



The  
Teach**Able**  
Project

## Lesson Plan

Grade 12 HRE4M:  
Jean Vanier

**Jean Vanier's Philosophy  
of Belonging**

**A Lesson for Grade 12 Religious  
Education and Social Sciences and  
Humanities Religious Education**



## Lesson Summary

Using Jean Vanier's philosophy of belonging as a springboard for discussion, students will investigate and discover the meaning of the intrinsic dignity of each human person. Through the activities of listening, gathering information from Jean Vanier's Philosophy on Belonging, sharing and critical peer evaluation students will examine their own personal philosophies on inclusion and belonging. They will extend this examination to their school and community environments.

This lesson should be taught as part of a series of investigations on extraordinary individuals who acted as agents of change.

## Connections to Accessibility Awareness – The Big Ideas

- The goal of Accessibility Awareness is to shape a society in which individuals are appreciated for their intrinsic worth.
- Empathy for others and respect for the dignity of all persons are essential characteristics of an inclusive classroom, school and society.
- The biggest barriers to accessibility are attitude and lack of awareness.
- Students have an important voice and a valuable role to play in advocating for change in their classrooms, their schools and their community.

## Important Considerations for Program Planning

In keeping with the inclusive nature of accessibility and best teaching practices, lessons and instruction must provide a continuum of supports for all students, including those with accessibility considerations and/or special education needs. The front matter of all revised Ontario curriculum documents highlights elements to consider in planning classroom lessons and instruction, including Universal Design, Differentiated Instruction, Equity and Inclusive Education, the perspective of First Nation, Métis and Inuit people, meeting the needs of English Language Learners and of students with special education needs. See the **Accessibility+** hub for more information about these and related topics.

## Community Connections

Connections with parents, members of the broader school community, agencies and institutions, social services, community organizations, corporations, and local businesses provide important opportunities for supporting accessibility awareness for students. Community partners can be an important resource in students' learning as volunteers, mentors, guest speakers, participants in the school's accessibility events or models of accessibility awareness in the life of the community. Modelling and mentoring can enrich not only the educational experience of students but also the life of the community. Schools should ensure that partnerships are nurtured within the context of strong educational objectives. If the topic of a lesson is a disability and a student in the classroom has that disability, it is important to discuss that lesson with the student, if appropriate, and his or her parents so that planning can be respectful and strengths-based in perspective.



## Curriculum Document(s)/Grade

*Ontario Catholic Secondary Curriculum Policy Document (Revised) 2006*

Grade 12 Religious Education 4.3; Social Sciences and Humanities Religious Education (HRE4M).

### **Overall Expectations**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate the contributions of philosophy and the sciences to a Catholic Understanding of ethics and morality
- Describe ways in which the limits of human freedom can be challenging but can also offer opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment
- Understand and apply Catholic social teaching to various situations
- Identify various examples of people who are models of justice
- Describe the meaning of “the intrinsic dignity of each human person,” and its impact on our inherent sense of responsibility towards self and others;
- Describe ways in which the limits of human freedom can be challenging but can also offer opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment (e.g., living fully with a disability)

### **Social Sciences and Humanities Religious Education: HRE4M Grade 12 Religion – Church and Culture – Big Ideas**

#### **Family Life:**

Examine a variety of issues that pertain to the dignity of the human person

## Instruction and Context

### **Learning Goals**

Students and the teacher will work together to create Learning Goals in student friendly language that are connected to the curriculum expectations. Co-created Learning Goals should be posted in the classroom for reference. Please see the **Accessibility+** hub for more information.

### **Success Criteria**

Success Criteria for each lesson will be developed by the teacher and the class based on the curriculum expectation, the students’ ability to demonstrate knowledge of content, use critical thinking processes, to make connections, and personal knowledge or experience according to the nature of the activity. Co-created Success Criteria should be posted in the classroom for reference.

Please see the **Accessibility+** hub for more information.



## Differentiated Instruction and Assessment

Please refer to *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12* for more information about differentiated instruction and assessment practices.

## Readiness

Students should have prior experience with:

- Co-creating Success Criteria and Learning Goals
- Investigations and discussions about other philosophers and writers who speak about dignity, respect and inclusion
- Shared reading - teacher reads specific quotes/passages from a variety of prophets and modern writers
- Discussion and research on specific Gospel readings that connect to dignity and respect for all
- Previous discussions on the types of barriers and challenges that might prevent a person from being fully included in society
- Connections between Catholic values and attitudes about others

## Terminology

Accessibility, attitudinal barriers, diversity, intrinsic dignity

This terminology should be discussed and understood to help students meet the expectations of these lessons. These and other words that come up in discussion should be posted in the classroom for reference.

