



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago



SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

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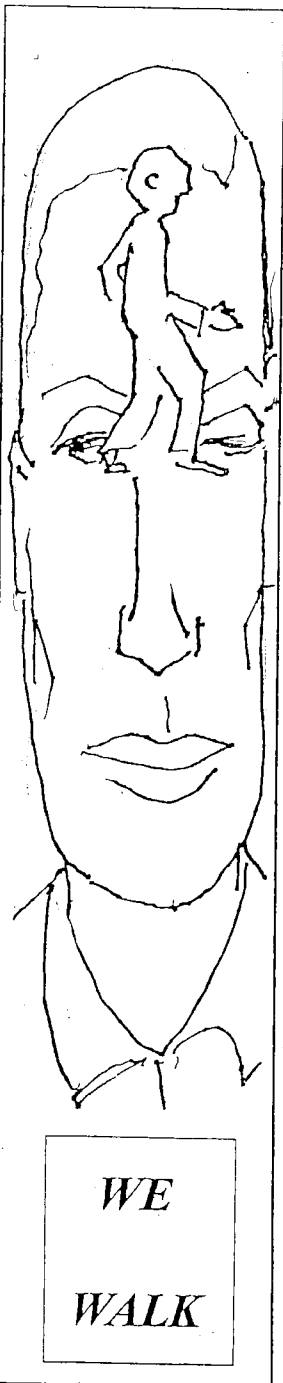
Just to be is a blessing, just to live is holy.

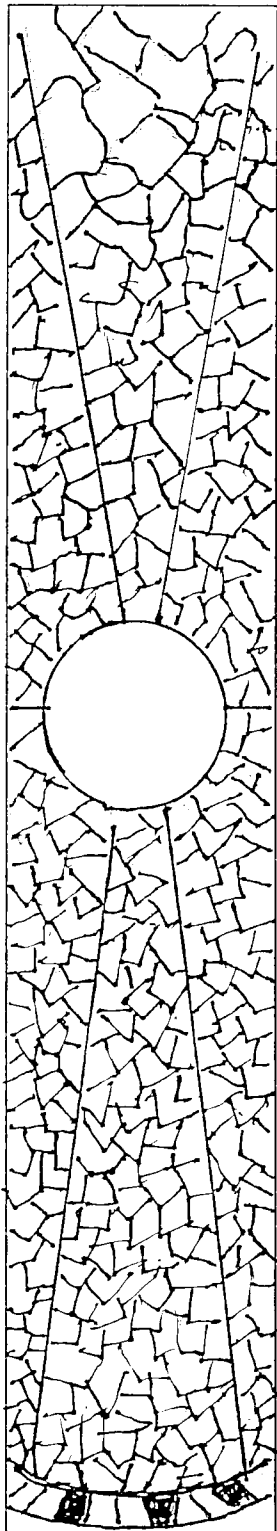
Abraham Joshua Heschel

What happens in Spred? There are usually 24 sessions in a year; 12 for the adult catechists and 12 with the catechists and the friends with disabilities. Each session for catechists and friends has the same goal but is approached differently.

What happens in an adult catechist preparation session? There is a small community of 8 to 10 adults. Since adult faith is the norm, the focus is on the catechists' faith life. How does the session unfold? Initially the group assesses the prior session: what occurred. The goal of the current session is read. A literary piece is read out loud by the leader catechist; a synopsis follows; then a universal summary statement is made and a *question* is posed that distills the story and embodies the goal of the total community session. Each adult reflects on the question in silence for 20 minutes and then shares in the celebration room. The leader catechist evokes an element from liturgy and scripture and ends with a message from Jesus to each one. A liturgical hymn concludes followed by a reading of the session for our friends to be held the following week. The session ends with a small snack.

One catechist expressed pondering on the *question* in this way: "During the silence it is like trying to take a long walk alone. Except you always start in the middle of a noisy bustling State and Madison center. All the noises of a busy day still echo in the inside of you. Hurrying people, telephone interruptions, things that must be done - the whole hurly burly of a day that in your sane moments you admit cries for some quiet and privacy, reverberates in your head. In trying to take this walk alone, your feet are moving fast and you are sidestepping hundreds of other ideas that are hurrying some place on their own. Suddenly a story is given to you and you carry it along, jostling it like an added shopping bag. Then its weight makes you hold it with both arms. It calls forth something very human and personal to you. Slowly as you move along, the outside sounds begin to recede. It's like you're walking and you find you're getting out of the city and moving along alone on a deserted country road. The noise is gone and you're concentrating on this very personal gift you have. Your body is still moving but the motion is outside and effortless and there is a growing awareness within. But it's a contained focus of awareness. This personal compass keeps you on a certain track. Soon, it's like you're floating and not walking. And after a while so preoccupied do you become that you're all lost in wonder like one of the three kings on the way home. But the personal treasure you've been given calls to you and brings you to a place - a place where there are a few doors. You have to make a decision to open one of the doors. You are a little afraid because you don't know what you're really





IN

BEAUTY

going to find when you open that door. Will it be joy or sadness, a remembered moment, a forgotten event, a memory all seen in light? You open a door and choose and walk forward. It's a journey now of the spirit. It's like you transcend space and time. Yet you are there. Even the music you hear comes and goes distracting you for a moment or calling you on. Your journey started without and went far within. You're all lost in it. Words are not there but presence is. You sense presence more than colors or forms or sights. You feel motionless and held. At that time your walk alone is over. It's like waking from the journey alone. You sit in a circle and are asked to give words to your adventure. You don't know what you are going to say. When you share, you preface the expression with some sort of sputtering or tie in with what someone else has shared. You don't know consciously what you're going to say, but you say it. It's not easy to give words to that journey. The feelings run deep. Often the words seem wrong. Your lips give expression to what you finally saw and felt and experienced. You're really awake now. You have not moved from the room. The walk alone was so real and you still are filled with the taste of it. In the sacred area of the celebration room you offer the gift of your reflection and it all gets mixed up with your awesome new experience." Through "evocation" an *object, a memory, a recollection* becomes a *symbol*.

