

Dear Friends and Family,

In this time of global economic recession I wish you a renewed sense of community this year – a community that you belong to and can rely on in the times when you are in need.

Writing to you I am listening, in the background, to a radio programme concerned with the global financial crisis and I am struck by how often the word confidence is spoken. I am reading a book at the moment about confidence tricksters and it occurs to me that ‘the economy’ is just one big confidence trick. It exists only in our words and our confidence in those words. When we hear that the economy is thriving we feel secure and one whisper that it is weakening can just as easily send the world into a tail spin!!! For a long time we have based our security on an illusion – an illusion created with words, distraction and sleight of hand.

Last Summer, in a church in West Kerry I was struck by the Irish phrase - *‘Mo Sheasamb ort a Íosa’*. In conversational English it means – ‘Jesus, I depend on you’ but I much prefer the literal translation – *‘Jesus, you are the place of my standing’*. The full saying is - *‘mo sheasamb ort lá na coise tinne’* which is ***‘you are the place of my standing on the days when my feet are sore’***.

I think that’s a much more beautiful way of speaking confidence than the way we speak it these days. For example instead of saying that we have lost confidence in the market we could say – **‘the market is not the place of my standing on the days when my feet are sore’**. Then it is simply stating the obvious – of course the economy could never give us real security. All the money in the world can’t give me what I need on the days when life seems like a burden too heavy to bear and my feet are too tired to carry me forward. Those are the times when I need people I can count on – family, friends and neighbours - relationships that have stood the test of time. The **people we can count on** are the very ground of our being – real, solid and dependable whereas the stuff we can count is only part of the illusion of security that we have been tricked into believing in recent years.

Speaking in economic terms – if we are looking for a place to invest the resources of our lives why not invest in our local communities? Not unlike the market the return will reflect the level of risk we are prepared to take. Human relationships are a high risk, high reward investment if we are willing to invest in the long term and not look for quick fixes. Irrespective of our status or circumstances, most of us need and long for a community where we belong, where we matter, where we are known, where we can be weak and strong, where we don’t have to be alone and where we can grow old in the company of those who know and love us.

If the economy can be brought down by spreading fear, the opposite is true for community – it is built by spreading ‘LOVE’. I declare that 2009 is our year of community and I invite you, wherever you are, into that possibility. We will collaborate and invest and multiply our gifts to build an economy of communion that is sustainable and resilient. We will be inspired by a vision of community instead of allowing ourselves to be blinded by an illusion of individual wellbeing and together we will create a future that we can have real confidence in.

Love,

Maria.

## **In Other L'Arche News:**

We'd like to extend a big thanks to everyone who supported us with their gifts, time and love over Christmas. It was a lovely time for us all with friends and family and lots of cheer. Your generosity and kindness made it a wonderful holiday for us all!

Our AGM was a huge success with 57 people in attendance! Thank you all for being there and making it such a special event.

Baby Aodh is growing, growing, growing. He now weighs in at 11 lbs and he is fascinated with the world around him and has lots of smiles for his brother, sister and papa. His mama is still waiting!!!

Sylvia, one of our founding assistants, who is now married to Jirka and living in Prague, is expecting a baby! The baby is due in March. We will keep you updated!

Faythe has been volunteering with 6<sup>th</sup> form students, teaching with a team about breaking down prejudices and stereotypes. If you'd be interested to learn more about this check out [www.forgivenesseducation.org](http://www.forgivenesseducation.org)

We owe congratulations to Sister Mary of the Sisters of Sion for celebrating her Golden Jubilee on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. We are all blessed to have you, Sister Mary!

Our very own assistant is becoming famous before our very eyes! A big congrats is due to Neil and his band, the Lowly Knights as they will be on tour with Snow Patrol for a few dates in the coming months! Sadly for us that doesn't mean a free pass into the gigs.

## **Prayer Requests:**

The office is buzzing as we are preparing for an inspection by the RQIA on 6<sup>th</sup> of February. Please keep us in your prayers as we are all working flat out.

Mary Egan has been in touch and is happy and well. She sends a warm hello to all! She is currently learning the value of 'how to be' instead of 'what to do' in front of some terrible misery and suffering. Our prayers are with them all in Brazil.

Our condolences go to the friends and family of John Morrow who was and is a dear friend to our community. He passed away on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Keep them in your prayers.

The end of January will be a bittersweet time for us at L'Arche. We are saying goodbye to our beloved Jim Gibney, who has served faithfully in our office for over 6 years.. Jim and Murray were the dream-team that made this office run for so many years. They leave very large shoes to fill for Lesley and Henri, but we believe they are the ladies to do it! Words cannot express our thanks and gratitude to Jim for his years of service and friendship. Jim will be moving on to his post as skilled grandfather, DIY man, and gardening expert. Jim, you will be missed!