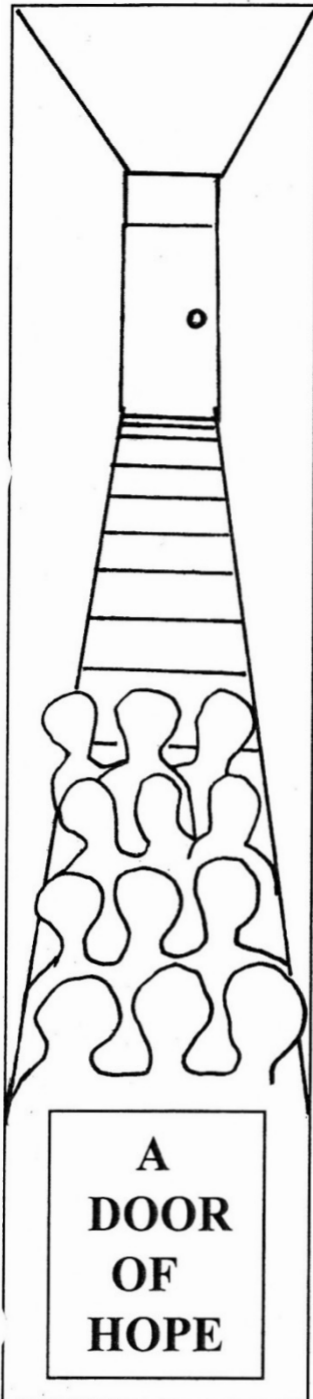


SPRED

A publication of Special Religious Development

Volume 102 | Number 2 | October 2022



SPRED communities are planning to return to hosting our SPRED ministry after two and a half years of dealing with COVID-19 and its variants. Another factor which our SPRED ministry is dealing with is the Renew My Church grouping decisions that have impacted parish SPRED environments. Some parishes closed and that impacted the SPRED ministry and put the catechists on a journey to find a parish that would welcome them. Some parishes merged and were asked to relocate to another parish. There are also SPRED communities who are still waiting for a decision about where to relocate their ministry.

During this time, several communities discovered that catechists had decided to retire. This left some communities with only one or two catechists. Presently, those communities are working hard to find the catechists needed to reopen.

Why is it difficult for a SPRED community to move to a new location? Because of the amount of work required to move the activities, chairs, tables and other furniture for both the meeting and celebration rooms. SPRED catechists work hard to create this amazing place to meet one another and their God.

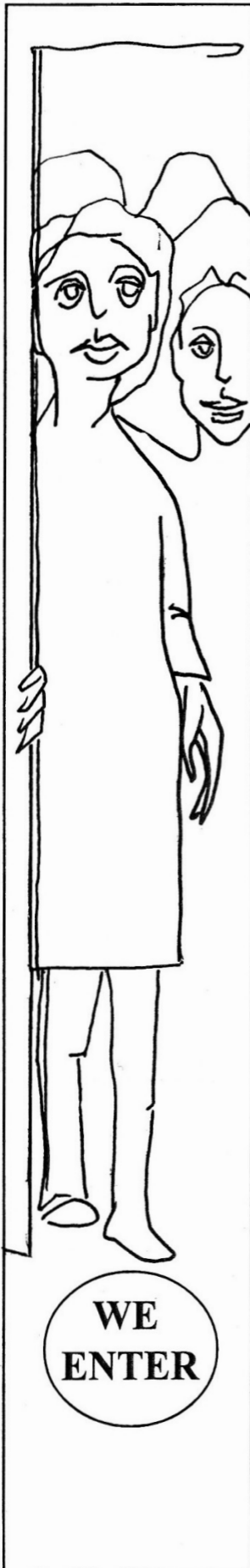
“How many groups have painted a room, carpeted it, and built cabinets, all at the expense of the members, and when it is all finished, the parish leaders declare that the room is needed by others! The group is left to start all over, often with the least desirable space in the parish. One has to recover, reflect, and find meaning and determination in order to start over.

