



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago

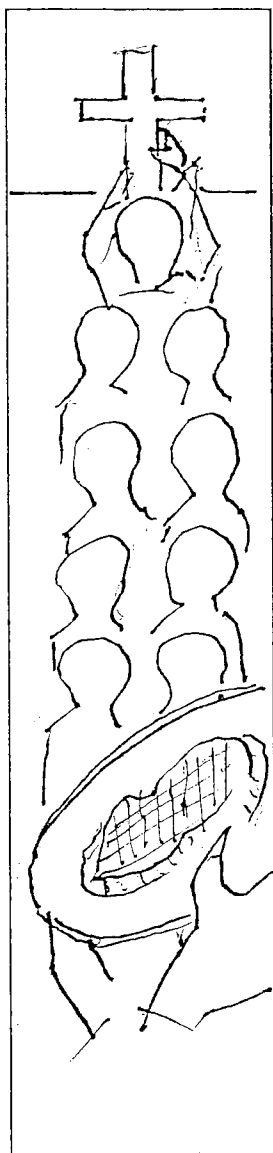


SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616  
312-842-1039 [www.spred-chicago.org](http://www.spred-chicago.org)

May 2018

Volume 94 Number 5



## LITURGIES

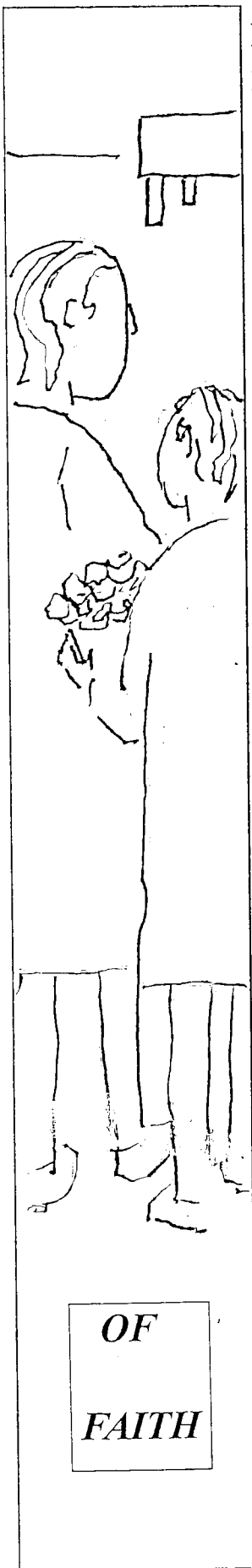
This is the time of the year when feedback flows into the Chicago Spred Center. A great deal comes from all those who come to spring Spred training. This spring we heard from teams coming for training from 26 parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago, one from the Archdiocese of Toronto, Canada and one from Los Angeles, California. We also receive feedback from all the teams who come to observe Spred sessions to improve their own skills and to develop new insights. On our part as the team for the Archdiocese of Chicago, we sift through the wonderful bits of feedback to see issues more clearly and to reflect on them.

The most consistent feedback this year has been from the experiences of liturgy with our friends with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Some families cross state lines into Illinois so that the whole family can be at a Sunday mass together. They arrive after hours of travel to be at a Spred family liturgy.

From the beginning of Spred, we have worked to have our friends be integrated into the regular parish Sunday liturgy. With time we became aware that we needed to consider the needs of whole families. They needed to feel more than tolerated and they did not need to be asked to leave during liturgies. Something more was needed.

We watched liturgies taking place in Spanish and Polish languages as a matter of course. The deaf and hearing impaired community was sensitive to offering liturgies with sign language. What was the common element? Those who could have been marginalized were being considered to be full members of the assembly, not only to be passive but to be active in offering their gifts.

How about those with intellectual and developmental disabilities? If the disabilities were significant there could be issues with verbal language, short attention span, distress at loud noises, over stimulation of any kind and the need to move around from time to time. So what to do? At the regular parish Sunday liturgy there could be readings from the childrens' lectionary, mime during the readings, soft acclamations during the long Eucharistic prayer, participation in processions, etc. Patient pacing during the liturgy could preserve a sense of the sacred, a sense of church, and a sense of Jesus leading us to the Father in praise. When we did these things we saw that our friends were happy, focused (for the most part!), and seemed to belong to the assembly with everyone else. A happy surprise was that all the elements that we shifted slightly seemed to help everyone in the assembly and the celebrant as well. We were even more surprised to discover that parish leaders started to ask for more Spred family liturgies as they were getting requests from others in the assembly.



