

## Loved by Jordan

Everyone has a part to play in building communities of love. The following story was told to me by Eileen Glass, one of the founding mothers of L'Arche communities in Australia which provide family-style homes and lifestyle support for people with intellectual disabilities. Eileen has also been a key link between L'Arche Australia and other L'Arche communities around the world. Says Eileen:

'There is a young man I know in a L'Arche community in Manila, Philippines. His severe disabilities mean that he spends his life sitting in a chair, unable to walk, talk, dress or feed himself. He was abandoned by his mother as a baby and came to L'Arche about eighteen years ago.

'There is something very special about Jordan. His presence exudes peace. I have often found it a great relief after the stresses of the day to sit with him. And it is the same for every assistant who has ever cared for him. You see, you don't have to "prove" anything to Jordan; you just have to "be there". And in "being there" with each other around Jordan, community forms.

'As things happened, a new leader was named in Jordan's community and she was of Japanese descent. Her ethnic background was a sensitive issue because there were still raw memories of how the Philipinos had suffered under the Japanese occupation. In fact,

on the Board of the community was a Philippino woman whose father had been executed by the Japanese when she was six years old.

'Amidst these sensitivities, I saw the friendship between these two women deepen and grow. In a situation which under normal circumstances might have been fraught with tension, relationship blossomed because both women had their eyes on Jordan. Jordan doesn't need care that is expensive or complex, but he does need 24-hour care. And around Jordan, among those who respond to his need, community takes root.

'This story brings to life the truth of which Jean Vanier (the founder of L'Arche) has repeatedly spoken: that we should never be scandalized by weakness or pain. Sadly, society is scared to death of this message. It is bent on making sure that the Jordans of this world don't come to birth. And yet, as the witness of L'Arche keeps reminding us, weakness is something we all share; it is not to be feared. On the contrary, it is our pathway to real communion with one another and with God.'

•



© Teresa Pirola, 2004  
teresapirola.net

"Community is not built upon heroic actions but rather upon the love shown in the little things of daily life."

— Jean Vanier