



SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago



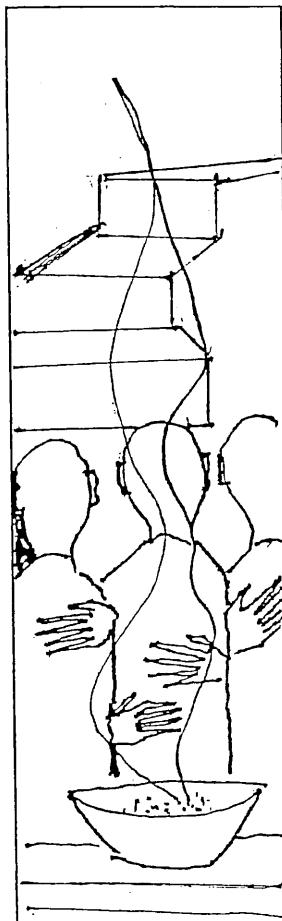
SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616

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During our Spred session last night, we celebrated all the growth that had taken place in our little community of faith. Teens with intellectual and developmental disabilities can fear the changes that adolescence brings. Some fear it will change life for them and so they hang on to being children whereas others are afraid that the changes of adolescence will never happen. So we just celebrate where we are in our growth! Families also fear the changes that adolescence brings so we all celebrate that we have made it this far, right now! Then this moment fades and we enjoy the memory of that moment.

Last night one of the girls worked with perfumes during the preparation for catechesis. Each little bottle captured a whole world of scent. Yet once inhaled, the strength of the perfume evaporates and one can only enjoy the scent that lingers. The moment has passed.

At liturgy we often enjoy the scent of various types of incense. As we inhale, the space is changed, we are transformed. We experience serenity and peace but as the solid incense burns, there is nothing left. The perfume lingers. We are ready to pray, "Lord let my prayer rise before you like incense."

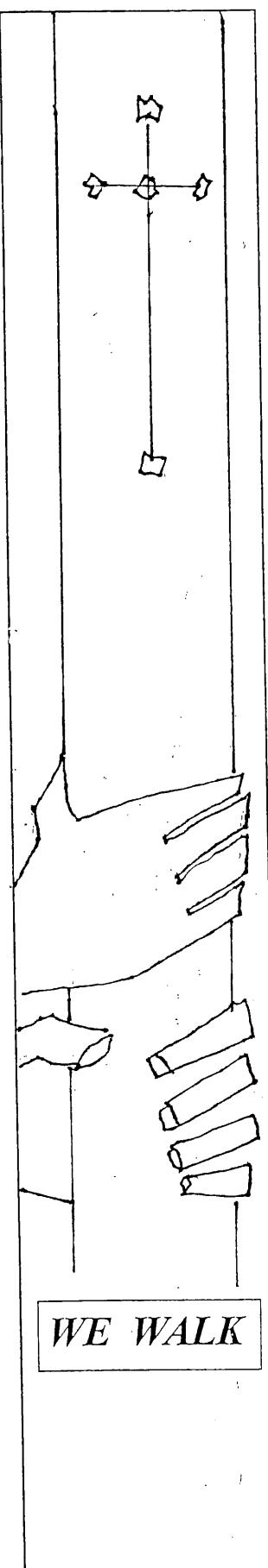
Sunday we will have our Spred family liturgy. We play music and all will sing together to give praise. When the last note dies, the music fades away. We never capture it again in exactly the same way, but we have been changed.

Everyday we live with the impermanence of life. Because of the fundamental anxiety that changes bring we respond in various ways. Some try to deny change and hang on for dear life to what is now. Others seem to relax into change. Whether we fight it, fear it, or welcome it, change just keeps coming. We begin to realize that just as we get one piece of our lives in place, another slips beyond our control. We begin to figure out that we cannot ever completely get it all together.

Sometimes change is compared to a pilgrimage. There are pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela as well as Chartres, Lourdes, Lisieux.... A pilgrimage begins with a hope and a promise. This is a gift given from in front of us, from before us, from the light that shines ahead of us on our path. This promise sustains us as the hardships and disappointments rain down on us.

**TO  
GETHER**

We may hit a fork in the road and we have to decide if we will stumble ahead, trusting in the grace that calls us forward or turn off the road in disappointment and bitterness.



We basically have to decide if we want the hardships to work for us or against us. If we want the hardships and changes to work for us, we have to keep our eyes on the light on the hill. Then we can take one step at a time. We keep the dream alive. We celebrate each step that we take to get closer to our goal.

The surprise always is that our arrival at the end is apt to alter everything. Nothing is exactly the way we pictured it. As this throws us off balance, there are still wonderful surprises and more on the way, so we still have to wait for the future to unfold.

Since the very first step patience has been necessary. We cannot leap toward the goal of our pilgrimage but we go forward little by little. And we do it with others if we really want to succeed. Others are also bound to have worries different from ours as well as gifts that are different so there is mutual patience.

All this comes to mind as Spred is part of the Chicago Archdiocesan movement called **Renew My Church**.

This movement is starting a process to re-imagine our parish life. 391 parishes have been gathered into 97 groupings.<sup>(1)</sup> These groupings are still a work in progress. New ideas and insights are bound to alter these patterns but at least they are a start.

To the delight of the leaders in Spred, there are Spred groups in 62 of the 97 groupings. Many groupings have more than one Spred center. At the present time, there are 140 centers operating with 15 more in planning stages preparing to open. There are over 1,000 Spred volunteer catechists.

What might the changes brought about by **Renew My Church** mean for Spred?

