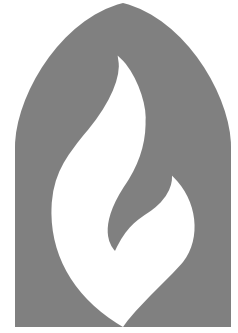
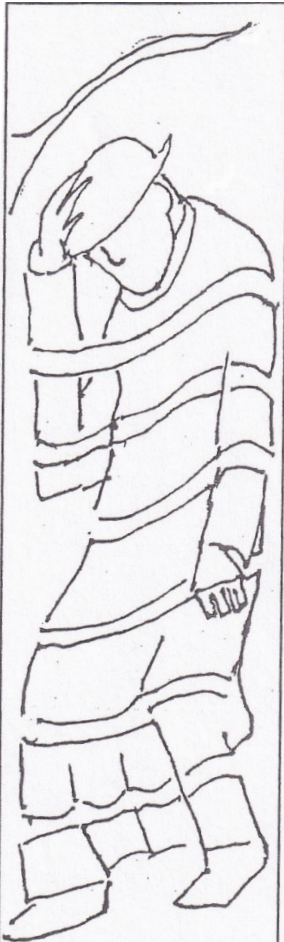


# SPRED



A publication of Special Religious Development

Volume 103 | Number 3 | March 2023



*YOU  
DO NOT  
KNOW*

Ann has been in my SPRED community of faith for five years. She is 14 years old and has coped well with her intellectual limitations. For the last months, she has been sick and has missed her sessions with us. Her mother brought us a little poem that she asked her mother to write down.

The wind is blowing softly,  
I think about my friends.  
The leaves are falling slowly,  
I think about my friends.  
The wind is blowing in my face,  
I think about my friends.  
I look toward heaven,  
I think about my friends.

I was more than happy to receive her poem and I was “blown away” by her ability to juxtapose her experience of wind and her friends. In our SPRED sessions we had evoked our experience of the wind and the mystery of the Holy Spirit.

In the story of Nicodemus, Jesus says “Do not be afraid that I told you ‘you must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it will, and you cannot hear the sound that it makes. You do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Jn3:7)

In SPRED, we are familiar with the mystery of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit pushes us in one direction rather than another. It blows us in the right way to go. It blows us forward to reach out to others in friendship. The Holy Spirit binds us together as a community of faith.

We juxtapose the Holy Spirit and the mystery of the Church in our creed on Sundays. “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church.” As members of the Church, we know that the Holy Spirit knits us together. As members of SPRED we know that the Holy Spirit knits us together.

The wind is blowing everywhere,  
I think about my friends.

For the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to all to move them interiorly to love God with their whole heart, with their whole understanding and with their whole strength (See Mk 12:30) and to love one another as Christ loves us.

In the sacrament of Confirmation, the celebrant prays:

All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide.



*WHERE  
IT COMES  
FROM*

Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of right judgment and courage,  
The spirit of knowledge and reverence,  
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

Our friends with intellectual and developmental disabilities need all the help they can get! It is a comfort to know that the Holy Spirit is at work as well as we are.

However, in the early days of SPRED whenever we would meet a teen, young adult or adult who was interested in belonging to one of our communities of faith, even though they may have received Holy Communion, virtually none of them had received the sacrament of Confirmation. I was mystified and set out to find out why.

We could certainly begin by trying to understand better the mystery of Confirmation. First of all, it was one of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Communion. At first, in the early church they were celebrated together but with time they took on a different rhythm of their own.

“As the early Church grew, it began to develop more consistent initiation practices, though they could vary from place to place. In general, initiation was a ritual unit that was typically celebrated together in one liturgy, moving from baptism to anointing to sharing in the Eucharist with the whole community. Documents from the early church show that communities practiced post-baptismal anointing and imposition of hands in the second to fourth centuries. These are symbols and gestures we now associate with confirmation, but there is still no evidence of a distinct sacrament of Confirmation in the early Church.”<sup>1</sup>

“With larger populations from greater geographical areas seeking to join the Church, it eventually became impractical for everyone to be initiated at one Easter Vigil celebration at the bishop’s church, as was typical in the early Church. One way this problem was addressed was by the way initiation rites developed over time to allow priests to baptize people in the outlying areas, with the understanding that those who were baptized would at some point receive a post-baptismal laying on of hands and anointing by the bishop. Particular practices still varied by region, but this practical response to the growth in Christianity is one of the reasons why the post baptismal laying on of hands and anointing that we know of as Confirmation became separated from the unified initiation rite.”<sup>2</sup>

Later, Protestant communities kept the sacraments of Baptism and Communion but dropped Confirmation. They created their own rite that was a completion of religious instruction.

Once it was clear to me that we have been influenced by the Protestant practice of having Confirmation as a kind of graduation from religious instruction, I understood better why our friends with various intellectual disabilities were not in line for Confirmation. They simply could not manage the instruction, the usual written material and the usual social service required. If they had significant limitations, they often could not cope with large crowds. At first, in the beginning of SPRED, we tried to remedy the situation by sending out a notice to the parishes in the Archdiocese that there would be Confirmation for our friends on a given day in May. Lo and behold we had more than 300 arriving at the door, including some coming by ambulance. We learned a lot that day. One thing was to never do it again! We tried for some coherence between our catechesis and the ritual of Confirmation, but the large crowd defeated our purpose.

