



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago

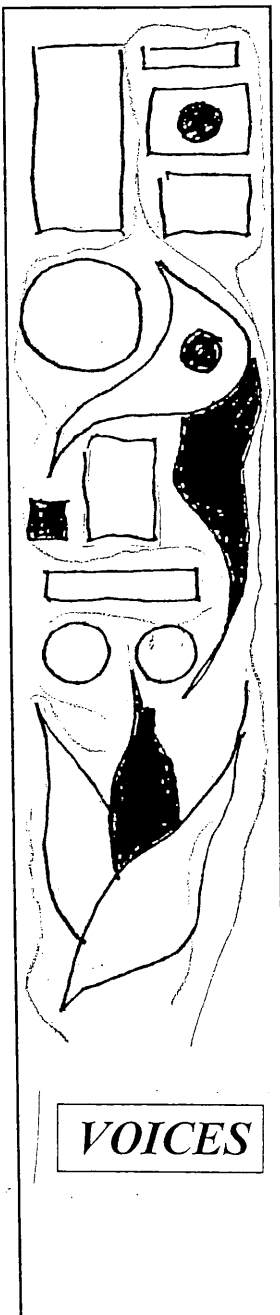
SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave, Chicago Illinois 60616

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

December 2015

Volume 89, Number 4



On the first day of our international Spred gathering in June, Julia Hess from Chicago gave each of us a little booklet entitled **Voices, Finding the Joy of Coming Together in Faith**. This booklet was the brainchild of Sloan Donnellan Salah and Mary Ward of the Archdiocese of Chicago. They asked a number of people to respond to three questions:

+What does Spred mean to you?

+How has Spred influenced your everyday life?

+What value does Spred have for you, your family, and your parish community?

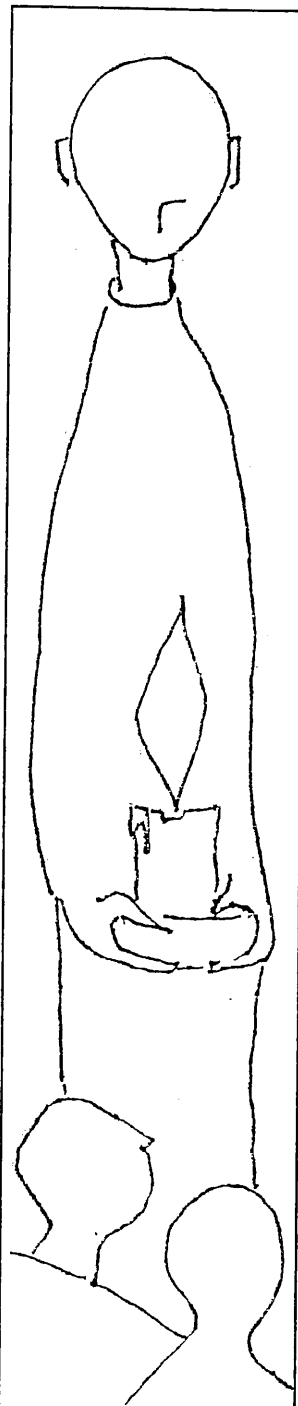
The replies came from Ireland, Scotland, Malta, Western Australia, and in the United States, from Alaska, Illinois, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The first names only of the 44 contributions were printed in the back.

It is a very beautiful read, listening to the many varied responses from catechists, friends, family and caregivers throughout the world. All of them are so appreciative of the effect that Spred has on their lives. I scanned the booklet and then did a search on some words. The one word that really stood out, and it is not surprising was **community**. We are little communities of faith and friendship within the larger parish community. Here are some of the responses that were given. We do not know the country nor who made the responses.

“Spred is a nourishing gift to me: an opportunity to deepen my own spiritual connections with other like-minded adults in a gentle, loving and totally embracive and supportive environment. Our adult group of catechists then share our love of faith with our young friends, who we continually invite to participate fully with us in the sharing of the events of their lives and discovering the love of God in everyday life. For me, Spred is a reaffirmation that God’s love for us is often revealed in the small moments of our lives.”

“Our friends remind us to be genuine, empathetic and accepting: this has carried over for me in my everyday life.”

