



EDMUND RICE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE,
FREMANTLE

Registration Form

Social Justice and Spirituality Retreat

Registration and accompanying payment must be received at least three days prior to Retreat commencement. Participant numbers are strictly limited to 50 and will be allocated in the order in which payment is received.

Please Print:

Full Name: _____

Full Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email Address: _____

Name of Organisation: _____

Do you have any food allergies, or any other dietary needs?

I enclose payment of \$ for the Retreat (cheque or money order). Those requesting a 50% concession should post a photocopy of a current concession card with this payment.

Enquiries to: Susannah McAlwey, ERISJ Major Events Coordinator, telephone (08) 9432 2409 or email majorevents@erisj.org.au

Download the flyer for our companion event, A Spirituality of Human Dignity, Monday 8 September 2008 2:00pm – 8:00 pm, at www.erisj.org.au



EDMUND RICE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE,
FREMANTLE

Social Justice and Spirituality Retreat

24 High Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

Wednesday 10—Sunday 14 September 2008

The Edmund Rice Institute for Social Justice, Fremantle has identified building the skills, insights and resilience of SJ supporters as a major focus. One dimension of this is a rich inner life. We exist for people of all faiths and none. This event will appeal mainly (although not exclusively) to Christians. This 5-day non-residential retreat draws on the spirituality and lived experience of L'Arche (www.larche.org.au) and the Gospels.





Retreat Leaders:

Eileen Glass AM cofounded L'Arche Australia in 1977, and was its national leader from 1981-1985. She came to L'Arche with a background in secondary teaching. Eileen has been a key figure in L'Arche for the past twenty-five years, holding numerous leadership positions in Australia and internationally. Between 1992-2001, she was L'Arche Coordinator for Asia and the West Pacific. Eileen trained as a Spiritual Director in 1991, and has since

provided retreats around the world to laypeople, clergy and religious orders. Since 1993, she has been a supervisor of Spiritual Director trainees through the Masters of Theology program at the Australian National University, Canberra. She received a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission award in 1990, was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1996, and continues today to lead retreats and provide formation and spiritual direction.

John Coleman is the national leader (Regional Coordinator) of L'Arche Australia and was Community Leader of L'Arche Hobart for seven years. John has been part of numerous retreat teams, and regularly leads days of formation. He is also a singer-songwriter whose four CDs (fundraisers for the work of L'Arche Australia) are used in L'Arche communities and in Churches around the world. John has a teaching degree, majoring in History, and a background in secondary teaching. Prior to discovering L'Arche, he worked as a professional musician.

In both his secular and religious song-writing, themes of social justice/injustice, dignity, community and compassion recur. In sharing the leadership of the retreat, John will interweave his many L'Arche-inspired songs.



Social Justice and Spirituality Retreat

When: Wednesday 10 - Sunday 14 September, 2008

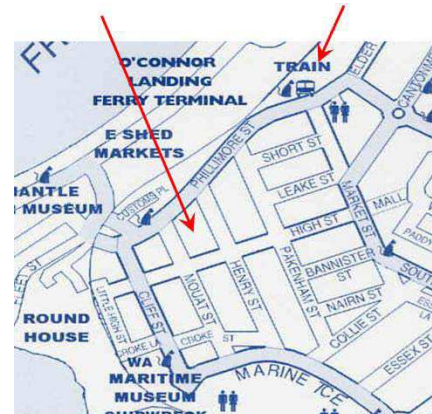
Where: Edmund Rice Institute for Social Justice, Fremantle
24 High Street, Fremantle

Times: 9:15 - 5:00 pm daily

The Retreat concludes with a Closing Dinner (catered in), yarns and live music from 6-8:30pm on Sunday 14 September.

Price: \$495 (half-price for students and concession card holders)

This includes morning and afternoon tea each day, and the Closing Dinner.



FINDING US: We are 2 blocks from the Indian Ocean (between Henry and Mouat Streets), and just 5 minutes' walk (700 m) from Fremantle Train Station.

You can access All-Day Parking for \$5.00 in Little Cliff Street.



Why this Retreat (continued)?

This retreat emerges from our analysis that we need to address deficits that routinely confront social justice work. One such deficit is insufficient inner life, resilience and robustness as to survive - even thrive - given the inherent difficulties of this work. Providing social justice supporters with tools for the journey is one of the priority tasks that we have set ourselves. L'Arche provides a remarkable conduit to 'psychic integration', and to 'be the change you want to see'. This retreat will provide spiritual sustenance for this journey, and that of social justice generally.