We tried various other strategies over several years. We finally came to realize that the one person who best understood and could relate to our friends in a sacramental encounter was the parish priest. He was most often at ease with our friends and their families. As we talked about Confirmation as being a sacrament of love and belonging, it seemed more and more awkward to have the one stranger in the group be the bishop. We had to be concrete about this reality and not talk about the bishop in the abstract. If no one in the group really knew the bishop, it was an issue to confront. At the Easter Vigil, the pastor was comfortable with the renewed order of the sacraments of initiation.

Finally at the request of Fr. James H. McCarthy, Director of SPRED, Francis Cardinal George on February 8, 1999, gave delegation of powers for Confirmation for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities to Fr. James H. McCarthy to be passed on to pastors who wish to confirm those in SPRED communities of faith.

On September 23, 2016, Blase Cardinal Cupich reaffirmed this delegation of powers for Confirmation for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Again, Fr. James H. McCarthy was authorized to pass on this delegation to pastors who wished to confirm those in SPRED communities of faith.

Since 1999, virtually all members of SPRED have received the Sacrament of Confirmation from their pastors during the same liturgy as their First Communion. For most, this development was appreciated. Although it is still possible to request a bishop to preside, I am not aware of this happening.

On August 5, 2022, Fr. Jim McCarthy passed away. Before he died, he had chosen Joseph Quane to replace him. Joe, being a layman, cannot pass on the delegation of power for Confirmation to pastors, so a new path forward had to be developed. With the assistance of many, the following has been set up.

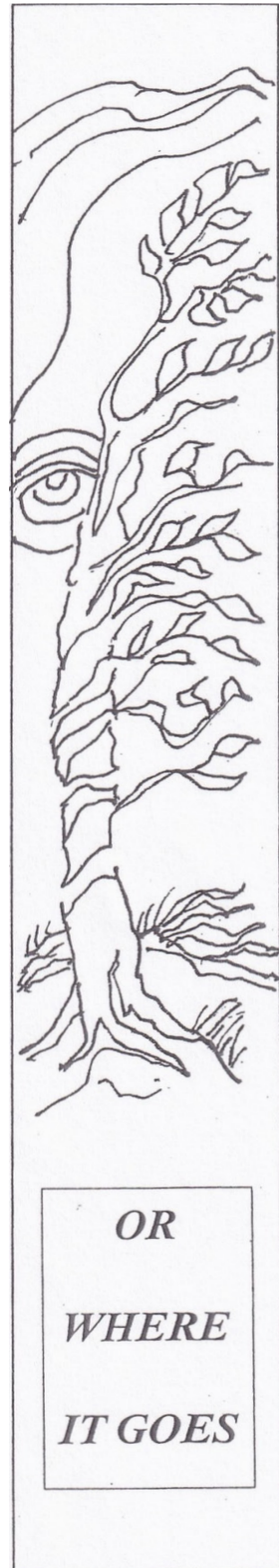
1. A letter (e-mail) requesting delegation to confirm should be sent to the Vicar or Associate Vicar of Canonical Services. At this time, it would be Fr. Francis Kup, Associate Vicar.
2. Please send a copy to Joe Quane, Executive Director of SPRED ([jquane@archchicago.org](mailto:jquane@archchicago.org)).
3. Request the faculty to confirm, state the situation (Candidate is in SPRED).
4. Provide the name(s) of the candidates,
5. The date
6. The parish location of the Confirmation.

The wind is blowing softly, I think about my friends.

On a personal note, this will be my last newsletter as writer and editor. On January 31st, 2023, I retired from SPRED, but I will always be part of SPRED and SPRED will always be part of me.

Sr. Mary Therese Harrington  
SPRED Chicago

1, 2, Gabrielli, Houston, Taylor, *In Introduction to the Restored Order, History, Theology and Catechesis*, Liturgy Training Publication, Chicago II USA 2022.



**CHICAGO SPRED CALENDAR 2023****SPRED Center:** 2956 South Lowe Avenue**Training (Orientations) 2023**

SPRED Center, Contact: 312.842.1039

Role Orientation (3-1):

March 11, 18, 1 – 6 p.m.

English Helper Catechist Orientation:

March 4, 1 – 6 p.m.

Spanish Helper Catechist Orientation:

March 25, 1 – 6 p.m.

**Observation,** SPRED Center, 312.842.1039

6–10 Group, 6 p.m. on March 13, 27, April 24, May 8

11–16 Group, 7 p.m. on March 28, April 25, May 9

17/21 Group, 7 p.m. on March 28, April 25, May 9

22+ Group, 7 p.m. on March 27, April 24, May 8

**SPRED Family Liturgy,** SPRED Center

English: 11 a.m. March 5, April 2

Spanish: 11 a.m. March 19, April 16

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**