## Materials and Equipment

Biography - *Jean Vanier A Young Person who Followed his Heart; A Man who is Changing our World!* (Appendix A) from the Teachers Guide to Belonging "The Search for Acceptance"  
<http://www.windborneproductions.com/belonging.html> (study guide available on line)

Prophets of Peace video (available for a modest fee from Prophets of Peace  
[http://www.deiren.com/film/prophets\\_of\\_peace/index.html](http://www.deiren.com/film/prophets_of_peace/index.html) (video clip available on the website)

Other videos about Jean Vanier, including a biography, available at no cost from the *Learn Alberta* website: <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/ssjv/index.html>. *Learn Alberta* has 5 of the 6 segments of the Quote exemplars on Vanier's philosophy (Appendix B)

Exit cards (Appendix C) (one/student)

Place mats (Appendix D) ( one for each student and one for each small group)

Sample bibliographies from various sources (invite students to bring in biographies if they have examples)

The following videos are available for a small fee and will help students understand Vanier's philosophy and see it in action. Belonging can be used as a source of additional quotes from Vanier.

- *Belonging "The Search for Acceptance"* <http://www.windborneproductions.com/belonging.html> (study guide available for schools)
- *Prophets of Peace* [http://www.deiren.com/film/prophets\\_of\\_peace/index.html](http://www.deiren.com/film/prophets_of_peace/index.html) (short clip available on the website)

Possible Supplementary Resource:

*The Soloist* is a full-length feature that is an excellent supplement to this lesson. It is the true-life story of Nathaniel Ayers, a former cello prodigy whose bouts with schizophrenia landed him on the streets after two years of schooling at Juilliard. Ayers is a man whose promising career in music was cut short due to a debilitating bout with mental illness. Please check with your school librarian about the copyright issues related to renting and showing a movie and your board's policies. Please see the Possible Extension Activities section below for ideas about how to incorporate this film into this lesson.

Please see the **Accessibility+** hub for additional information and resources related to this unit.

## Learning About Attitudinal Barriers and Advocacy for Change

This lesson will focus on the following Accessibility Awareness messages:

- Empathy for others and respect for the dignity of all persons are essential characteristics of an inclusive classroom, school and society.
- The biggest barriers to accessibility are attitude and lack of awareness.
- Students have an important voice and a valuable role to play in advocating for change in their classrooms, their schools and their community.

## Minds On

### **Whole Class** ⇄ **Guided Listening/ Viewing of Video**

This lesson is in conjunction with previous investigations on extraordinary individuals who acted as agents of change.

Share short clip of Prophets of Peace Video.

Discuss as a class the type of man Vanier was. How do you think Vanier's philosophy may have acted as a moral agent for change in society? Discuss as a class.



### **Pairs** ⇨ **Think-Pair Share** 2-3 minutes

What is your perception of Jean Vanier? With a partner take a few minutes to predict what you think his impact will be.

Jot down a few ideas to review at the end of class.

Additional suggested guiding questions: What does the term “agent of change” mean? Who can you think of who was (or is) an agent of change? What characteristics do agents of change have in common? Do you think it takes courage to be an agent of change? Why or why not? Record students’ ideas for future reference.

To create greater interest and understanding of the topic, view one or several of the videos (listed in the Materials and Equipment section above) about Jean Vanier or about the people he works with so that students will have a better understanding of the lives of people with Down’s Syndrome and other types of developmental delays and the context of his philosophy. Ask students what they learned about Jean Vanier and/or his work from viewing the video (s).

## Action

### **Whole Class** ⇨ **Shared Listening Activity**

Read the biography *Jean Vanier A Young Person who Followed his Heart* (See Appendix A) aloud to the class. To activate listening, ask students to record 5-8 main points while listening to the biography. Distribute cue cards to students to use to record key points as they listen.

### **Whole Class** ⇨ **Discussion and Think-Pair-Share**

In pairs, ask students to talk about their impression of Jean Vanier based on the reading and the selected video(s). Ask students to think about what his impact has been and what it will be in the future. As a class, discuss the type of man Jean Vanier is and how his philosophy has affected him and others. Ask students to share their ideas with the class and record them to review later.

### **Small Group** ⇨ **Writing**

Ask students to work in small groups using the place mats to share the information recorded on their cue cards. The group must consolidate ideas and agree on which items to record on their place mat, and summarize them under the headings provided: identify his childhood influences/life experience/and who he has influenced (see appendix B) and then post their place mat for the next part of this activity.

