



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago



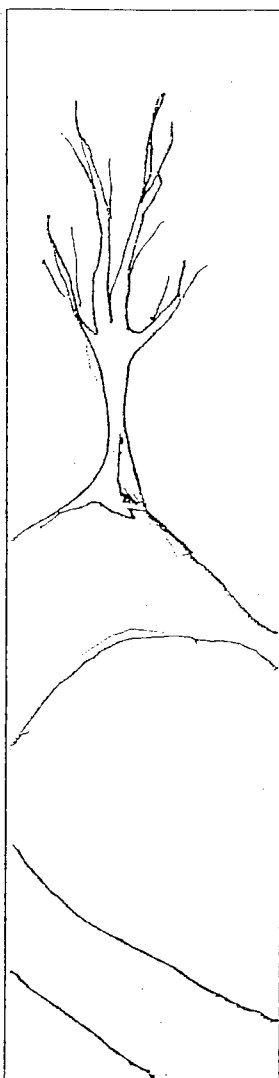
SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616

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

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SILENCE

WITH

Recently in a preparation period with our friends with disabilities, I chose to work with paints. I chose two colors, yellow and blue. I was meandering, not seeking to effect a specific form when I was startled by accidentally mixing the two colors to arrive at a third: green! Now I have had color charts galore over the years, yet I was thrown by this discovery. Startled, I just wanted to look at the 'new' color and work with it. It is the phenomenon of 'the coming together of opposites'. The 'coming together of opposites' is a phrase initiated by Nicholas of Cusa. St. Bonaventure used it in his philosophy and theology. Some would hold that the source of the phrase comes from Plato. Mix yellow and blue and you get green!

This 'coming together of opposites' happens all the time in a Spred session using the Method Vivre. I give as an example the first session in the 11-16 series of 12 sessions. This session is called 'The Way.' The overall goal is to 'set an ambiance of friendship with one another. Together we become the People of God. The Lord Jesus is present when we are friends. We need a time and a place to become aware that he is in our midst as we go on our journey of life.'

To move into symbolic awareness requires an evocation, a calling to mind of a memory. For the session with our friends, we begin the process of evocation by using a picture of a long road through beautiful trees. In the preparation sessions with the adult catechists, we begin by reading Brian Doyle's "A poem for a Quiet Lady at St. Patrick's Church in Oregon.* In summary, 70 ladies gather in a farm country church hall, knitting. One lady sitting apart from the others works on small blankets for still-born babies. Speechless, the writer thinks of all the glorious things being done that you never hear of. After reading this piece, the leader catechist *distills* this short account with a general statement: describe when we go down a different path and make a new discovery. Then a *question is posed*: Describe when you have gone down a new and different path and were surprised.

Each adult catechist reflects for 20 minutes on this question as light classical music is played briefly. Then they gather in a different area, circling a candle and bible. In deep confidence, they share their personal response individually while together. The leader then proceeds with the same material that is used with our friends in a total community session, "We are happy to be together in our special place here, we can be quiet, sing and pray." The biblical evocation is read aloud, "In the Book of God's Word, Jesus says, 'I am with you - always.'" The leader then goes to each person, joins hands and repeats the same message. The session ends with the song and gestures to "Live On In My Love" from Collegeville.**

When catechists share their stories, their evocations, it could hit us in such a way as to tilt us toward dusky shadowy events, or shift our emphasis to surprise. Our personal evocations flit about to many memories. Consciousness is a struggle with the 'coming together of opposites.' We are selective in the memories we choose to share. Through the years I have read about other ways to enter into symbolic reality. They have supported the work of Fr. Jean Mesny and Fr. Euchariste Paulhus.

For Paul Ricoeur, the philosophy of symbol requires moving beyond the primary meaning, e.g. a picture of a long empty road on a sepia pigment, to a secondary meaning which arrives as a new awareness. For example it could be the beginning of a new year and the future that it holds for the group embarking on the road. An interiorization could focus on, 'we are happy to be together on this road'.

Phenomenology could take another approach to the same end. We look at the picture of the long road. We are aware of ourselves and at the same time the total otherness of the road. We look long enough and we have an encounter, we begin to be at one with the road. We begin to fuse with it. We begin to construct a hut of meaning, such as 'during the year before us, we are going to be happy.'

Josef Goldbrunner, in pastoral anthropology, would offer a different explanation. We are accustomed to the platonic dualism of spirit and matter. From an incarnational point of view, spirit and matter would conjoin and be on the way together. We can either flee what is offered to us or we can realize it. Again, the importance of evocation is at play. Everything depends on how we steer our understanding of the brownish hazed road and the persons around us.

A playwright offers the 'status quo' of the first act (what the Greeks called Mythos) followed by the second act, the crisis or challenge (Pathos) and then the final third act, the resolution (Mathos). We see a long road ahead. It's hazy and yet beckons us. This could be the beginning of the catechumenal year. We are all together. It's going to be great! Similarly, an author of a book writes a prologue, sets up a story, introduces dialogue and completes everything with an epilogue.

Campbell, in mythology, would claim that there is only a mono-myth. There is tragedy, there is comedy and it is the story of life. We see the darkness of the road ahead; we could be afraid. Yet we are all together and we like each other. We are going to like this journey.

Jean Piaget, in developmental psychology, would have us see the long road ahead. We are to absorb the scene, take it in, assimilate it, then accomodate to the dusky scene, knowing we are with others to achieve a certain equilibrium through evocation and interiorization. The opposites collide and level off in a new reality.

