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PRESS RELEASE—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BILINGUAL MEMORIAL MASS AT OTTAWA'S NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL
FOR JEAN VANIER**

On May 25 at 5 PM., the Most Reverend Terrence Prendergast, SJ, will preside at a bilingual Mass to honour the memory and pray for the repose of the soul of Jean Vanier at Notre Dame Cathedral.

Jean Vanier passed away peacefully in Paris on May 7, 2019, at the age of 90.

Among his many accomplishments, Canadian Catholic philosopher and humanitarian Jean Vanier is perhaps best known for founding L'Arche at Trosly-Breuil, France, in 1964. L'Arche is a living testimony in the modern world to Catholic social teaching and the virtues. It is also a powerful counter-witness to the evil of denying the right to life to pre-born with suspected disabilities. He established the second L'Arche home in Richmond Hill, Ontario, in 1969, from which grew the present-day International Federation of L'Arche Communities consisting of 154 residential communities in 38 countries that welcome some 10,000 members.

Jean Vanier was born in Geneva in 1928 to former diplomat and Governor General of Canada, Major-General Georges and his wife Pauline Vanier. The family narrowly escaped the Axis advance on Paris by fleeing to Britain and then Canada. At age 13, Vanier made his way back to Britain to train as a naval officer. Although successful in the British Navy, his "little compass" as a devout Catholic led him to study theology and philosophy with Dominican priest Fr Thomas Philippe. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Aristotelian ethics from the Catholic Institute in Paris in 1962. He subsequently taught philosophy at the University of Toronto.

In 1968, Jean Vanier gave the first Faith and Sharing retreat, a worldwide movement of retreats where people from all backgrounds are welcome. In 1971, with Marie H el ene Mathieu, he co-founded Faith and Light, an international movement of forums for people with developmental disabilities, their family members, and friends. There are more than 1,800 Faith and Light communities in 80 countries.

Until the late 1990s, Jean Vanier carried the responsibility for L'Arche in Trosly-Breuil and for the International Federation of L'Arche. He stepped down from these responsibilities to spend more time counselling, encouraging, and accompanying L'Arche care givers. Vanier has written 33 books and has inspired such luminaries as Henri Nouwen and Hans S. Reinders.

In recognition of his contributions to the marginalized, Jean Vanier has received numerous distinctions including the Companion of the Order of Canada, the Legion of Honour (France), the Paul VI International Prize, the Community of Christ International Peace Award, the Rabbi Gunther Plaut Humanitarian Award, the *Gaudium et Spes* Award, and the Templeton Prize for his "exceptional contributions to affirming life's breadth of spiritual dimensions."

Several members of L'Arche will be available after the Mass to speak to well-wishers. L'Arche Ottawa will offer an opportunity to sign a memory book honouring the life of Jean Vanier. Those attending can also receive a small gift from L'Arche Ottawa containing the final message from Jean Vanier, issued a few days prior to his death.

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