

HANDICAPPED AS COMPLETE PEOPLE

by John Moore

On the evening of Nov. 8 at the Chaplaincy Centre of the U.P.E.I. campus, there was a twilight retreat at which Art Laffin spoke.

Art Laffin is a former student of U.P.E.I. who is well known as a basketball star. He is a devoted Christian. Laffin has recently been in Europe and in his talk he shared with the students assembled some of the things he saw and experienced there.

He talked specifically about two Christian communities which he visited in France. They are L'Arche and Tai

L'Arche is a community founded by the Canadian Jean Vanier. It is centred around the mentally handicapped, who Jean Vanier calls the wounded.

Art worked and lived in the community of L'Arche. He described how he worked with four handicapped people, two men and two women, on gardening chores. He explained how the object in L'Arche is not for each person to strive for great efficiency, but for each person to strive to do what he can.

Art talked about how we are all handicapped. We all need help from others. Therefore, when you work at a place like L'Arche, you don't just give to the handicapped, you let them give to you. To illustrate this, he explained how he was very embarrassed when a man at L'Arche walked up to him and hugged him. He was put off at first by this, but over time he grew to understand the man.

Art explained some of the things he learned from the handicapped. He talked about the importance of patience, kindness, and the other simple things which we can give to another person.

Perhaps the most important thing Laffin talked about concerning L'Arche was that we must learn to see the handicapped as complete people. Whether a person

has trouble adding ten and ten, or whether he has stopped talking because he has been rejected by the world, makes no difference. We must accept people not for what they do, but for what they are. To bring everything together, Art explained how the mentally retarded,

though they may be handicapped in one way, are especially valuable because they show us a special kind of love, their own unique love.

The other place that Art visited in France was Taize. Taize is a Protestant Monastery. It is also an ecumenical Christian community, a gathering place for Christian youth from all over the world.

It was not always this type of gathering place. It became this in the late sixties, when some of the youth of France, out of disillusionment with life in general, flocked to the monks of Taize. They talked with the monks, and it helped them to make some sense out of life.

Ever since it has been a spiritual mecca for youth of the world. It is visited by young people who are searching, trying to grasp a direction in their lives.

Laffin also spoke in general terms about living a Christian life. It is hard to be a Christian these days, he explained. There is a temptation to give in to easy escapes, like drugs, booze and sex.

But he said that we need to listen to what we are being called to in our lives as Christians. Everyone has a gift, everyone has something to give to others. We must discover what it is that we have to give, and then give it.

To conclude, Art gave some encouragement to those students present at the retreat. He told us that it is important that we do form a Christian community on the campus. This would help those who are uncertain in their



ART LAFFIN AS SISTER MARY ELEPHANT


faith (all of us), and would allow those who are tempted to believe to have a place to go to talk about it.

All the students present enjoyed Art's talk, as was expressed when Brian Walsh, president of the Act Continuation Committee, thanked him by saying that everything Art had said had had a lot of meaning for him and the other students assembled.

I personally got a lot

out of Art's talk. He is a man who obviously has a lot of faith, and he's the kind of person who's going to do something about it. He expressed this several times during his talk when he said that a Christian should not be satisfied just to believe, but should show it in his life.


The gathering was well attended by about 40 people. We hope there will be more activities of this kind at the new Chaplaincy Centre.



WHAT:
STAR WAR'S PARTY...

WHERE: WOOKIE WOOM
{MAIN LOUNGE-MARION HALL}

WHY:
FOR THE HELL OF IT...

STAR WARS 

WHEN: STAR DATE, THURSDAY, NOV. 10
AT 2100 HOURS OR 2130 HOURS

WHO BY: THE SIX PACK OF SPRITELY 7-UPS

COME OR YOU MAY RUN THE RISK OF BEING STRUCK BY THE FORCE.