

May 7, 2020-Thursday, Fourth Week of Easter

'We are not called by God to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.'

-Jean Vanier

Jean Vanier

Born September 10, 1928, in Geneva, Switzerland, Jean Vanier was the son of the former governor general of Canada.

Vanier served in the navy for Great Britain and Canada. He considered joining the priesthood, and lived for a while in a Trappist monastery in France. Instead, he received his doctorate and taught philosophy at the University of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.

After a visit to France to see his Dominican spiritual director, Vanier was impressed by the priest's work with developmentally disabled people. Vanier began visiting asylums where he was appalled by the patients' living conditions. Inspired by the Gospels and the work of Dorothy Day, Vanier decided to establish a community where disabled people could live together and equally with non-disabled people. With financial help from family and friends, he purchased a home outside Paris, France, in 1964.

The community became known as L'Arche International, named after the ark which saved Noah, his family, and the animals. Today, there are more than 154 L'Arche communities in 38 countries.

Vanier, who also founded Faith and Light, a network of support groups for mentally disabled people and their families, died on this day in 2019 at the age of 90.

Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the disciples did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. (John 10:6-7)

The full power of the shepherd image came through easily to people whose ancestors were Bedouin shepherds and who lived in a country where shepherds were a familiar sight.

The sheep were part of the Bedouin family. They traveled with the family. New lambs were born into the group, and the sights and sounds and smells of the family were familiar to these lambs from the time they were born.

When Jesus used the image of the sheep and the shepherds, the people immediately understood the closeness he was talking about.

God is like that for me.

From the very beginning of my life, I had an experience and knowledge of God. As I grew up, people "from the outside" helped me to interpret this experience and helped enhance the truths I held within.

This Easter season is a good time to reconnect with the familiar God that I have known for so long.

Spend some quiet time with the Lord