Vision We share the vision of this Archdiocesan pilgrimage into the future. We see the re-groupings of parishes as an effort to have parishes become more vibrant, welcoming and more in mission to others. While we stumble toward this goal, we know that whatever happens will bring grace and we will never get it all together to our satisfaction. But we want to remember that Spred has assets to contribute to this process.

Mentality Spred is imbued with a mission to welcome those who are marginalized and often forgotten. This spirit of compassion and care is part of the goal of **Renew My Church** and so Spred has something to contribute to this conversation.

Spred also accompanies individuals and families. “The church will have to initiate everyone--priests, religious, and laity--into the “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life....Genuine spiritual accompaniment begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization.”<sup>(2)</sup> Each person with a disability in Spred has another person as a helper or sponsor to be with them in their growth of faith and each Spred group has a core team to accompany the whole community of faith.

**WE WALK**

Spred works in a collaborative spirit. In any cluster of parishes, there are catechists and friends with their families from the general area. The leaders meet to figure out which parish will take responsibility for all the little children in the area, which parish will focus in the teens, which one will work with young adults and which ones will accompany adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As people shift from one age to the next one, from one parish center to another, Spred members are remarkably resilient. They shift roles, locations, environments, and resources in an ever widening network.

Spred catechists are incredibly generous with their time, talent, and treasure. They know that the easiest way to become poor is to have a family member with a disability, so the catechists step forward with untold generosity.

Method Spred adult volunteers meet to pray before every interaction with those who have various disabilities. It is only this regular prayer together that maintains the vigor of the community of faith. The prayer form used begins by focusing on everyday life events and leads to a discovery of the presence of God at work in our everyday lives. The process is based on the belief that on our pilgrimage God is beside us as well as before us. At the conclusion of our Spred Family Liturgies we sing: "In Jesus we walk, with Jesus before us we walk, with Jesus behind us we walk, with Jesus above us we walk, with Jesus about us we walk. It is finished in Jesus." (3)

Program Spred relies on a core team in each community of faith. They accompany all the helpers/sponsors as well as those with various disabilities in order to manage the needs of all. Each group moves forward only as fast as the slowest member. It is required to be able to be self aware and to be able to work well in a team. Spred has three requirements to exist.

Space Spred needs space. We do not use textbooks with our friends who seldom read, but we need a space that can be "read" as sacred and welcoming. As parishes are grouped and re-grouped the Spred community of faith has to be remembered as needing space that is appropriate to their needs.

Time Spred also needs time. We just cannot hurry our friends. We do one thing at a time at a pace that pleases the slowest one. This is actually a gift for all who learn how pleasant events and friends are when there is time to enjoy them.

People There needs to be enough people to manage all the personal needs and group needs in a welcoming and coherent way.

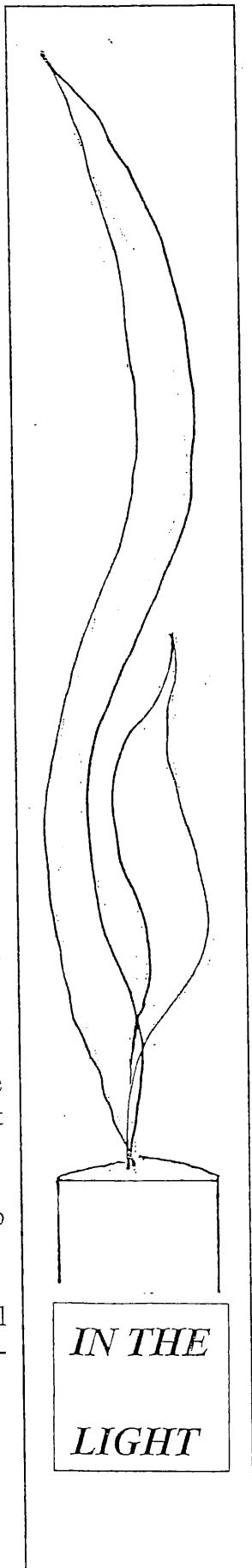
We are enjoying and celebrating the growth in Spred at the present moment. The future will surely bring changes to the Archdiocese, to all the parishes and to all the Spred communities of faith, but we will move together into the future and enjoy all the surprises.

Sr.Mary Therese Harrington  
Spred Chicago

1 Renew My Church - Archdiocesan Groupings posted January 2017

2 Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, Evangelii Gaudium, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 2013

3 Ian Callanan, In Beauty We Walk, (Based on the Navajo Night Prayer) GIA Publications 2012



## SPRED CALENDAR

### Planning Meetings

Vicariate I Deanery A, B, C.

St. Francis de Sales/Lake Zurich      Wednesday May 17

Vicariate I Deaneries DEF

St. John the Evangelist/Streamwood    Tuesday May 23

Vicariate II Deaneries A, E, F

St. Nicholas/Evanston                 Wednesday May 24

Vicariate II Deaneries B, C, D

St. Vincent de Paul/Chicago          Monday May 22

Vicariate III Deaneries A, B    Vicariate IV Deaneries A

St. John Bosco/Chicago               Thursday May 25

Vicariate III Deaneries C, E

Spred Center, Lowe Ave

Tues. May 30

Vicariate IV Deaneries B, C, E

St. Vincent Ferrer/River Forest

Mon. May 22

Vicariate V Deanery A, B, C

St. Cajetan/Chicago

Wed. May 17

Vicariate V Deanery D, E

St. Alphonsus/Lemont

Wed. May 24

Vicariate VI Deaneries A, B, D

St. Ann/Lansing

Thurs. June 1

# SPRED

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Spred Family Liturgy, May 7, Spred Center Chicago

Observation: 6-10 & 22+, May 1, 15.  
11-16, May 2, 16