, where there is so much desolation and fear, there springs forth a song of thanksgiving. And at the heart of Bethlehem there is our community that sings about peace, unity and joy. It was a great joy for me to be at the heart of the community and also to pray in the grotto of the vast Basilica of the Nativity, the hidden place where Jesus was born. Accompanied by Odile, I spent four days of joy and peace in our community, happy with all that I have seen, touched and heard. L'Arche is small and composed of very fragile and weak people who have often been viewed by their parents as a source of shame and sometimes even as a punishment from God. And yet in L'Arche they become a sign of real relationship. The weakness of different people, born of different cultures and religions, has become the place of relationship. Weakness has found a new meaning through what we desire to live in our communities of L'Arche and Faith and Light. It is no longer a reality to be despised, to be kept at a distance, but a reality that becomes a link. It is the cry: "I need you, your respectful and loving presence." Weakness becomes gift that unites the community, as we come to realise our great need for one another.

News from Jean Vanier



Bethlehem's
Arche Community

Jean Vanier



L'ARCHE-MONTRÉAL, IT IS... a place of life, of mutual relations. "Mutuality" implies that these relations are lived in mutual respect, that the interaction between individuals is marked by honesty. These relationships foster the growth and development of each person. They create the possibility to truly appreciate each person in their uniqueness, whatever their strengths and weaknesses.

Upcoming events

Our community is excited to welcome you and to get to know you better by inviting you to some events where you can "Dare to be met"!

Sunday, March 27, 2016 - Mass at 10am, followed by Easter Brunch – For the meal that will be prepared by the community, we ask that you contribute a donation to L'Arche Haiti.



Mondays, March 28 & April 25 – No Café-rencontre

Sunday, April 24, 2016—An Elite Music Concert By the Cadets of Greater Montreal at 2pm-
Free admission upon reservation at 514 761-7307 ext.112.
Voluntary donation to support L'Arche Haiti.
Snacks and drinks will be sold.



Saturday, May 14, 2016- Spaghetti Dinner and Concert with Seduccion Band - "A Latin musical group who will make you dance and create some unforgettable moments in the rhythm of salsa, merengue, cumbia, bachata, rancheras and more." Tickets available at the door for \$ 20. Reservations at 514 761-7307 ext. 112.



Thursday, May 26, 5:30-8pm and Friday, May 27, 10am-5pm - Exhibition of works by workshop artists of L'Alizé.

Monday, May 30, 2016 – Café-rencontre, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. – Voluntary donation to support L'Arche Haiti.

Monday, June 27, 2016 – Café-rencontre BBQ, from 6:30 to 8:30pm – Come celebrate 'National Day' with us - Voluntary donation to support L'Arche Haiti.

“ When we are deeply in communion with someone who is in need , we invent ways to answer their needs.” Jean Vanier

That is exactly the state of hope in which I accepted to meet the challenges of being responsible for philanthropic development. L'Arche Montreal has needs and challenges and TOGETHER we find ways of meeting them.

One of the greatest riches of L'Arche Montreal is you, who take the time to read our newsletter, that you remain faithful to our cause. Many of you already support L'Arche Montreal. Thanks to you, L'Arche Montreal excels in its mission. Your generosity allows L'Arche to face challenges with hope and enthusiasm.

If you would like to support L'Arche Montreal, here are some possibilities:

- Spontaneous donations by mail. You can send a check directly to L'Arche Montreal.
- Monthly donations allow you to spread your donation out over 12 months. The amount goes directly onto your credit card once a month. The amount is always adjustable.
- On line donations allow you to give directly through a secure site to our website larche-montreal.org
- We can also send you information about planned donations and bequests.
- You can also donate your Airmiles to L'Arche Montreal. Your donation will give us wings! www.airmiles.ca/donner
- Your presence at our different activities makes all the difference!
- If you have greeting cards to give or need a little gift, think of our L'Alizé workshop. The artists are happy when people enjoy their work.
- Many other ways of giving are possible: workplace donations, donations of service, material donations...

If you have other ideas, please contact me at philanthropie@larche-montreal.org or by telephone at 514-761-7307 ext. 112. It would be my pleasure to discuss your ideas with you. Once thing is for sure, the best way to make L'Arche Montreal known is through you, so please don't hesitate to speak to people about us!

Thank you for your generosity!

Marie-Claude Gendron, Responsible for philanthropic development

**Together we can change the world...
one heart at a time!**