



It is with great sadness and sorrow that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) learned of the death of Jean Vanier yesterday, 7 May 2019.

Born to former diplomat and Governor General of Canada, Major-General Georges and his wife Pauline Vanier on 10 September 1928 in Geneva, Switzerland, Jean Vanier spent much of his childhood living in France and England as well as Canada. While he served in both the British Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy, he left to pursue a more spiritual calling to live his life guided by the Gospels. He pursued his studies and completed a PhD in philosophy from the Institut Catholique de Paris in 1962. A visit to a small village in France with an institution that housed men with intellectual disabilities, prompted him to learn more about them and the sufferings they endured. In 1964, he purchased a small home and invited two men with disabilities to leave the institutions where they resided and live with him. This became the first community to become known as L'Arche - a place where people with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers journey through life together. It was in Canada, in Richmond Hill, Ontario, that the second home was established in 1969 and where he launched what was to become the present-day International Federation of L'Arche Communities consisting of 154 residential communities in 38 countries on five continents that welcome some 10,000 members.

In 1971, Jean Vanier also co-founded the movement "Foi et Lumière" (Faith and Light) with Marie-Hélène Mathieu. Faith and Light brings together people (children and adults), some with disabilities and others without, through gatherings rooted in fellowship, prayer and celebration. Faith and Light has nearly 1,500 communities in 81 countries on five continents.

A prolific author, he published a number of books from 1969 to 2015 and inspired the writings of many others. He was also the recipient of multiple honours and awards for his service to society and spiritual leadership, including the Companion of the Order of Canada (1989), the Paul VI International Prize, given by Saint John Paul II (1997), the Officier de la Légion d'Honneur of France (2002), and the Templeton Prize (2015).

The Bishops of Canada extend condolences to his family and the entire L'Arche community, and pray earnestly for the repose of his soul.

For more information on the life and works of Jean Vanier, please visit www.jean-vanier.org/en