Suzanne Langer, in the fine arts, juxtaposes feeling and form so as to arrive at expression, giving an insightful pattern. It is a reality that has its own unique logic which can be bewildering but on target.

The "coming together of opposites" is an achievement, often experienced in silence.



**THE
COMING
TOGETHER**

I began to notice this silence first in the preparation process when we are gathered together with our friends; the later, following the catechesis and personal expression with when we linger quietly, needing time for absorption. No one is telling another person to be quiet. Silence just happens.

In our adult catechist preparation sessions, we drop into twenty minutes of silence after a literary selection is read out loud, summarized, and a question is posed that requires our *personal* reflection. After these twenty minutes of silence, our personal reflections are shared with the other catechists in the celebration room. Over time we all become friends with silence while being with others.

As a priest presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist with families who have members with intellectual and developmental disabilities, I am struck with the quality of silence that lingers after the message is proclaimed following the Gospel reading. The quality of silence is even deeper after the communion song is sung. This is a kind of silence that compresses, compacts, settles us. It is not eerie. It is a kind of savoring. The sacred is present. We are alone with others. We feel we are all being hollowed out as we are melded together.

Recently I was reading a passage of Thomas Merton and I thought of this kind of silence.

“Realizing and knowing are not the same.

In realizing one grasps or one is grasped
is actualized in oneself and

one becomes what one realizes, one is what one realizes.

Knowing is just a matter of registering
that something is objectively verifiable -
whether one bothers to verify it or not.

Realization is not verification but “isness”.

In solitude I become fully able to realize what I cannot know.”***

My experience of silence reinforces this insight. We are a “we” in catechesis or liturgy. We are unique, separate and yet together. The many become one. We realize we are one. We are grasped by a presence. We commune.

Silence is the opposite of noise. The noise need not be outside us but within us. Technology heightens this trap. We may not be silent within ourselves. I like to sculpt with clay. The way I characterize this experience is to say, “I go someplace else.” It’s quiet there. The humdrum of everyday life dissolves. It is a healing: I realize what has its own unique logic. It is bewildering. It is a “coming together of opposites.” It is a sacred moment.

Our friends, of all ages, and levels of comprehension, realize this kind of catechesis and liturgy, not what they cannot know. No one could prove otherwise to me.

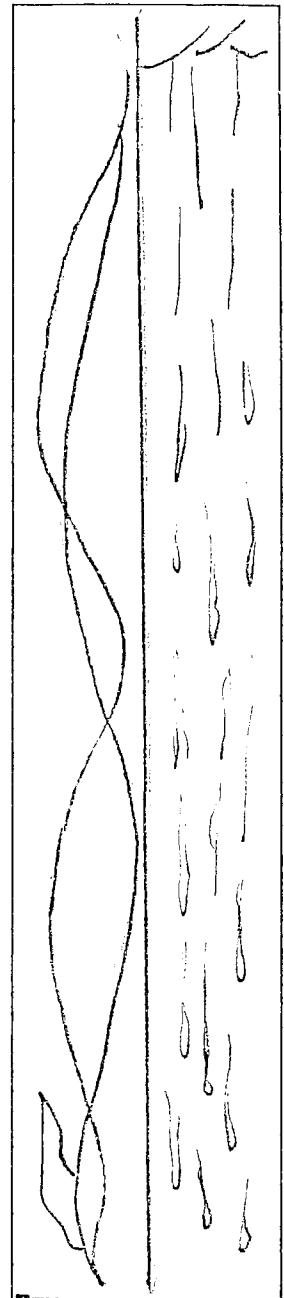
Rev. James H. McCarthy

Director, Spred Chicago

*Brian Doyle, The Kind of Brave You Wanted to Be, Liturgical Press, 2016

**Collegeville, Walk in My Ways, Liturgical Press, 2005

***Patrick Hart & Jonathan Montaldo, The Intimate Merton: His Life from his Journals, Harper Collins N.Y. 1999 p.492



OF

**OPPO
SITES**

SPRED CALENDAR

Spred Training

Introduction to Spred, Feb. 9, 16, 23, Chicago 1-6pm

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

Role Orientation, March 9, 16, Chicago 1-6pm

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

Spred Family Liturgies, Chicago 11:00 am

Spred Chapel 30th & Lowe

Dec. 2, Feb. 3, Mar. 3, April 7, May 5

Observation

6-10, 6:00 pm Monday Dec. 3, Feb. 11, 25, March 11

11-16, 7:00 pm Tuesday Dec. 4, Feb. 12, 26, March 12

17-21, 7:00 pm Tuesday Dec. 4, Feb. 12, 26, March 12

22+, 7:00 pm Monday Dec. 3, Feb. 11, 25, March 11

Spred Reflection Weekend, January 4th to 6th, 2019

St. Benedict Abbey, 12605 224th Ave. Benet Lake WI

Arrival 7pm Friday, Departure 2pm Sunday

Register: www.queenofangelsspred.org /Julia Hess 773-539-7510

SPRED

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Workshop for Parish/Church Chairpersons

Sat. Dec 8, 9:30 to 12noon, Spred Center, 30th and Lowe

Enter through parking lot 3rd fl. over church, Donation

\$3.00, RSVP 312-842-1039 ext. 220 Elizabeth Sivek