“Why do we care about the space that we want to use? Because... within our space, we build a zone of beauty.

“We know that when we are involved in SPRED, we are basically involved in developing relationships. This is because the joy of friendship is the human experience which corresponds most closely to the spiritual reality of faith.

“We want space that will mediate relationships, so that when we enter a space, we are more loving. We want space where we can place beautiful objects and we become beautiful as we relate to them. We want space where we can listen to beautiful music and experience inner and outer harmony.

“We want ecclesial space where we can initiate one another into a way of living together, a way of loving, a way of praying.”¹



How do we find the needed funds to prepare such a place? Often it is through the annual Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Drive for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. This drive usually takes place on the third weekend of September. Working with a local council, SPRED catechists can volunteer to collect funds. They wear yellow aprons, hold canisters and give out tootsie rolls. This money is intended for any group or organization that provides for people with learning challenges. Our program is one that is greatly benefited. Sometimes SPRED communities collect at the Masses that weekend while the Knights are in the streets or in front of stores designated by the council for this drive.

The Knights keep track of how much is collected by each group or organization volunteering to help that weekend. However, each council designates a specific time of year for the distribution of their checks from this drive. Councils can host this distribution in December, March, May or July following this drive. This means that SPRED communities need to keep some of the monies from this fund available to meet their needs for the current year. They are exempt from turning these monies over to the parish general fund annually since it is a specific drive with a specific population acknowledged. SPRED chairpersons work with the parish business manager to ensure that monies from this fund are used for SPRED. We are aware that the Knights do so much more for the parish, but this drive is specific.

The monies from this fund can be used for SPRED training for each of the catechists, for summer social events like going to a movie or a ball game, for furnishings for their SPRED environment, for activities to be used during the preparation process, or for our Mamre dinner dances so our friends can attend. As a parish chairperson, when I received our check, I would invite the Grand Knight and the tootsie roll chairman to our SPRED environment to show them what we bought from last year's check and what we want to purchase with this year's check. They were very impressed by the beauty of the environment and how we enhanced this sacred space for our friends each year.

I am reminded in *The Directory for Catechesis* that:

“Sacred Scripture presents, in an unmistakable way, God as the source of all splendor and beauty.

“In the New Testament, all beauty is concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ, revealer of the divine who ‘reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature.’ (Heb.1:3) His Gospel is captivating because it is news that is beautiful, good, joyful, full of hope. ...In his relationship with men and women, he spoke beautiful words that with their efficacy heal the depths of the soul: ‘your sins are forgiven.’ (Mk.2:5) ...He performed beautiful actions: he healed, he set free, he accompanied humanity and touched its wounds.”²

“The Church, therefore, bears in mind that in order to reach the human heart, the proclamation of the Risen One must shine forth with goodness, truth and beauty.”³

“Communities are called not only to take care of the most fragile, but to recognize the presence of Jesus, who in a special way manifests himself in them.”⁴

I remember listening to a true story from one of our SPRED groups who had an environment that they had to put together and taken apart every week for our 24 sessions. The catechists decided to invite the pastor for a meal in their space. He was so moved by what he realized they were doing that he provided permanent space for their SPRED group.

When catechists complete their training, they can seek their local Knights of Columbus Council to become involved with their Tootsie Roll drive for funds. They can also seek parish volunteers who could make cabinets for them or people who would create placemats and napkins for their table. In thanking these people, a SPRED community might invite them to a meal in their SPRED environment. A SPRED community could have an open house in their space after the parish Masses and serve refreshments. I believe that the more people see their space, the more people would become catechists.

