



Letter of Jean

*In a world where there is so much suffering,
I want to live each day,
yes, each day,
in thanksgiving,
giving thanks to God, because life is so beautiful.*

*I love to watch the flowers emerging from the earth,
snowdrops,
primroses,
violets,
and the littlest daisies,
they are so beautiful, and so humble.*

*None of these are big or elegant flowers like roses,
they are so tiny, so fresh,
colorful and close to the earth ;
they are like a smile from the earth.
I don't know who planted them,
perhaps they land in this earth,
carried here by the wind,
breath of life.*

*I love to watch the birds,
the sparrows,
sometimes the pigeons
the little doves,
and soon the swallows.
They move so freely from tree to tree,
branch to branch ,
so beautiful !*

*The moon, some evenings we see it so clearly,
as it shines down on us with such gentleness,
and tenderness.*

*With compassion as well,
as it looks upon the hatred
and the wars of this world.
And yet, the reality is so beautiful.
Yes we are called to love reality and not to run away.*



Etty Hillesum says that « the greatest obstacle is always the representation and not the reality. Reality we can cope with, even with all its suffering, and heave it onto our shoulders. But the representation of suffering – which is not suffering, because suffering itself is very fertile and can make life itself precious – we must go beyond it. In going beyond these representations we liberate true life in ourselves, with all its strengths, and we become capable of managing the suffering in our own life as well as in the life of humanity. »



Pope Francis! I met him! Yes, I met him ! I spent good moments alone with him in his office.



He is beautiful, he is quiet, he is gentle and he is joyful. We looked at each other in the eyes, my hands in his. I don't know what we spoke of, but it doesn't matter, because we met each other. He is so humble that God is present through him. That's what is important, to meet, to dwell in each other's presence, and to give thanks together for God's presence within us.

In February, here in Trosly, I met with the Board and the Executive of Faith and Light. It was wonderful to be with them, to listen to them, and through each member to encounter each of the little communities of Faith & Light around the world, and especially those communities which are alone and in difficulty.



I am happy to be in Trosly, to listen to each person who comes to meet me. Because each is a presence of God, a gift which I wish to welcome and for whom I give thanks.

I love to take meals in my home, the Val Fleuri ; to be there with each one is a great joy for me, because each person is so beautiful.

From time to time I leave my desert of Trosly...



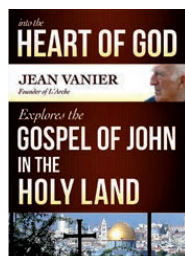
I spoke to all the French Bishops, assembled together in Lourdes. I wanted first of all to thank them, as each of them carry much, with so much faith and courage. They are a sign of the presence of Jesus. I shared with them what I have discovered year by year, for the past 50 years of L'Arche and Faith & Light; how I have been slowly transformed by my life with vulnerable people.



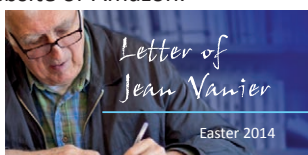
Behind my life, behind all that I have done and all that I have not done, behind all that is invisible and all that is visible in creation, behind all that – the flowers, the birds, the moon and the earth – there is a God so humble, so beautiful, and so hidden that some don't think He exists at all. They are unable to feel His presence, in life in the evolution of life, in the evolution of humanity, in the weak and in weakness. It is only in stilling oneself in silence that His presence can be detected, because God speaks in silence. His word is so life-giving, one must be silent to hear it.

We are now in Easter week, a passage, a moment of transformation; from suffering and loss spring forth new life, a resurrection, a rebirth, our hope. I give thanks to Jesus who teaches me to love each person, whatever their religion, their faith or their vision of life.

In my little desert here in Trosly I carry in my heart all our communities of L'Arche and of Faith & Light. I feel in communion with each one as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of L'Arche this year. This huge boat floats on the waters, so well guided by the breath of the Spirit, by and through Patrick and Eileen as well all the others who live in this huge boat. Together we are heading towards the distant horizon of peace where every person, the strong and the weak, are hand in hand celebrating life.



PS: Great news!
The English version of the DVDs of Jean Vanier in the Holy Land, speaking about the Gospel of John, are now available, and entitled «Into the Heart of God». These beautiful videos have been dubbed from the French. They are now available for purchase through Franciscan Media USA website or Amazon.



Sometimes I feel tired, in my legs or my head, I have more and more difficulty finding the word I am looking for. Nonetheless I am happy here, and I rest in the silence where we are in communion with each other. I feel very poor in the face of the terrible war, in Syria, and especially the death of Father Frans who inspired L'Arche in Damascus and was assassinated in his home in Homs. And then there is the deepening crisis in the Ukraine, the walls separating peoples in the Holy Land, and the walls around our hearts.

Father Frans Van der Lugt



Community L'Arche Al-Safina
Day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria

God is thirsty for unity, he longs to bring together all the children of God who have been dispersed. He longs to break down the walls which separate us from each other, so that life can spring forth. God weeps before division. God wants us to celebrate unity, and to work humbly and poorly for unity. This God is so hidden behind all the noise and the stresses of our societies. He is there, He waits, He waits for an encounter, He waits for me, He waits for each of us. Let us pray together for our world in pain.

With my Easter blessings,

Jean