News



Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities, is pictured in a March 11, 2015, photo. On Feb. 23, 2020, Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, revoked the Notre Dame Award conferred upon Vanier in 1994 after an investigation by L'Arche found credible allegations that Vanier sexually exploited six women. Vanier, who died in 2019, asked the women to keep their relations secret. (CNS/courtesy Jean Vanier Association)

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South Bend, Ind. — February 26, 2020

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Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities, is pictured in a March 11, 2015, photo. On Feb. 23, 2020, Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, revoked the Notre Dame Award conferred upon Vanier in 1994 after an investigation by L'Arche found credible allegations that Vanier sexually exploited six women. Vanier, who died in 2019, asked the women to keep their relations secret. (CNS/courtesy Jean Vanier Association)

The University of Notre Dame Feb. 23 revoked the Notre Dame Award that was conferred upon Jean Vanier in 1994 after the L'Arche organization he established found credible allegations that Vanier sexually exploited six women.

Vanier was the recipient of the third Notre Dame Award for worldwide humanitarian service. The university established the award in 1992 in conjunction with its 150th anniversary to honor "citizens of every nation whose religious faith has quickened learning, whose learning has engendered deeds, and whose deeds give witness to God's kingdom among us.''

"The L'Arche report was thorough, rigorous and fair," prompting Notre Dame's president, Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, "to revoke the award," said a Feb. 24 news release issued by the university.

Similarly, the release said, the 2014 Ford Family Notre Dame Award for International Development and Solidarity given to Vanier by the university's Kellogg Institute "was revoked today by the institute."

An internal investigative report made public Feb. 22 concluded that Vanier, founder of the ecumenical L'Arche communities that provide group homes and spiritual support for people with intellectual disabilities, used his status to have "manipulative" sexual relationships with at least six women.

The investigation, commissioned by the organization, gathered "sincere and consistent testimony covering the period 1970-2005" from six adults, none of whom had disabilities.

These women report Vanier initiated sexual relations with them, the report said. Vanier, who died in 2019 at age 90, asked the women to keep their relations secret.

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