

Signs: Seven Words of Hope

Jean Vanier

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"It can be hard for a believer to be happy in the face of all that is going on in the world today," writes Jean Vanier, a Canadian philosopher, humanitarian, and founder of L'Arche, a Christian community in which people with severe intellectual disabilities live alongside those who care for them in mutual honor and respect. In *Signs*, Vanier shares how his nearly fifty years at L'Arche has taught him to accept his own vulnerability. He suggests that walking the paths of the seven "signs"—humiliation, awakening, encounter, authority, community, vulnerability, and mystery—can rekindle a radical hope for ourselves and the greater world.

Vanier says that what most of us are seeking is joy, a joy that is "capable of transcending the fear, anxiety, grief, and the overwhelming exhaustion so many feel as they struggle to hold together all the fragments of their lives." That joy, he says, can be found in communities where people actively love each other, celebrate together, and experience a feeling of belonging despite their differences. In these communities, the weak learn their deepest human value and the strong discover the tenderness in their own hearts and are transformed into "real people," capable of true compassion.

With this book, Vanier reveals how, gently and beautifully, people with a disability can bring us to the heart of the Christian mystery.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2015)

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