“Spred has been a part of me, my family and my parish community for over 15 years. My son was in our parish’s first Spred group and he still has wonderful and loving memories of Spred and of his catechist who sadly has passed away. Our parish has embraced and supported our groups and has repeatedly singled out Spred as a valued ministry. As a catechist, Spred has come to help define who I feel I am - an adult of deep faith who greatly values being part of a small faith community that cherishes each other and provides loving, inviting catechesis to our friends.”



OF CATE CHISTS

"Spred is an opportunity for me to quiet my heart and mind and be in the presence of the Lord once a week. The energy and peace that I feel is then shared with a community of adults and children. Our time together is sacred, loving and powerful. The time I share with my friend sometimes challenges me. It is then that I need to think deeply about myself and how I might change myself to bring about a more peaceful and meaningful experience for my friend. This time of introspection facilitates growth for me spiritually and emotionally.

Spred has opened up a new way to experience God for me in everyday life. I see, feel and hear God in more simple ways.

We live in a community that highly values perfection. Life experiences here are often choreographed to an unattainable standard. The experiences create pressure all around us. Spred illustrates for me, my family and my parish community that God's gifts are not the wordly definition. Beauty is felt on a deeply and altogether different level through Spred.

I have found a peaceful joy in my participation in Spred. It is structured with experiential activities that enhance and reach my spirituality on many levels. For instance, when I am helping my friend feel soft pieces of cloth, I love watching her expressions as the textures change, I can see her feeling something that is smooth and interesting. I am experiencing her discovery and it is hard to describe how a simple interaction like that brings me such happiness. Also, when we are together as a community I am humbled how a natural sense of calm and quiet comes over the group as we share the theme of the week and sing together as a community. I feel connection and a great sense of love as we relate to each other through God's spirit, music and touch. After each session my commitment to my faith is booming and I feel energized in wanting to continue with Spred. Each interaction is genuine, sacred and wholehearted. I feel honoured to be part of that spiritual process and to be among such a genuine and giving group of people.

Spred is part of who I am, who I strive to be, and where I feel connected to our friends on a level that cannot be measured in words. Each time we meet for our full session, I learn something new from our friends and know that I come away wiser and can only hope that they have felt even half as much as I do. Spred easily "spreads" into other areas of my life and I would like to think that I am more patient, more thoughtful, and more accepting of others without prejudice, that I can see beyond what is on the outside and know someone's heart, just as I have witnessed our friends do with one another. Our church is blessed to have our group within its confines and we know we have touched them in our Spred masses or simply by attending mass as a group. You can see in their faces as they glance and see unabashed worship. It touches them.

I have come to appreciate the importance of being part of a small, loving, trusting, accepting, believing community of faith. This has deepened my faith, knowing that I am totally loved for who I am. Feeling the presence of Jesus during meeting is very tangible. Hearing his personal word for me is very moving.

Spred means: creating bonds of new friendships; a beautiful sense of community; learning to see Christ in everyday situations; knowing that I need a Shepherd; not being afraid to grow, to love, to forgive; seeing my friend with disabilities for the first time eagerly lean forward with her hands outstretched to hear what Jesus wants to say to her today."

Different parents respond:

"Spred is both a personal and communal religious experience where my son and my family can experience the love of God in a very unique manner. It is not a program just for my son with special needs. Rather, it is a program that has benefited my entire family connecting us with other families and volunteers that truly bring the light of Christ into our lives.

Are we not all born with a broken heart or at least a heart that is searching for oneness with God? I can honestly say Spred has helped my heart by bringing it closer in union with God. I have had experiences that have changed my heart, in a good way.

Spred has definitely made me a better father and husband. The experience of God is certainly one dynamic, but the experience of connecting with fantastic people that have our friends in the true, best interest of their hearts holds lasting effects. Our Spred liturgy has become the parish's favorite liturgy. One just knows that the Spirit is present and alive in those liturgical experiences.

Spred has given our intellectually disabled daughter the blessings of a spiritual and social life in her Catholic parish that she would not have otherwise enjoyed.

