



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago



SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616

312-842-1039 www.spred-chicago.org

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**PREPAR
ATION**

A pastor, a director of religious education, or a parent of a person with developmental or intellectual disabilities may call the Spred office to inquire about the program. A Spred parish chairperson from a neighboring parish may call upon the pastor to see if he is open to having Spred in his parish based on the waiting list we have, thanks to the Spring Planning Meetings. At these meetings the parish chairpersons become aware of the needs of the local area and try to make plans to respond to the requests of families.

These are the factors that begin a process called animation. The process begins with one person opening the door at a parish. Then we can move ahead with animation. Animation as it relates to Spred has nothing to do with the world of Disney. Animation in Spred means to give spirit and support; to encourage; to give vigor, vitality and zest to; to move to action in a parish to develop a ministry called, Spred - special religious development.

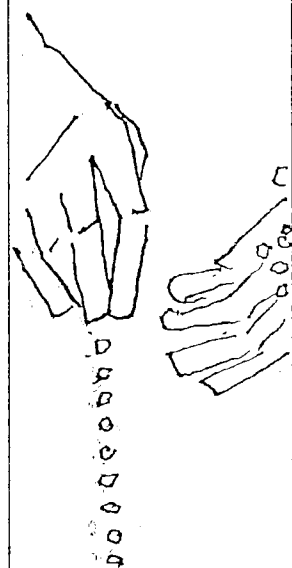
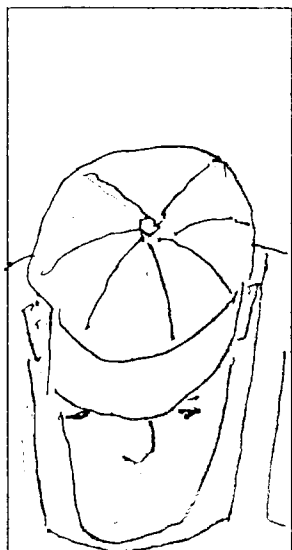
Our efforts do not come to fruition quickly. It is a process that takes time. It is our firm belief that the process is guided by the Holy Spirit who gathers people to form a small community of faith within a parish's larger community of faith. How long will the process go on? One cannot say: a year, two years or perhaps five years? Who is counting? If we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, time does not matter. What does matter is that one day a Spred community of faith will grace the parish and welcome people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, be they children, teens, young adults or adults.

We animate to gather families who have loved ones with disabilities who are young to those who are well into their eighties, to affirm that faith and development in faith is possible. The parish chairperson, the pastor's representative, finds families on an on-going basis as people move into and out of parishes continually.

We animate also to invite adult men and women to become catechists. Through parish bulletins and newspaper articles, volunteers are found and encouraged. At some point a Spred catechist may speak at Masses to introduce Spred to the assembly and to ask for help. A Spred community of faith has eight adults as active members.

The Spred community religious worker accompanies these volunteers on a monthly basis as they grow in their appreciation of one another, the Spred Method Vivre and the seven standards.

This process is akin to the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) process. The RCIA



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process usually begins in a parish in September and culminates on Holy Saturday when the elect receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Communion). The process involves a journey of walking with people every week as a catechist or sponsor. RCIA is about listening to Scripture, sharing stories from life experiences, asking questions about our faith, sharing food and drink, and becoming a small community through it all.

In many ways, the animation process in Spred corresponds to the period of evangelization or pre-catechumenate in the RCIA process. The period of evangelization is a period in which those who are not yet Christian begin to familiarize themselves with the faith. During this time, the inquirers or sympathizers are introduced to the Gospel and have the opportunity to meet other individuals and families. It is a period for them to come to better understand the faith and to determine if they feel drawn into God's love. There is no formal structure to this period and there is no particular time frame for a person to experience an initial conversion. It is really a time for the inquirer to ask questions and to allow their hearts to be opened by the Holy Spirit. It is a time for the inquirer to become familiar with the faith and to discern this calling to the faith. During this process, there are always people available to accompany the person, introduce the Gospel, and to assist with the questions the person may have.

Like the period of evangelization, the animation period is a time of inquiry. It is a time for those who might be interested in being a Spred catechist to become more familiar with the Spred ministry. It is a time to discern whether they feel called to Spred. It is a time to observe and to get to know others in Spred. There is no structure to the animation process. There is not a set time period for the animation phase. The community religious worker and local chairpersons as well as other Spred catechists continue to meet with those who are interested in discerning their being in Spred. While programs usually have a set structure with a particular start and end time; the process of animation is ongoing. It is never limited by time.

Some candidates do not complete the journey. They really don't feel called to continue. Others feel the need for more time; and so continue for another year in the RCIA. Being afraid of the unknown stops some from continuing the journey. They simply say, "not yet."