### **Independent Practice** ⇨ **Viewing and Sharing**

Have students take a Gallery Walk to view the posted group place mats. Each student should have a personal copy of the place mat to create an individual version based on the input from the entire class. Ask students to identify 2-3 additional items they would like to learn about Vanier and record them on the back of their cue card.



### **Independent/Pairs/Group** ⇄ **Research**

Provide samples of bibliographies for students. Using the Internet or library, give students time to research the additional questions about Jean Vanier that they identified. Remind them to record their sources on the bibliography summary sheet and evaluate the effectiveness/credibility of the site used as good/fair/poor.

### **Independent** ⇄ **Writing/Technology**

Ask students to think about how a biography and a social media page are similar. What are the important elements of attractive and engaging social media? Ask students to contribute ideas for a rubric for a social media page including essential information and the details needed assessment purposes. Help students identify various indicators of good social media pages. Identify the critical components to include (photo, graphics, personal details, contributions, etc.).

Give students time to use their individual place mat and research findings to write their own create a draft version of a social media page for Jean Vanier using art materials or the computer. Ask students to share their work with a critical friend for feedback.

As a variation, ask them to create a blog for a week in Jean Vanier's life.

### **Sharing**

Give students the possibility to orally present their finished work to the class or post it for others to read and see.

### **Action Planning**

Ask students to use their exit cards to identify three strategies to address attitudinal barriers in their school or community environment.

### POSSIBLE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to select one of Vanier's quotes and then make a sketch or comic strip to illustrate its meaning.
- View the video entitled *The Soloist* which is based on the true story of a brilliant street musician with visible mental health issues. If Jean Vanier were to contribute to a web blog about the story of the Soloist, what would he say?
- What are some other quotes from Jean Vanier that we could add to the list in Appendix B?
- Ask students to summarize Jean Vanier's philosophy in a formal essay looking at the multiple philosophies studied under the theme of the dignity of the human person and discussing how three of the philosophies studied promoted the dignity of the human person with stories and examples for each philosophy.



## Assessment

**Assessment for Learning:** Are students able to attend and listen to information shared orally by the teacher? Can students use the tools provide to collect information (cue card, place mat)? Are students able to share their information in a meaningful way and learn from what others are sharing? Are students able to identify additional information they are interested in and locate it though research? Can they evaluate the credibility of different sources? Can they identify the characteristics of an effective informational video?

**Assessment as Learning:** Are students able to actively listen to information provided orally and in video format and record 5-8 main points to share? Are students able to identify the characteristics of an effective social media page? Are they able to create a social media page containing essential biographical information and the critical criteria as developed by the class? Were students able to identify the characteristics of Jean Vanier that make him an agent of change? Where students able to write a formal essay that summarized the multiple philosophies studied under the theme of the dignity of the human person?

## Consolidation

Using probing questions if necessary, try to elicit the key ideas related to the Accessibility Awareness statements for this unit:

- Empathy for others and respect for the dignity of all persons are essential characteristics of an inclusive classroom, school and society.
- The biggest barriers to accessibility are attitude and lack of awareness.
- Students have an important voice and a valuable role to play in advocating for change in their classrooms, their schools and their community.

Do you think Jean Vanier has been an agent for change? Why or why not? How does Jean Vanier's work demonstrate the importance of respect for the dignity of all persons? What efforts has he made to challenge attitudinal barriers with respect to persons with developmental disabilities? Through learning about Jean Vanier, has your attitude towards people with developmental disabilities changed in any way? Are there attitudinal barriers that impact people with developmental disabilities in our classroom/school/community? In what ways do you think you, as students, could be agents of change in our school and our community?



## Teacher Reflection

Did I incorporate student friendly teaching strategies that support best practices that incorporate accessible methods and materials to reach as many students as possible?

Are the resources I selected appropriate for the grade level and varied to meet the needs of all my students?

If the resources I selected presented aspects of accessibility awareness, was the perspective strength based?

Did I use Differentiated Instruction and Assessment to meet the varying learning styles of my students?

Were all my students engaged at all steps of the lesson? How do I know?

Were my assessment procedures fair and equitable? Have I demonstrated best practices and met the individual needs of my students? Have I accommodated in fair and equitable ways for students with special learning needs?

How do I ensure that the concept of accessibility is not only discussed but embedded in all conversation topics taught in the classroom?

How could this lesson be improved in the future?

How can I improve my own teaching practice to better address accessibility awareness issues?

How do I help promote accessibility awareness across my school and school board and share the results with parents and colleagues?