A mentor, Fr. Euchariste Paulhus, tutored our Spred staff in his doctoral thesis\*\* which defined the objective aspects of pastoral catechesis as well as the psychological aspects it awakens in each subject with intellectual and developmental disabilities to affirm that our friends can believe, they have the capacity for faith.

Fr. Paulhus considered the fourfold objective aspects to be the sacred, theological, christological and ecclesial realities.

1. The Sacred is something transcendent - totally other; it includes the mystery it contains. We rise above daily life, we tend toward the absolute. We get beyond the confusion of theories, we rediscover time and again that the sacred demands reparation and beauty. Abraham Joshua Heschel a Hasadic Rabbi had great influence on the Vatican II council. He was a theologian, a poet and a mystic. Several years before his death in 1972, he suffered a near fatal heart attack. He spoke to a friend: "I felt only gratitude to God for my life." "I did not ask for success; I asked for wonder. And you gave it to me."

2. A Theological Reality is a vital relationship with a God who loves, with a personal God. The sacred is assumed by a personal God who speaks and who loves. After ordination in 1955, I went with 3 priest friends to Hollywood, California where arrangements were made for us to be on the set of the *Ten Commandments*. We met Cecil B. DeMille who brought us around the set with pride. He showed us a huge construct of wood and piping and a water system for the parting of the red sea. He was very gracious with his time and explanation. Photos were taken. However, my reaction was that I could not get myself to view the movie until eight years later in Eagle River, Wisconsin on a cold rainy afternoon on vacation with nothing else to do. Why? Though no film critic, the production simply stayed in my head; it never got to my heart. It was something out there, not within me. "Theological" means living faith, hope and love within. In Holy Week the four Suffering Servant Songs of Isaiah are proclaimed (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). This is the Christ who touches me. He who knows how to speak to the weary; He acts only by His presence, His silent witness amidst great rejection. It is a defining moment.

3. A Christological reality springs from revelation that is accomplished through several stages: unbaptized people can live a theological life even when indulging in aberrant practices. "To be love" is God in his essence. In history God chose a people and gave them a mission. The people of God will realize - not as they expect - He is great and near. Only with Christ will we learn God is Trinity. God becomes incarnate in Jesus. We can see a sanctuary lamp, a burning bush in everything and everyone.

4. An Ecclesial Reality is the realization that Christ not only revealed the Trinity but also preached the kingdom - a spiritual kingdom. He chose for himself a vicar. He mysteriously associates himself with a community of which he is the head. Through this church he gives the mission of building up his own body and maintaining the work of revelation. One Spread parent calls it "a community of acceptance."

These four elements define the relationship of all human activity to a transcendent God who is entirely Other, personal, and has revealed himself in Christ and his church.

What happens in a total community session with our friends of any of the four age groups? The session is similar to that of the adult catechist preparation session except for a forty-five minute period at the beginning to gain focus with activities. It has the same goal, but with evocations of human experience appropriate to the developmental age of our friends. Fr. Jean Mesny worked with Fr. Paulhus to concretize this catechesis into what they called the Method Vivre. This Method focuses on three elements: Creation, Community and Word.

Fr. Paulhus also presented the Subjective aspects of pastoral catechesis, the ways we know. He follows in the footsteps of Jean Piaget. Fr. Paulhus distinguishes two modes of intellectual functioning, two kinds of knowing: Intuition and Abstraction. Catechists are challenged to adapt to the mode of intellectual functioning of their friends.

Intuitive knowing is a direct and global knowledge of reality which corresponds to the person's profound and natural needs. Intuition penetrates more directly to the heart of concrete things. St. Thomas Aquinas calls this form of knowledge a knowledge of connaturality. Piaget would call this knowledge concrete operational thought. Many of our friends are at ease with this form of knowing.

Abstraction is a discursive knowledge. It uses reflection and reasoning on principles to come to a conclusion. Discursive intelligence works essentially with concepts or abstract reasonings. Piaget would call it formal operational thought, which implies a mental age of at least 12 years of age. Few of our friends are at ease with this form of knowing.

I think of a September afternoon on a trip to the Cathedral of Chartres in France with its sculptures, stained glass windows and vaulted ceilings. There we heard the choirs of Paris and Chartres sing Handel's *Messiah*. The environment, the music, the stories in the sculptures outside and inside, the sun in the windows, the sheer beauty make it hard not to be caught up in this architectural catechesis by simply looking and someone evoking a story. It is a catechism in stone for **all**.

Rev. James H. McCarthy Director, Chicago Spread



## 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

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Helper Catechist Training: April 14 11:00 to 4:00  
at Queen of Angels, 4412 N. Western Ave, Chicago,  
to register call Betty Rogus at 773-588-0614 or  
Julia Hess at 773-539-3634 or jchqofa3@gmail.com  
Leader Catechist Workshop April 28, 9:30 to noon  
Spred Center, 2956 So Lowe, third floor above church

Spred Family Liturgy, April 8, May 6, 11:00  
Spred Center 2956 So Lowe, Chicago, 312-8421039  
Observation Spred Center Chicago  
6-10 and 22+ groups, April 16, 30, May 14  
11-16 group, April 17, May 1 and 15