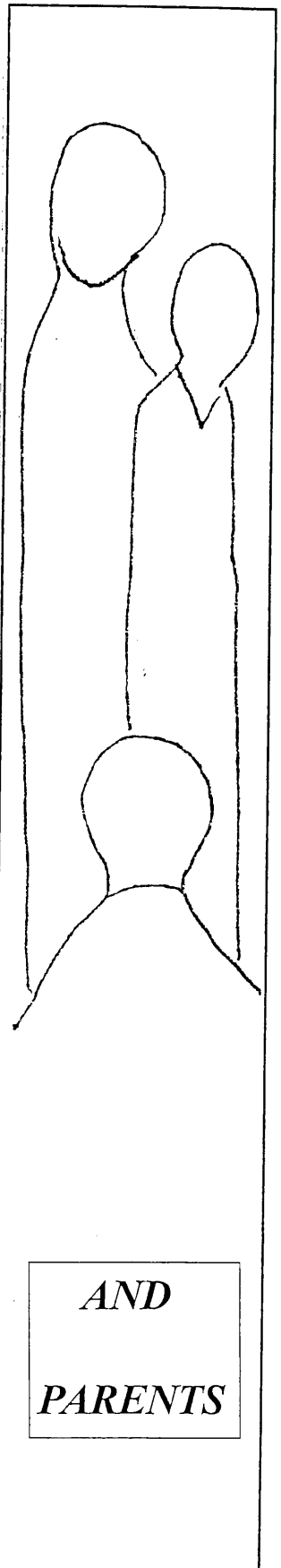
Not too long ago when our daughter/granddaughter was not receiving any religious education, we came upon a program at our church called Spred. Enrolling her was one of the best things we ever did for her. The wonderful people involved welcomed her and immediately made her feel at ease while learning about Jesus. She absolutely loves these sessions and the catechists who help her. After a short time, she made friends, joined the children's choir and biggest surprise of all; she made her First Holy Communion.

Before we moved to Chicago, my daughter did not have access to any religious education. She is cognitively disabled. We lived in many places but no parish could provide for her. She regularly attended mass with us. However, she did not understand. There was no relationship or meaning for her at all. Then I discovered Spred and enrolled her in a program. Not only did she love it, she does, and looks forward to it every other week. She learned about and internalized the quiet and what it means to take bread. So, she has completed her First Communion and Confirmation. She is very proud of this and very thoughtful. She will not take bread on Sunday if she does not feel she is in the right mood. It is beautiful. She also understands prayer and why we do it, many times initiating prayer for friends, neighbors and relatives. Needless to say, Spred has brought a fulfilment to both my daughter and myself in words.

Spred means that Julia can participate in her faith in a way she understands. She is always excited to go to her sessions. They mean a lot to her. It is a place of peace for her. Spred is very meaningful for our family. We never imagined that Julia would have the ability to experience a deeper level of learning about her faith. We never expected that she would make her First Communion, but she did. It matters that she has such a supportive and caring group of people looking out for her. It makes us feel more part of the church community, since sometimes having a child with special needs can, at times, be isolating."

Edited by Patricia Lennon
Diocese of Armagh, Northern Ireland

Voices. Finding the Joys of Coming Together in Faith, May 2015 Spred, see www.spred-chicago.org



CALENDAR

SPRED FAMILY LITURGIES

Feb. 7, Mar.6, April 3, May1

MAMRE SPRING DINNER DANCE

Drury Lane Oakbrook, April 24, 2016

SPRED TRAINING

Introduction course (2-1) Feb. 13,20,27 1-6pm

English and Spanish at Spred Center, 30th and Lowe
Enter through parking lot, go through garden door.

Role Orientation (3-1)March 12,19 1-6pm

English and Spanish at Spred Center, 30th and Lowe
Enter through parking lot, go through garden door.

OBSERVATION

6-10 Group Mon. Dec.7, Feb. 8, 22. 6:00 pm

11-16 Group Tues. Dec.8, Feb. 9, 23 7:00 pm

17-21 Group Tues. Dec.8, Feb. 8, 22 7:00 pm

22+ Group Mon. Dec.7, Feb. 9, 23 7:00 pm

Core Team Morning of Enrichment 9:30am to noon

Jan. 23, 2016, Donation \$3:00 a person

RSVP Elizabeth Sivek, 312842-1039 ext 13

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