

Faith and Sharing early days on Vancouver Island

By Claire Donovan

Bishop Remi De Roo was interviewed recently about his involvement with the beginnings of Faith and Sharing on Vancouver Island. As a Vatican Council Father, Bishop Remi De Roo actively participated in all 4 sessions of the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965. He shared, "at these sessions there was a deepened renewal sense of the mystery of the Church. It was recognized that all of the baptized faithful are members of the body of Jesus, have the gift of their baptismal royal priesthood, and are called to perfection regardless of age, colour, creed, or social standing".



When he returned from these sessions, he was interested in promoting this new understanding here on Vancouver Island. He became interested to learn about Jean Vanier and the L'Arche communities that he was forming. Remi remembered, "I was impressed by Jean Vanier at a large gathering I attended in Winnipeg. The Archbishop of Winnipeg had not been made aware of the gathering ahead of time and Jean Vanier wanted to wait for him to arrive. In this way, Jean showed a sense of the communion with the whole Church and that gave me an immediate trust in what he was doing. So when I heard of people who wanted to invite Jean to come to Vancouver Island, I encouraged them to pursue it, sensing this was a prophetic initiative, inspired by the Holy Spirit."

The first Faith and Sharing retreat on Vancouver Island was held in Duncan in 1974. Momentum grew and in 1983 Jean Vanier led a large Faith and Sharing retreat at the University of Victoria with the theme "Opening our hearts to the Poor".

Bishop Remi has made himself available as much as possible to be present at our retreats over the last 44 years, often leading a worship service. He animated our retreat in 1994 alongside the Anglican bishop Barry Jenks and the United Church leader Reverend Lance Woods, speaking on the theme 'One in Spirit'. In 2008, by then retired, he animated our retreat again, on the theme 'Our journey with Jesus to the cross, a sign of hope'.



Bishop Remi also shared his observations that "in L'Arche and Faith and Sharing, there are people with disabilities and those who are hurting. The experience of suffering makes them sensitive to the mystery of the suffering of Jesus and the mystery of the cross. As St Paul stated, when he was weak, he was strong through the power of God. The members of Faith and Sharing are living the Beatitudes - the Sermon of the Mount, in a special way and at a deeper level than most people - Faith and Sharing." 💜

To read a short history of Faith & Sharing on Vancouver Island, see [Heart-to-Heart bulletin of April 2017](#), p. 3-4