As various Spred teams were helped to adjust to these shifts in emphasis through liturgy workshops, Spred family liturgies started to take place throughout the the Archdiocese. First the teams had to move through phases of trepidation, shyness, nervousness, and fear. When they were met with family and friends' enthusiasm and priestly support and appreciation they could hardly believe it. Then came positive feedback from musicians, other parish leaders and parish members. Their general response was that the family liturgy helped them to be moved and to pray when they saw the reverence of our friends and the whole Spred community of faith. Now on a regular basis 56 parishes in the Archdiocese offer Spred family liturgies.

We wondered what characteristics were being manifest by the Spred community during these liturgies? What was shining through? The feedback was more than pity. The assembly was as moved by the catechists and by the families as well as the people with disabilities. Not only that but new volunteers started offering their service as Spred catechists after being at a Spred family liturgy.

We realized first of all, that by attending to our friends with disabilities, we became aware that they exist, they are there, they are not invisible. Then we saw that "attention is the medium through which kindness can flow."<sup>1</sup> If there is no attention, there is no warmth nor kindness. The attention we give is not to push our friends to show off but to offer them empathy. We realize we can step out of our own selves to open out to the other. We can envelop them in our warmth. Compassion flows from empathy. "Compassion is a great spiritual quality."<sup>2</sup> But we cannot welcome the other if we do not allow them to come into our space. Compassion helps us to include others, the least able, the least pleasant and the least intelligent.

The parish Spred community of faith does not just show up at a Spred family liturgy fully formed. The catechists and friends are all on a spiritual journey. The Eucharist liturgy marks one station on their way forward. They form a kind of catechumenate as they grow in faith and new awareness. One of the new awareness' is the pleasure of patience. We learn that the more we hurry, the less effective we are. Kindness has a slow pace. To be kind, we discover that we need to make time to see the other, to listen to the other, to wait for the other. We actually learn the skill of waiting from our friends. They seem to be waiting most of the time. They wait to be noticed, they wait to be offered attention, they wait for services of all kinds, educational, medical, social and above all, they wait for friendship.

Catechists grow in their ability to be patient, to wait. This leads to a different perception of time.<sup>3</sup> This ability to wait is preparation for 'going to the celebration room.' By waiting we become open to reality beyond our closed self and we become ready to be in our own inner sacred room. As catechists we shift into the same frame of mind as our friends, waiting for the breath of the Spirit. As we wait together, we become friends, we belong together.

Belonging is a basic human need. No one can manage alone. Everyone has to give and to receive help, comfort, reassurance. When the need for belonging is not met, we are apt to feel disoriented, depressed and hostile. When someone arrives in Spred and gives every indication of having suffered by being excluded by others, the whole community is challenged to surround that person with respect, care and support.

Welcoming others into our own space in Spred always involves some humility, simplicity and generosity. We welcome others by who we are and by what we do. What we do includes remembering key events in the lives of our friends because they matter. The key events we are sure to remember is what happened at Confirmation, at First Communion at our Sunday liturgies together. Nourishing our memories helps us to build our identities as individuals as well as a community of faith.

All of this we bring to our Spred family liturgies. We gladly welcome the respect of the assembly at large but we offer our gifts as well. We offer the gift of our witness of faith and of prayer. In this we are involved as a community in a kind of evangelization. We can respond to Pope Francis call to evangelize as individuals and as a community of faith. We give witness to our joy and our gratitude. We know that when we are full of joy, our defenses drop and we show ourselves for what we are, a believing community.

Pope Francis remarks in the Joy of the Gospel that there are Christians whose lives seem to be like Lent without Easter. “Joy adapts and changes but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress.”<sup>4</sup> Families who have members with various disabilities need to be bathed in this atmosphere of joyous faith.

