



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago



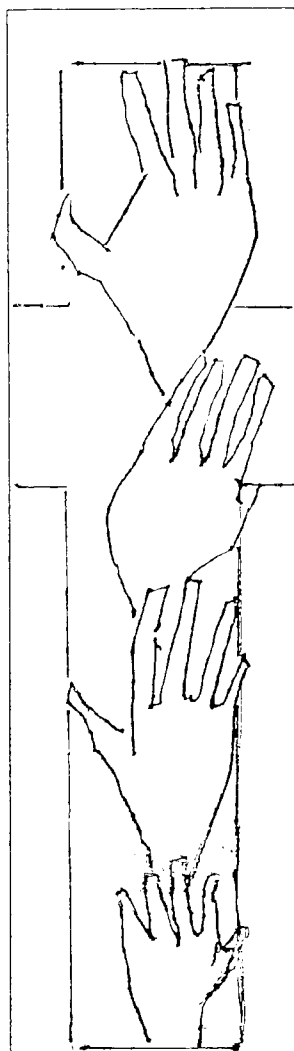
SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616

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GROWTH

In Spred we often speak of our two-fold goal; growth in the life of faith for each person and growth in the community of faith for all of us together.

Those who are new to Spred often have basic questions. If we are working on faith development, how much intellectual capacity is required? How much ability is needed to belong authentically to a community of faith?

This question leads us to confront very basic challenge. What do we mean by faith? What do we mean by intellectual capacity for faith?

When we stand before a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities, what goes through our minds as catechists? Often it is a rather egocentric thought; "How will I ever manage a catechesis with this person?"

Over centuries, serious work was seldom done on a person with disabilities capacity for faith but now that work has been done, we know we can say confidently, "sure I can do this catechesis for faith growth because..."

I can do this because there are more than one mode of intellectual functioning and there are more than one form of faith.

We know from St. Augustine that there are at least three modes of faith. ¹

Faith as assent to the truths of revelation. We find these truths in creeds, catechisms, and theological reflections. This mode of faith is made up of *ideas* and *concepts* that require *discursive* thought.² This is a form of explicit knowledge of "the faith." It involves a disciplined reflection on faith as a series of *concepts*. The person does a work of *analysis* to sort out ideas into bits and pieces and then they can form a kind of mosaic.

At some point, however, since the assent of faith is to the truth of revelation, there still has to be a submission of the intellect. We are dealing with the mysteries of revelation. Revelation cannot be totally verified by reason, so we talk about a kind of obedience of faith. With deductive reasoning, we are willing to accept the veracity of these mysteries. Obviously the catechist standing before a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities is **not** going to go down this path of faith development. Why?

In the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis puts his finger on a key element in the process of catechesis.

“The challenge lies in proclaiming a synthesis, not ideas or detached values. Where your synthesis is, there lies your heart. The difference between enlightening people with a synthesis and doing so with detached ideas is like the difference between boredom and heartfelt fervor.”...We have “the wonderful but difficult task of joining loving hearts, the hearts of the Lord and his people.” 6

For the catechist to work with a synthesis is easy for some and not so easy for others. For some analysis is their more natural way of thinking. However, there are some ways to help keep on track with a synthesis.

To begin with the catechist has to have a pretty good vision of where a session is heading. Usually this is clearly stated in the beginning of a Spred session under the title of goal. The goal actually is very global and the steps to reach it are also global. A symbolic progression works with intuition. Various memories or evocations are put side by side but not explained. We call this the juxtaposition of evocations. We do not try to explain the connections - discursive thought - but to let them stay side by side and then insight comes from the members of the group. No two persons may have the same insight or intuition.

Along with just leaving the evocations side by side, catechists need to be careful to banish the word “like” from their vocabulary. The word like provides an attempt to give a reason for one of the two evocations. If at the end of a series of evocation the catechist would say “The light of this big candle is *like* the resurrection of Jesus.” The child could hang on to one of the two evocations - the candle light - or the resurrection of Jesus. But why they are connected is beyond them as the comparison involves discursive, abstract thought.

The catechist could just say “this is such a beautiful candle. I love the light.” Silence. Then the catechist could say, “Jesus lives in the light.” Silence. This involves a sense of the sacred, a juxtaposition of two elements, and a feeling tone. Now we are in the realm of symbolic, intuitive awareness. We can never teach a symbol as this demands discursive thought. Rather we work with objects until they become symbolic for the person and the group. Once we are in the realm of symbolic awareness, the person enters a full sense of the sacred and the possibility for faith growth through relationship with Jesus.

How do we move from discursive ideas to intuitive awareness? For the catechist it may not be all that easy. For those with intellectual and developmental disabilities it may be easier. One developing mode of intellectual functioning is symbolic. This is when the person moves out to become one with the Other through the mediation of an object, gesture, person, music, etc. Two elements are crucial for this to happen; silence and focus. Blessings on the catechist who gives the gifts of silence and focus to others in catechesis.