We respect that process. In Spred potential volunteers are invited to ask questions. We use handouts familiarizing them with our program. We invite them to take another step which is to observe a Spred session at the Spred Center in Chicago or one of the two regional centers: Queen of Angels on the north side of Chicago or St. Francis de Sales in Lake Zurich. Those still interested continue to come to a monthly Spred Information Gathering at their parish. They choose to continue the process of discovery or are ready to make a decision. It is their choice. We thank them for the time given to find out more about the details. We do ask if they would help us spread the word and invite others to our monthly gathering.

We trust the power of the Holy Spirit who calls us, gathers us, and tugs at our hearts. This is a slow process because there are barriers to overcome. Barriers such as: "Do I have the time to make this commitment? Can I be present for 24 sessions from September to May?"

“How do I become comfortable with people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities? I don’t have any experience!”

People contemplating joining Spred are looking into the unfamiliar. What is a community of faith? What does that mean? How could people with disabilities grow in faith? How does one communicate with someone who is non-verbal? Why eight catechists? What is expected of a Spred catechist?

In Spred as in RCIA we grow in relationship with one another and with the Lord. The processes have a different goal but each involves opening self to others through stories from our life experiences. This sharing helps one to become known and to open up to the gift of friendship with others.

What hampers our efforts is when a pastor stops the process. He may feel that it is going on too long and there might not be any interest. What he is forgetting is that it is a process and the real work is allowing the Holy Spirit to touch peoples’ hearts. People need time to see why this ministry is important for the parish. People need time to become comfortable with others including our friends with disabilities. People are busy and sometimes they wait until they are ready which could be a year or more after we begin the animation process in a parish.

But the fruits of our efforts are found in the birth of a strong Spred community of faith whose people take the training to know more of the Method Vivre and the seven Spred Standards. What a blessing this ministry will be to their parish. Not only does Spred prepare catechists through training; but also supports a parish Spred community of faith to give leadership for a liturgy that welcomes families of those with special needs in the area at a regular weekend parish Mass. At this Mass, the Spred catechists, friends with disabilities, and families give witness to the larger parish community of faith that they believe.

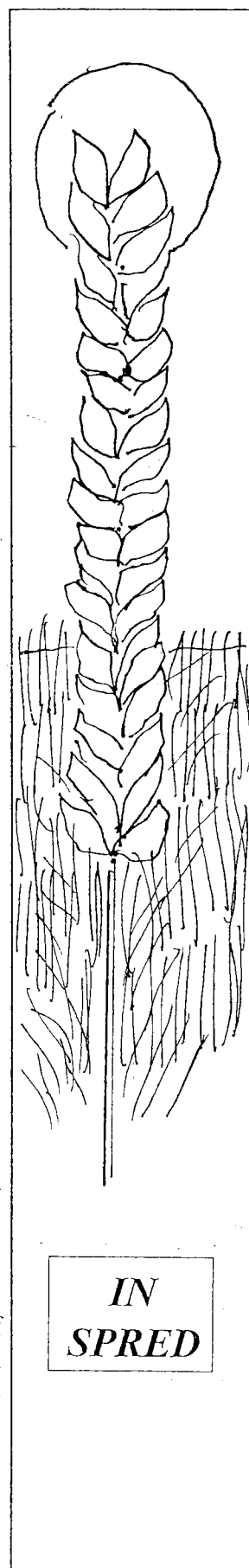
Spred parish chairpersons continue the animation process when they seek to find families with special needs members of any age to welcome them to Spred. They work to identify volunteers who are apt to become catechists and they continue their work when they need more catechists over time.

The Spred parish chairpersons and fellow catechists are invited to do this with zeal and joy. Their Spred session will nurture them and renew their spirits to go forth and evangelize their own parishioners.

Pope Francis writes: “Since this Exhortation is addressed to members of the Catholic Church, I want to say with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his work, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must translate into a privileged and preferential religious care.”*

Joe Quane and Elizabeth Sivek
Spred-Chicago

*The Joy of the Gospel, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, #200, USCCB, 2013



SPRED CALENDAR

Mamre Autumn Dinner Dance Fundraiser

Saturday Nov. 11, 2017

Crystal Sky Banquets, McCook, IL

Spred Family Liturgies

2956 So Lowe Chicago 11:00 am 3120842-1039

Nov.5, Dec.3, Feb. 4, Mar.4, April 8, May 6

Visit our website: www.spred-chicago.org

Observation

6-10 6:00 p.m. Monday Nov.13, 27, Dec.11

11-16 7:00 p.m. Tuesday Nov. 14, 28, Dec.12

22+ 7:00 p.m. Monday Nov.13, 27, Dec. 11

Helper Catechist Training

Spanish, Nov. 4, 1:00 to 6:00 Spred Center, Lowe Ave

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