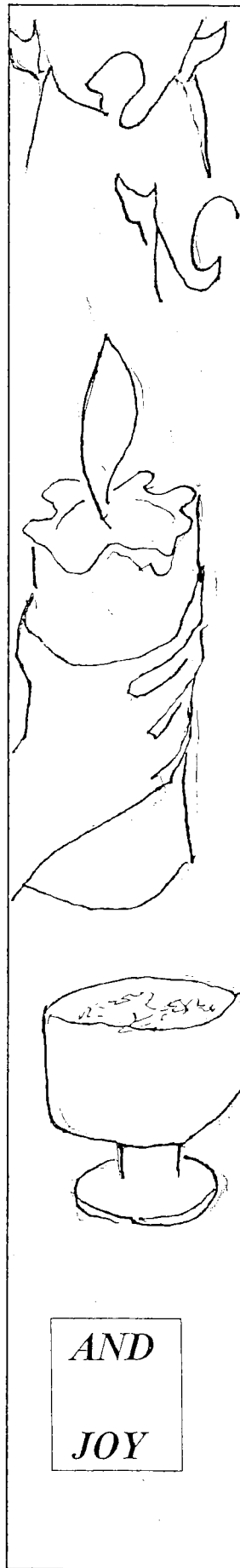
Our surest path to joyous faith is friendship. Our greatest skill and gift in Spred is friendship. As Fr. Jean Mesny, our mentor, said over and over, “our friends have the capacity for faith when they have the capacity for friendship. Faith is friendship with God.” The goal of Spred is to support this capacity for friendship as the door to faith, love, and joy.

So when we share in a Spred family liturgy, we take all these bits and pieces of our lives and form them into a kind of mosaic or stained glass window through which the light of the Risen Lord shines through. The assembly can be awakened to joy and courage by the witness of our friends and their catechists. Bit by bit we become aware that we are all on the path of conversion from darkness to light and from despair to hope.

“By virtue of their baptism all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. Whatever their position in the church or their level of instruction in the faith they are agents of evangelization....The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.”<sup>5</sup> This means that our friends also give witness by who they are before God and before the liturgical assembly.

In January Cardinal Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago addressed members of the Jewish community on the subject of evangelization He clarified that evangelization was not proselytism. Rather evangelization is to follow in the footsteps of the disciples of Jesus. “As a community around Jesus, they share his life, this good news, this Gospel with others by witnessing to others all that this Gospel-centered life offers them.”<sup>6</sup>

Sr.Mary Therese Harrington, Spred Chicago



1.Piero Ferrucci, *The Power of Kindness*, Penguin Random House, New York 2006 pg. 131 2. Ibid 144 3 Ibid 169

4.Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2013 #6 5. Ibid #120

6Archbishop Blase Cupich, *Evangelization: What is it? What is it not?* Chicagocatholic.com Feb.11, 2018, The Cardinal's Page

## SPRED CALENDAR

### Planning Meetings

#### Vicariate I Deanery A, B, C.

St. Joseph Libertyville

Wed. May 16, 6:30

#### Vicariate I Deaneries D, E, F

St. Thomas Becket Mt. Prospect

Tues. May 22, 7:00

#### Vicariate II Deaneries A, E, F

Our Lady of the Brook Northbrook

Wed. May 23, 7:00

#### Vicariate II Deaneries B, C, D

Queen of Angels Chicago

Mon. May 21, 6:30

#### Vicariate III Deaneries A, B Vicariate IV Deanery A

St. Stanislaus Kostka Chicago

Thurs. May 24, 7:00

#### Vicariate III Deaneries C, E

Spred Center, Lowe Ave

Tues. May 29, 7:00

#### Vicariate IV Deaneries B, C, E

St. Francis Xavier LaGrange

Mon. May 21, 7:00

#### Vicariate V Deanery A, B, C

St. Jane de Chantal Chicago

Thurs. May 17, 7:00

#### Vicariate V Deanery D E

St. George Tinley Park

Thurs. May 24, 7:00

#### Vicariate VI Deaneries B, D

Our Lady of Knock Calumet City

Thurs. May 31, 7:00

## SPRED

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### Spred Family Liturgy, May 6, 11:00

Spred Center 2956 So Lowe, Chicago, 312-8421039

### Observation Spred Center Chicago

6-10 and 22+ groups, May 14

11-16 group, May 1 and 15