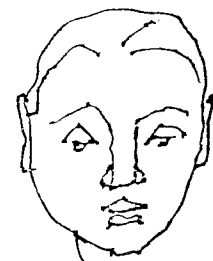
Sr.Mary Therese Harrington Archdiocese of Chicago, Spred Staff

1 Dulles, S.J. Avery, The Assurance of Things Hoped For, A Theology of Christian Faith, Oxford University Press, 1994 pg. 186,
2 Ibid 186

3 Pauthus, Euchariste, L'Education de la Foi, Aspects Psycho-therapeutique, Universite de Sherbrooke, 1982 pg.49

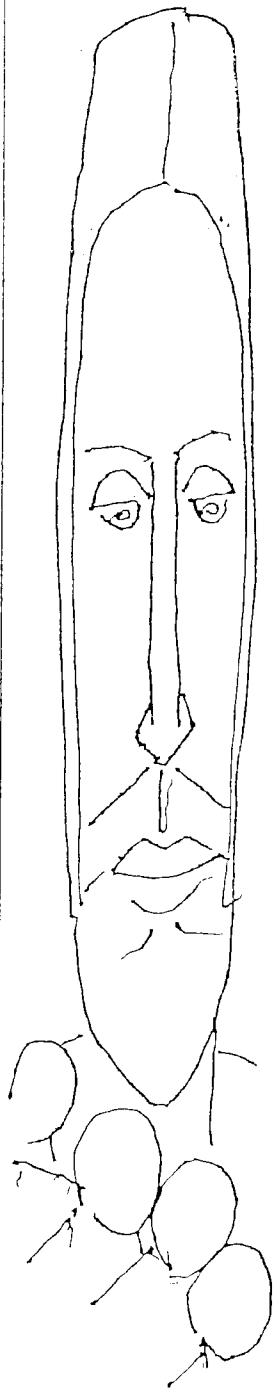
4 Merton Thomas, The Climate of Monastic Prayer, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN 2018

5. Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2013 #167 6. Ibid #143



AND

LIFE



IN

FAITH

According to Jean Piaget, the Swiss Psychologist, it takes a "mental age" of at least 12 to 14 years of age to be at ease with discursive thought that analyses abstract concepts. 3 If the person has a true intellectual disability, they are not educable in faith in this mode of intellectual assent. So then what?

St. Augustine has a second mode of authentic faith. This is faith as trust. We believe the one who reveals. We trust the one who reveals. This mode of faith is personal. We believe a person.

There is a difference between faith as concepts and faith as personal trust. In faith as assent the one who knows possesses and masters concepts. In personal faith, through intuition, the one who knows is possessed by the person known.

"The aim, ... of Christian faith, is not to arrive at an objective and apparently "scientific" knowledge about God, but to come to know him through the realization that our very being is penetrated with his knowledge and love for us. Our knowledge of God is paradoxically a knowledge not of him as the object of our scrutiny, but of ourselves as utterly dependent on his saving and merciful knowledge of us. ... We have no other reason for being, except to be loved by him as our Creator and Redeemer... There is no true knowledge of God that does not imply a profound grasp and an intimate acceptance of this profound relationship."4

Personal faith is possible because of symbol. Symbol is required for faith as trust. We will only know God face to face in the Beatific Vision. What we have now has to be mediated through symbol.

We always say that the first work to be done in Spred is to help everyone to develop a sense of the sacred. A sense of the sacred makes us alert to symbol and reverence also is awakened by symbol. Symbol opens us to the beyond and the beyond is bigger than we are. We move out in faith as trust but we need a sense of the sacred to be able to do this. A sense of the sacred is non-verbal, but there are clear signs for those who have eyes to see. The person's manner softens, the voice is calm and serene, the body is relaxed and not agitated. A catechist who is preoccupied by "do they know enough" will be frustrated by this question as there is no chance of an answer. But if the catechist looks for signs of growth in a sense of the sacred they become aware of a kind of growth open to personal faith.

A sense of the sacred is fostered by beauty.

"Catechesis would do well to attend to the "way of beauty" (via pulchritudinis). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus....a renewed esteem for beauty is a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. 5

When there is an ambiance of beauty, the catechist has set the stage for a good catechesis for both those who have disabilities and for the catechists in the community of faith.

SPRED CALENDAR

Spred Training

Role Orientation, English and Spanish

Oct. 13, 20 1:00 to 6:00 pm

Spred Center, 30th and Lowe, 312-842-1039

Helper Catechist Training

Oct. 27 Spanish, Spred Center, 30th and Lowe Chicago
1:00 to 6:00 pm

Nov. 3 English, Spred Center, 30th and Lowe Chicago
1:00 to 6:00 pm

Observation

6-10, 6:00 pm Monday Oct. 1, 15 Nov. 5, 19

11-16, 7:00 pm Tuesday Oct. 2, 16 Nov. 6, 20

17-21, 7:00 pm Tuesday Oct. 2, 16 Nov. 6, 20

22+, 7:00 pm Monday Oct. 1, 15, Nov. 5, 19

Helper Catechist Training

Oct. 6, English, Queen of Angels, 4412 Western Chicago
11:00 to 4:00 pm

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Spred Family Liturgies. 30th and Lowe Chicago 11:00
Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Feb. 3, Mar. 3, April 7, May 5

Mamre Dinner Dance Fundraiser Crystal Sky,
McCook **Nov. 10, 2018**