



**THE
CATECHIST**

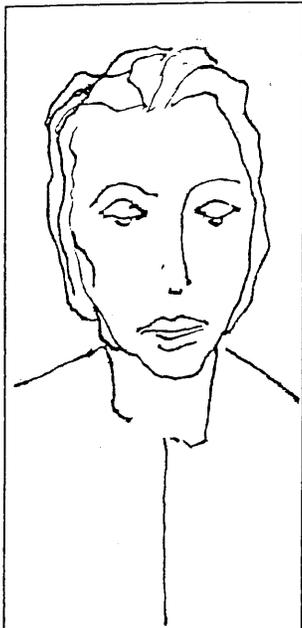
As part of the celebration for the Year of Faith, Pope Francis earmarked Sunday September 29, 2013 as the day for Catechists. This is part of his homily for the day:

So as I look out at you, I think: Who are these catechists? They are people who keep the memory of God alive; they keep it alive in themselves and they are able to revive it in others. This is something beautiful: to remember God, like the Virgin Mary, who sees God's wondrous works in her life but doesn't think about honor, prestige or wealth; she doesn't become self-absorbed. Instead, after receiving the message of the angel concerning the Son of God, what does she do? She sets out, she goes to assist her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. And the first thing she does upon meeting Elizabeth is to recall God's work, God's fidelity, in her own life, in the history of her people, in our history. "My soul magnifies the Lord...For he has looked on the lowliness of his servant...His mercy is from generation to generation." (Luke 1, 46, 48, 50) Mary remembers God.

This canticle of Mary also contains the remembrance of her personal history. God's history with her, her own experience of faith. And this is true too for each one of us and for every Christian: faith contains our own memory of God's history with us, the memory of our encountering God who always takes the first step, who creates, saves and transforms us. Faith is remembrance of his word which warms our heart and of his saving work which gives life, purifies us, cares for and nourishes us. A catechist is a Christian who puts this remembrance at the service of proclamation, not to seem important, not to talk about himself or herself, but to talk about God, about his love and his fidelity. To talk about and to pass down all that God has revealed, his teaching in its totality, neither trimming it down nor adding on to it. ...

Saint Paul recommends one thing in particular to his disciple and co-worker Timothy: remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead who I proclaim and for whom I suffer. (2 Tim. 2:8-9) The apostle can say this because he too remembered Christ, who called him when he was persecuting Christians, who touched him and transformed him by his grace.

The catechist then is a Christian who is mindful of God, who is guided by the memory of God in his or her entire life and who is able to awaken that memory in the hearts of others. This is not easy! It engages our whole existence! What is the catechism itself, if not the memory of God, the memory of his works in history and his drawing near to us in Christ present in his Word, in the Sacraments, in his Church, in his love? Dear catechists, I ask you: Are we in fact the memory of



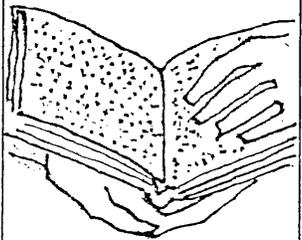
God? Are we really like sentinels who awaken in others the memory of God which warms the heart?

“Woe to the complacent in Zion!” says the prophet. (Amos 6:1,4) What must we do in order not to be “complacent” - people who find the security in themselves and in material things - but men and women of the memory of God? In the second reading, Saint Paul, one more writing to Timothy, gives some indication which can also be guideposts for us in our work as catechists: pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness (1 Tim 6:11)

Catechists are men and women of the memory of God if they have a constant, living relationship with him and with their neighbor; if they are men and women of faith who truly trust God and put their security in him; if they are men and women of charity, love, who see others as brothers and sisters; if they are men and women of endurance and perseverance, able to face difficulties, trials and failures with serenity and hope in the Lord; if they are gentle, capable of understanding and mercy. Let us ask the Lord that we may all be men and women who keep the memory of God alive in ourselves and are able to awaken it in the hearts of others.

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There is a young lad with autism who regularly attends Mass. Just as we are about to make a response he responds in his own particular way. When he does, I smile and say a quiet ‘thank you.’ It reminds me that the church is for all people. As Dough O’Shea, OP states in [wwwgoodnews.ic](http://www.goodnews.ie) for the 28th Sunday:



A Christian society that is deaf to the outsider and that marginalizes some of its own, can hardly be described as Christian. A Christian community of any kind is not a group of likeminded people who confirm one another in their narrowness, but a group that reaches out to those whose lives are in chaos, whose voices are not heard, whose presence is not welcomed.

We in Spred form small Christian communities of faith and friendship with the most vulnerable in our society, those who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. We create a beautiful environment where we share our lives and we share our faith. Pope John Paul II has stated that every baptized person has the right to receive from the church the instruction and education enabling him or her to live a truly Christian life.

In Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland we read:

Catechesis is central to the life and mission of the Church, offering instruction and formation in the faith and bringing members of the Christian community to maturity in that faith...

