

Today Faith and Light more than ever

Letter to our sisters and brothers of Faith and Light

We were all heartbroken when we heard the news published by different media and specifically by L'Arche, about certain behaviours of Jean in the context of spiritual accompaniments with some adult women between 1970 and 2005.

Our first reactions were varied: from disbelief to disappointment, from anger to frustration, even fear and asking ourselves many questions, but none of us remained indifferent. And it couldn't be otherwise, because we love Jean and we have witnessed all the good done through him to so many human beings. Something we can all assert.

The first thing we want to tell you is that we feel the same way you do. We are also members of a Faith and Light community and, like you, we were called by Jesus himself to be part of this family. Therefore, we want to tell you at the beginning of this letter, that we are with you, that we share the same feelings and that we understand all the different reactions to this news about Jean. Today more than ever we want you to feel taken up in our arms and recognized in what you think and feel.

This letter is not about giving more information, we cannot give you any further information or clarification because we do not know more than you. We don't want to judge, nor condemn, nor deny. We just want to talk to you from our heart. This letter is rooted in our prayer and the reflexion we have had those last few days.

We wanted to write this letter on February 26. It is not by chance: today, many of us celebrate Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Lenten journey which will lead us to the crucified and risen Christ. The imposition of the ashes reminds us that we are dust, mud, fragility, that we are almost insignificant, but nevertheless loved by God. Yes, God loves this mud that we are. But this "conversion" which is asked of us during Lent is not the only fruit of our efforts, our strength, our will... It is a grace, a gift from God himself. He loves us by pure grace, unconditionally! When we say that "God is love", we mean that the essence of God is to love and to keep loving. What a good news! God loves us although we are mud and ash. The first thing we need to do is to accept that we are also mud and ash. We cannot do anything by ourselves, without God, father and mother, we are like orphans.

Until now, we probably didn't realize that if we are all made of mud, fragility and ashes, Jean was no exception. We think he knew and was aware of his fragility. But, nobody but God knows why he used him to inspire, along with others, the birth of our Faith and Light family. And we have all been called by this same God to be part of communities where we can feel and experience fragility and littleness.

Our first concern now is to encourage you to look again at Jesus. He is the heart of our communities as well as our friends with learning disabilities who are also at the heart of our communities. We need Faith and Light more than ever today; Churches need Faith and Light more than ever and the world needs Faith and Light more than ever. What Faith and Light looks like today and what it will be in the future mainly depends on us all who are part of this family spread over so many countries. It makes no doubt that what we do depends on our ability to listen to the Holy Spirit who keeps breathing and guiding the rhythm of our boat.

Our boat has just experienced a jolt. Like the one that the disciples of Jesus experienced when this storm broke out in the middle of the Lake of Galilee. Like them, we are afraid and react in unexpected ways. But Jesus, don't you care that we are drowning? And Jesus gives us today the same answer he gave to his disciples: do not be afraid! I am with you!

Every situation in life, especially the most difficult, can become an asset if we know how to be wise and humble. Being wise because we see the importance of a movement like Faith and Light in the defence of all life even with a disability, in the support of so many families, in helping so many friends to discover faith and in walking along with so many people with disabilities and helping them to understand how valuable they are.

In a world sharing a culture of "appearance", the proposal of Faith and Light to be happy and joyful to be as we are, to recognize that Jesus saves us through the little ones, to accept that we don't need to put on makeup or to wear masks because we love ourselves as we are. Being humble because this news about Jean reminds us that Faith and Light is the work of God. And that if one day Faith and Light should no longer exist, the risen Jesus wouldn't stop being among us. He is the way, the truth and the life for each one of us. Jesus, who gives a deep meaning to our existence and who makes us live hope beyond death. God uses fragile and muddy persons... sinners! The Gospels remind us of all these meetings of Jesus with sinners... *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* We also have the image of the good shepherd who walks in search of the lost sheep and leaves the other ninety-nine. And this father who awaits the return of his son who left the house and wasted half of his fortune, to welcome him with open arms... Yes, God used Jean and many others, he calls you and me to do good things and teach the world other values that build life and happiness; to turn reality into something that looks more and more like God's dream for us and for our world.

Dear sisters and brothers of Faith and Light, at the beginning of Lent, recognize your fragility and put it in the hands of God. Let him transform it no matter how and when, into life, joy, peace and hope for humanity. Now it is our turn, all of us who are part of Faith and Light to row harder and harder in our simple boat. We have many challenges to overcome. If you need to talk, to share how you feel, do it! But keep your eyes on the crucified and risen Jesus.

As international coordinators, we do not have solution for everything, we do not know everything, but we know who we trust in! If we keep looking at Jesus, we have nothing to fear. We thank you very much for your support, your closeness and your prayer at this time. May we, today more than ever, live unity in Faith and Light, because today more than ever, Faith and Light is necessary, we must know and feel that we are united in our common mission.

We keep you in our hearts, in a way that only our friends with disabilities can do.

***Lord Jesus Christ,
You are with us, you take care of us, you encourage us
We are in your hands, we are yours
Don't let us be discouraged
Help us to be happy people, people of peace and communion
Make us one in these moments
and give us the grace to have a clear vision
Focus more our lives and our communities on you
Give us your Spirit
in order to keep the boat of Faith and Light sailing at your own pace.
Amen***

United in Jesus, united in prayer, united around our friends with disabilities, united in Faith and Light.

María Silvia y Raúl
International coordinators