L'Arche is ecumenical; consider but two examples. One of the most powerful accounts of L'Arche's 2005 International Federation gathering in Assisi (Italy) was penned by Anglican Bishop of Perth Roger Herft. (See p. 2-3 of the November 2005 newsletter *News From L'Arche Australia*, www.larche.org.au). Bishop Herft was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as the worldwide Anglican

representative to L'Arche. The 2005 Social Justice Statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops focused upon social justice in everyday life, nominating several outstanding examples from around the globe, including Vanier/ L'Arche. (Download free at www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au.)

David Freeman
ERISJ Director

Daily Format: Most retreats are residential - to get people out of their daily world to somewhere quiet. We are experimenting with something different, a 'retreat in daily life'. For the past 300 years, an ever-increasing percentage of the world's population live in cities. If spirituality is to be alive for people, ways need to be found by which ordinary people can 'do' spiritual development with vitality, and in cities. The idea here is vaguely similar to the 'Politics in the Pub' model that finds ways to 'do' the democratic ideal of public deliberation in ordinary places.

Within several blocks of 24 High St, one encounters urban life, numerous eateries, a University, the Indian Ocean at Bathers' Beach, and The Esplanade's expanse of parkland. The dynamic of the retreat will be to (literally) 'retreat' from urban life only to re-engage with it each day. We'll go to local eateries for lunch (or BYO), be sent off individually to meditate while walking the beach or parkland, and go to and from our residence each morning and evening, just as one might in a regular job. Morning and afternoon tea is provided at the Institute. The Fremantle train station is 5 minutes walk from the Institute.

Teachers Please Note:

The Catholic Education Office of WA has accredited this retreat as in-service training that "will fulfill 15 hours toward the faith formation component of ongoing renewal for those who hold an Accreditation certificate" with the CEO.



Why this Retreat?

Arguably the two greatest jewels of the Christian tradition are (a) not widely understood, and (b) just might help to transform the world if integrated. These jewels are the Churches' insights into social justice, and contemplative traditions of stillness, prayer and discernment developed over centuries by (for example) Old Testament prophets, the desert mystics and monastic techniques since the Middle Ages. The ardours of social justice work mean that 'burnout' is common. A core purpose of the ERCSJ's annual 5-day *Spirituality and Social Justice Retreat* is to provide creative fusions of social justice and spiritual development.

Each year, the ERISJ's *Social Justice and Spirituality Retreat* will utilise the insights and techniques of a particular spiritual tradition, led by that tradition's finest spiritual directors. This ERISJ retreat is based on the spirituality of 'L'Arche' (French for 'The Ark'). L'Arche was founded in 1964 by the French-Canadian Jean Vanier. It provides a live-in, faith-based community for people with an intellectual disability and others who share life together. Today, L'Arche is an international network of around 130 such communities, across 30 countries. It has become a movement, a place of spiritual formation, and a highly-regarded model of how to respond to people with disabilities.

L'Arche's motto is *changing the world one heart at a time*. It provides an equally life-changing experience for the members with disabilities and the assistants required to keep a house running. One of the most striking qualities that many people with intellectual disability possess is an enjoyment of, and honesty about, relationship building. Being involved in L'Arche provides an intensely satisfying experience of service learning, knowing that one's work supports a viable alternative to institutionalisation.



Why this Retreat (continued)?

One of the remarkable features of L'Arche is what people with a disability teach the rest of us. Many 'normal' people, for example, experience anxiety about various aspects of themselves; they grapple for self-acceptance and self-love. In L'Arche, they enter a world in which they are loved absolutely, unconditionally and just as they are - and it changes them. They start to regard their lifelong anxiety about this or that as petty, a waste of time and energy. They begin to perceive imperfection differently, and learn to relax around imperfection in all its forms, including their own. They discover that all humans can be lovable just as they are, and ...gradually the world looks a little bit different. L'Arche assistants gradually discover and accept their own brokenness, and come to regard the cult of perfection as 'barking up the wrong tree' - and actually narcissistic, despite seemingly being hard on oneself. They feel called to live more simply, and their former anxieties evaporate. L'Arche volunteers inevitably remark that they learned, and were given back much more, than they ever gave.

It's probably fair to say that an unintended consequence of plenty of social justice and Church work alike allows practitioners to slide in and out of ego and ambition. We further delude ourselves by repackaging this as high principle. The experience of L'Arche punctures such illusions, calling people to 'the way of smallness' and the 'way of the heart'. Here we confront the paradox that 'putting on littleness' may enhance rather than rob your dignity. L'Arche communicates the precise opposite of the worldly anticipation that the sensation of dignity and success requires us to subtract these things from others to experience them ourselves.