



The Second Calling ***A novel inspired by the life and work of*** ***Jean Vanier***

By Hans S. Reinders

An exploration through a gentle fictional narrative of Jean Vanier's ground-breaking work and the ministry of L'Arche

'Our goal is to live together celebrating the lives that God has given us to live.'

Ramón Jimenez, founder of The House of Bethany, summing up the purpose of their community

In 2015, Jean Vanier was awarded the Templeton Prize for his work in setting up and leading the ministry of L'Arche, a worldwide network of communities in which people with and without intellectual disabilities live together. *The Second Calling* was written by Hans S. Reinders – Emeritus Professor of Ethics at the Free University of Amsterdam, and internationally renowned for his work on theology and disability – after Jean invited him to write a book which would introduce the work of L'Arche to a wider audience.

Reinders' novel takes us to the beautiful Spanish countryside near Seville, where a young American named Jonathan has come to 'find his own way' at The House of Bethany, a small community of mentally and physically disabled people living together with carers and supporters. Here he meets a host of colourful characters, all 'battered souls' in different ways: Lucie, a 'flittering bird', without speech and with only very limited understanding; Fernando, a young man whose abandonment by his father left him without speech; Joaquin, a blind boy who was found living alone in the streets of Seville; the physically disfigured but resolutely proud Alfredo; the eager-to-please wheelchair-bound Sofia; gentle, lumbering Alonso; and the community's founder Ramón, whose understanding of what the House of Bethany really means only becomes apparent when he is forced to re-evaluate his own life.

Together, Jonathan and the members of the community work alongside each other and discover that they actually have much in common, including the pressure of parental expectations and the desire to prove themselves. As the residents continue their search for understanding, acceptance, dignity and purpose, relationships are built amidst the tears and tensions of daily life. But the stream of volunteers from around the world includes someone who will test The House of Bethany to its limits, and threaten its very core...

In exploring the distinctiveness of L'Arche as a spiritual community grounded in the recognition of the shared vulnerability of human beings, this beautifully-written novel will inspire and entertain the reader, while prompting us gently to think more deeply about how we view others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Hans S. Reinders is Professor of Ethics and Disability at the Free University of Amsterdam and is Chair of the European Society for the Study of Theology and Disability.

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