In another section of *The Directory for Catechesis*, we are reminded that

“Sacraments are gifts from God, and the liturgy, even before being rationally understood, needs to be lived: therefore no one can refuse the sacraments to persons with disabilities. The community that is able to discover the beauty and joy of faith with these brothers and sisters are capable of becoming enriched. Pastoral inclusion and involvement in liturgical action, especially on Sundays, is therefore important.”⁵

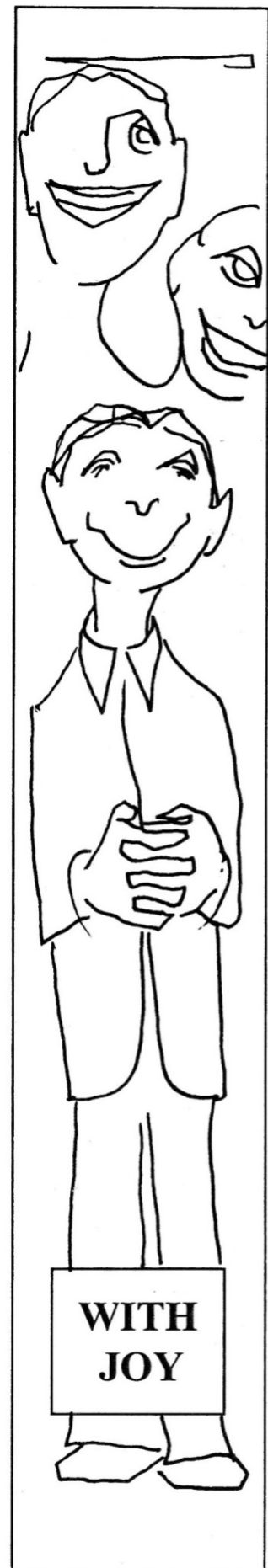
On the first Sundays of the month (October through May, excluding January), we host a SPRED Family Mass at 11 a.m. at the Archdiocesan SPRED Chapel on South Lowe Avenue. We invite all SPRED communities—some invite their pastors—to experience how our friends can give witness as they become involved in liturgical action with catechists and family members. We also provide workshops for catechists to become comfortable with slight adjustments so that they in turn can offer Family Masses in their own parishes with the help and support of SPRED groups in their area.

“The liturgy is one of the essential and indispensable sources of the Church’s catechesis...”⁶

“The spaces for catechesis are settings in which the community expresses its own way of evangelizing. ...It is therefore necessary that such environments be welcoming and well-kept, that they convey a climate of familiarity that fosters serene involvement in community activities.”⁷

This all begins with the effort to create a SPRED environment that speaks of beauty.

Elizabeth Sivek
Chicago SPRED Community Religious Worker



1. Harrington, S.H. Sr. Mary Therese. "We Stand at the Door and Knock; Space for Education in Faith." *NAMRP Quarterly*, Fall, 1986. Vol.17, No.3, p.2

2. *The Directory for Catechesis*, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, no. 106

3. *Ibid.* no. 108

4. *Ibid.* no. 269

5. *Ibid.* no. 272

6. *Ibid.* no. 95

7. *Ibid.* no. 222

CHICAGO SPRED CALENDAR**SPRED Center:** 2956 South Lowe Avenue**Training (Orientations) 2022**

SPRED Center, Contact: 312.842.1039

Role Orientation (3-1)

Oct. 15, 22, 1 – 6 p.m.

Helper Catechist Role Orientation

SPRED Center, Contact: 312.842.1039

English: Nov. 5, 1 – 6 p.m.

SPRED Family Liturgy, SPRED Center

English: 11 a.m. Nov. 6, Dec. 4

Spanish: 11 a.m. Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18

Observation, SPRED Center, 312.842.1039

6–10 Group, Oct. 17, Nov. 7, 21, Dec. 5 at 6 p.m.

11–16 Group, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, 22, Dec. 6 at 7 p.m.

17/21 Group, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, 22, Dec. 6 at 7 p.m.

22+ Group, Oct. 17, Nov. 7, 21, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.

Observation, Queen of Angels**4412 North Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625**

17–21 Group, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, 16, Dec. 7

22+ Group, Oct. 18, 20, 22, Nov. 1, 3, 5, 15, 17, 19

and Dec. 6, 8, 10

Reservations: Julia Hess, jchqofa3@gmail.com

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Special Religious Development

2956 South Lowe Avenue

Chicago, IL 60616

312.842.1039

spred-chicago.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 2769

SPRED