## Appendix A

### Jean Vanier

#### **A Young Person who Followed his Heart; A Man who is Changing our World!**

Jean Vanier has made a difference in the lives of countless people around the world, those with disabilities, their families, and the many young people who have chosen to help in L'Arche communities.

Jean was born in Geneva, Switzerland, where his father was serving as a Canadian diplomat. In the 1930s, the family moved to England where Jean attended school until he was eleven.

Because of his father's job, Jean lived in many different countries. The family, which would include five children, moved often but, like their parents, they kept close ties with Canada and grew up speaking both French and English.

At the outbreak of World War II, Jean's father was posted to Paris where Jean attended a French school. In 1940, when the armies of Nazi Germany were poised to attack Paris, the Vanier family fled the city and headed south to the port of Bordeaux. They managed to escape on an over-crowded refugee boat bound for England. This was Jean's first glimpse or the appalling situation faced by many refugees.

The Vaniers returned home to Quebec where Jean attended school. War-time Europe had made a strong impression on him and he felt it was his duty to help out. He was just 13 when he followed his heart and secretly prepared an application to England's Royal Naval College, then asked his father's permission to go. His father's answer was simple; "I trust you," he said. It was a remarkable response considering that his son would have to cross the Atlantic during the full heat of the war when ships were being torpedoed, then start a new life far from home. Jean has often spoken of the importance to him of his father's trust at that time.

Jean became a naval cadet and an officer in the British Navy, and, later, the Canadian Navy. He was well known for his sense of fun and also for his deep concern for those serving under him. He knew about the suffering life can hold. For instance, at 17, on leave in Paris after the war, he accompanied his mother to the railway station to meet starving Holocaust survivors and was shocked at the cruel things human beings can do to each other. In his early 20s, he decided to leave the navy and return to Paris to begin university studies philosophy. He received his doctorate, then taught philosophy at St. Michael's College in Toronto.



Still searching for a career that would fulfill him both intellectually and spiritually, he visited his spiritual mentor, Father Thomas Philippe. At the time, Father Thomas was a chaplain at an institution for people with developmental disabilities near Paris. Jean was disturbed to see the dreadful conditions in which these people were living – locked away from the rest of society, and leading dismal, unproductive lives. “There must be a better way for them to live”, Father Thomas remarked. Jean was up to the challenge. Once again, he chose to follow his heart and took a risk. In 1964, he bought a small house in the French village of Trosly-Breuil and invited two men from an institution to share it with him. He called the house “L’Arche,” after Noah’s Ark.

Immediately, young people began to come from Canada and from other parts of the world to help and share life in this new kind of community. Jean knew that in giving of themselves, both the young people who came to help (the “assistants”) and those with disabilities would be enriched. In L’Arche, each person is recognized and helps to bring his or her gifts. Many assistants say that their experience in a L’Arche community has helped them grow personally and find meaning and direction in life.

Today, there are 136 L’Arche communities in 37 countries on six continents. Jean also co-founded an international support movement for families of people with disabilities. It is called Faith and Light and now includes over 1700 groups around the world.

Jean still lives in the first L’Arche community, in France. He travels abroad less today but continues to write and to give many talks and retreats, especially to young people. He often highlights the plight of those who are marginalized, including the homeless and refugees, and he encourages young people to become “artisans of peace” who work to create a world where everyone belongs and can contribute. He also continues to encourage existing and new communities where people who have intellectual disabilities and the assistants who come to help, share life together. Maclean’s magazine has called him “a Canadian who inspires the world.”

The source for this material on Jean Vanier is the “Study Guide” for the film, “Belonging: The Search for Acceptance” (Discussion Version). The film and Guide, both approved by Curriculum Services Canada, are available as a kit from L’Arche Canada. This excerpt is used with permission.

The newest website on Jean Vanier is the L’Arche Canada website: [www.larche.ca](http://www.larche.ca).



## **Appendix B**

### Quotes from Jean Vanier:

“Belonging is something that people desperately crave in the 21st century. “

“The more exclusive we draw our lines, the more isolated and detached from humanity we become.”

“Belly laughs are a way to create community, a movement from loneliness and brokenness to change.”

“People have a lost sense of belonging.”

“Power and strength can separate people.”

“Human beings are so fragile.”

“A sense of belonging cannot create injustice for others.”

“The heart belonging is to grow in compassion.”



**Appendix C**

EXIT CARD	
3	Identify three strategies to address attitudinal barriers. : : :
2	What two questions do you have regarding organizations or institutions that support barriers? : :
1	What is one way you will apply Vanier's philosophy to positively influence our school culture/community? .

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**Appendix D**

Jean Vanier: A Young Person who Followed his Heart; A Man who is Changing our World!