The term ‘catechesis’ has been used to signify all that the Christian community undertakes, verbally and non-verbally, to educate one another in the Christian faith. Catechesis aims to make our Christian faith become ‘living, conscious, and active.’ It seeks to enable the Word of God to enliven us at our deepest levels... The aim of catechesis is to help the Christian to reach spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic maturity. The catechetical endeavor draws the person into a deeper understanding, celebration and participation in the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, opening up for us new life in the Holy Spirit as children of

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God our Father in the community of the Church.

Catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith. It presupposes some level of Christian faith, of initiation or continuing commitment to a community of believers, particularly one's parish community, and an attempt to live out faith in life. It suggests that the person has found a home in the Church and sees himself or herself as a member of the Body of Christ, united with Christ.

"The heart of catechesis is the heart of the catechist."

(Daniel O'Leary, Begin with the Heart.)

Patricia Lennon
Spred, Diocese of Armagh, N.Ireland

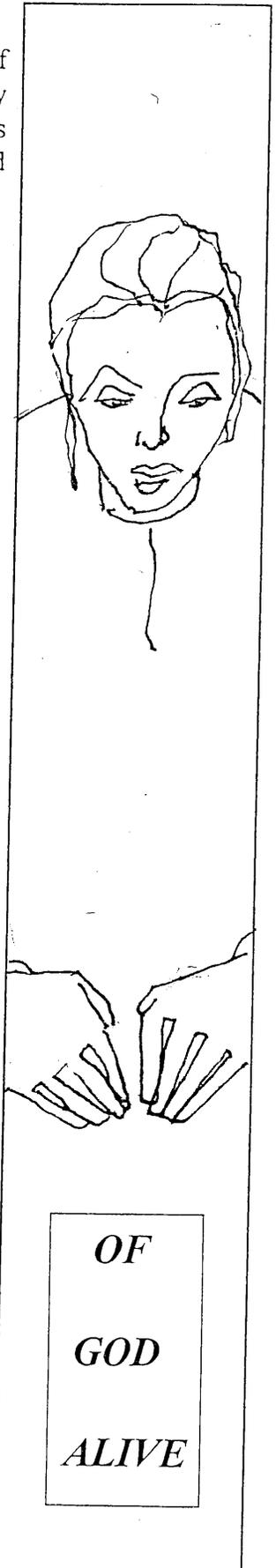
This week I was invited to attend a Spred Family Mass in one of the local parishes in Glasgow, Scotland and afterward to bless their new Spred Centre. Preparing for this I was very struck by some words from the official blessing of a Catechetical building:

"May the Word of God
always echo from these walls."

God's Word is central to every Spred gathering. The Word is enthroned in our celebration room, surrounded by fresh flowers and a candle and revered by the way the Leader Catechist holds the Word of God and reads from it. The Word echoes again and again from the walls to our hearts. "Christ is present in His Word since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read." This quotation from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1964) is another reminder that Jesus is truly in our midst as we gather for a Spred session and emphasises why we place such importance on the environment. It speaks of sacredness, of holiness, a place where we encounter God. This is holy ground for God is truly present. Those who read and those who listen are chosen to echo Christ.

The parish which invests in this kind of sacred space has already acknowledged that those with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not strangers but parishioners. It is recognized that those involved in education in faith need a zone of beauty, a space that will mediate relationships. It knows that when we enter a loving space, we are more loving; where we use beautiful objects, we become beautiful as we relate to them: where we listen to beautiful music, we experience inner and outer harmony. We congratulate the parish of Immaculate Conception in Glasgow for such insight.

Sr. Agnes Nelson
Spred, Diocese of Glasgow Scotland



SPRED CALENDAR

Spred Training

Introduction to Spred, English and Spanish

March 1, 8, 15 1:00 to 6:00 pm

Spred Center 30th and Lowe 312-842-1039

Role Orientation, English and Spanish

March 29, April 5, 1:00 to 6:00 pm

Spred Center 30th and Lowe 312-842-1039

Evening of Enrichment for Core Team

Friday, January 10, 2014

Spred Center 30th and Lowe

7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Contact: Elizabeth Sivek 312-842-1039 ext. 13

Workshop for Parish/Church Chairpersons

Wednesday January 29, 2014

Spred Center 30th and Lowe

7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Contact: Elizabeth Sivek 312-842-1039 ext. 13

Helper Catechist Training

St. Francis de Sales Spred Center

Sat. Feb. 8, 11:00- 4:00 Lake Zurich South of Rt 22

135 S. Buesching Rd. 2nd floor

Spred Center, 2956 South Lowe Ave

Sat. Feb. 1, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Spanish: Eva and Ramiro Hernandez

English: Eileen Rose, Karen Calarco,

Mary Ann Walke

Observation

6-10 Monday 6pm Feb. 10, 24, Mar. 10, 24 Ap. 28

11-16 Tuesday 7pm Feb. 11, 25, Mar. 25, Ap. 29

17-21 Tuesday 7pm Feb. 11, 25, Mar. 25, Ap. 29

22+ Monday 7pm Feb. 10, 24, Mar. 24, Ap. 28

Spring Dinner Dance April 27 6pm-10pm Drury Lane

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Spred Family Liturgies

2956 South Lowe Chicago 11:00 a.m. 312-842-1039

Feb. 2, Mar. 2, April 6, May 4

Visit us at our new website:

www.spred-chicago.org