

## To the International Leadership Team

Trosly, 2016 October 17

Dear friends,

More than one year has passed now since my letter written in May 2015 concerning revelations about Père Thomas. Some of you have expressed regret for what you consider to be my silence concerning his conduct and his sexual abuse. They read into this letter a lack of clear condemnation.

I would like to repeat my condemnation for these actions, whose gravity I was able to determine during the canonical enquiry and thereafter. I have mourned Père Thomas as I knew him. I ask the forgiveness of the victims for not having measured soon enough the extent of their traumatising and for not having been sufficiently sensitive to their suffering.

I continue now to reread the history of my relationship with Père Thomas and to better discern what was positive and what was negative. I ask you to pray for me as I pursue this task of re-reading.

Indeed, you know very well that in my past at l'Eau Vive, (as a young man aged 22 to 28 years old) and also after that time, I had great confidence in this priest who helped me spiritually.

I realize today, with all the revelations we have received, what sort of sexual perversion was at play within him, at that time and then later when he was at La Ferme when I founded l'Arche. I was totally unaware at the time. I was simply oblivious to the fact that he was making use of a certain Marian spirituality in such a perverse manner, as the subsequent testimonies revealed. Through his repeated and reprehensible acts, Père Thomas has shattered the trust that I had in him.

I would like to add that there is absolutely no link whatsoever between the spirituality or the theology used by Père Thomas, which served to justify his abusive relationships with women and the spirituality of L'Arche, as it was conceived, developed and lived since its origins.

A mass is being prepared for all the victims who suffered directly or indirectly at the hands of Père Thomas, and for Père Thomas himself. I think that this process, part of the 'work of mercy' that Pope Francis speaks of, is necessary and I know that it is accompanied by other initiatives testifying to the compassion and solidarity felt on behalf of all of l'Arche with regard to the victims. We will also pray for L'Arche itself, where each one of us is hurt following the disclosure of the suffering caused by Père Thomas. I will be present, of course, with you on the day of the ceremony.

Jean Vanier