



**Press Release**

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

**Jean Vanier to receive 2015 Templeton Prize at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 18<sup>th</sup> May**  
***“Let us meet across differences – intellectual, cultural, national, racial, religious,”***  
***says L’Arche founder Jean Vanier***

Jean Vanier, the founder of L’Arche, an international network of communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together as peers, will receive the 2015 Templeton Prize at an inspirational ceremony at St Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square London at 6pm on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

“Let us meet across differences – intellectual, cultural, national, racial, religious and other differences. Then from this initial meeting we can begin to build community together,” says M. Vanier in remarks prepared for the ceremony.

“Community is a place of belonging where each person can grow to become fully him or herself. It is belonging for becoming. We belong to each other so that each member can become more human, more loving, more open to others, particularly to those who are different, and finally more free,” he continues.

Attended by some of the most prominent religious leaders and significant figures from multi-faith organisations across the UK, the Templeton Prize ceremony will honour Jean Vanier’s vision, writings and the extensive network of L’Arche residential communities. The prize will be awarded by Heather Templeton Dill and Jennifer Templeton Simpson, daughters of Dr John M. Templeton Jr, President and Chairman of the John Templeton Foundation.

What began quietly in northern France in 1964, when Vanier invited two intellectually disabled men to come and live with him as friends, has now grown into 147 L’Arche residential communities operating in 35 countries, and more than 1,500 Faith and Light support groups in 82 countries that similarly urge solidarity among people with and without disabilities.

“People with intellectual disabilities have unique gifts of the heart and can open us to love in a special way. Isn’t it because so often they have been humiliated and pushed aside as useless? They are not crying out for advancement or knowledge or power, but simply for a personal relationship of love,” says M. Vanier.

Jean Vanier, 86, has extended his advocacy of belonging and social justice, with years of leadership efforts across the globe to nurture dialogue and unity among Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and other faiths through lectures, conferences and retreats around the world. His scholarship includes more than 30 books translated into 29 languages.

Performers at this year's ceremony will include St Martin's Voices, a new choir formed at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 2012 under its director of music Andrew Earis. In addition, L'Arche community members, accompanied by singer-composer Mick Sands, will present the "Feast of L'Arche" which invites audience members to join a symbolic meal for the hungry and the poor.

Valued at £1.1 million (about \$1.7 million or €1.5 million), the Templeton Prize is one of the world's largest annual awards given to an individual and honours a living person who has made exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension.

Established in 1972 by the late global investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, the Prize is a cornerstone of the John Templeton Foundation's international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality.

Jean Vanier joins a distinguished group of 44 former recipients of the Prize including Mother Teresa, who received the inaugural award in 1973, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1983), and Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (2007). Last year's Templeton Prize recipient, Czech priest and philosopher Tomáš Halík, followed Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, in 2013 and the 2012 Templeton Laureate, the Dalai Lama.

#### **Notes to Editors**

**Broadcast quality video** from the Templeton Prize ceremony and related events will be available from <https://redrobot.filecamp.com/public/files/27ng-lscakitk> from approximately 5pm on Tuesday 19th May.

**A full video** of the Templeton Prize ceremony will be available from [www.templetonprize.org](http://www.templetonprize.org) on Tuesday 19th May.

**Images** will be available from <http://filetransfer.ctn.co.uk/login.aspx> username: tp2015 password: accessTP2015 from 9pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May.

Videos of Jean Vanier answering several "Big Questions" are available at [www.templetonprize.org](http://www.templetonprize.org) and [www.youtube.com/user/TempletonPrize/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TempletonPrize/).

Further information including biographical information on the 44 previous Templeton Prize Laureates is available at [www.templetonprize.org](http://www.templetonprize.org)

Follow the Templeton Prize on Twitter using @TempletonPrize and the hashtag #2015templetonprize

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