

“I have had worse partings, but none that  
so  
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is  
roughly  
Saying what God alone could perfectly  
show  
How selfhood begins with a walking  
away  
And love is proved in letting go.”

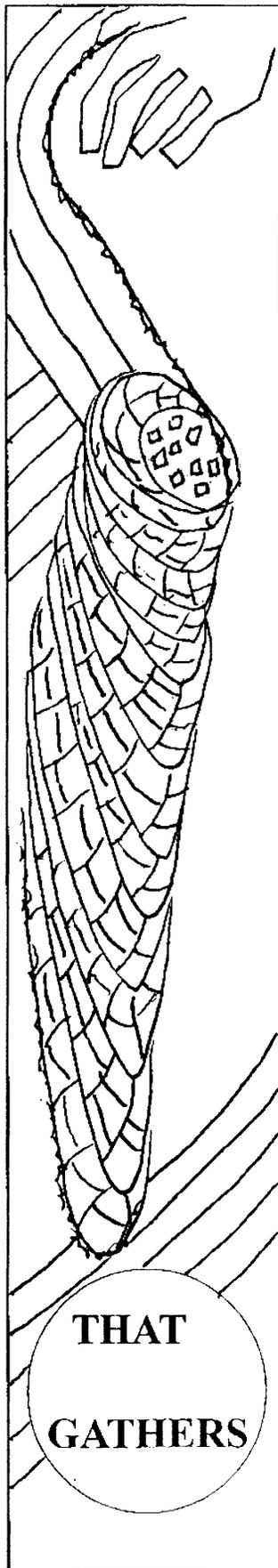
This selection from Walking Away by the poet, Cecil Day Lewis, was written after waving goodbye to his son at the school gate. Peter Stanford used the selection in an essay ruminating on a similar situation in his own life: his son, eight leaving home. 1 His thoughts go in so many directions: the exercise of parenthood; the launching of a child toward adulthood; how will communication be maintained; the bereft feeling he experiences; is this an undertow of the future? the painful effect on a younger sibling, etc. His reflections are multifaceted and multilayered.

However, suppose a parent, or guardian or sibling of a person with disabilities read this same poem. Where would their thoughts drift? What is seen as poignantly positive could flip to images singularly gray. The title itself, Walking Away, would sting. The point is that any experience is like a kaleidoscope turning before our eyes, new configurative meanings appear and beckon to be explored. Truth and contradictions are thrown together.

Karl Rahner, S.J., shortly before his death in March 1984, at 80 years of age, spoke of the pride of place which an analogical way of thinking had in a retrospective on his life’s work. Analogy is characterized by an assertion about a specific reality which is legitimate and clear, however, at the same time this assertion is also negated and denied. There is always this strange back and forth between affirmation and negation. 2

Specialized catechesis using the Method Vivre, presumes that the universe, and every story, thing, and relationship in it reflects the dynamic movement of love of the Trinity. This imprint is called **intentionality**. The aim and purpose of God’s relationship to the universe is the gift of Himself. In the Eucharistic liturgy, the priest proclaims, “Father...

All things are of your making,  
All times and seasons obey your laws,



THAT  
GATHERS

but you chose to create us in your own image,  
setting us over the whole world in all its wonder.  
You made us stewards of creation,  
to praise you day by day for the marvels of your wisdom and power  
through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

At a gathering of Spred diocesan leaders in Glasgow, Scotland recently, Sr. Mary Therese Harrington of Chicago chose the focus of the gathering from what the group had desired in Fribourg in 2003; we would do symbol, not just talk about it. We did this by delving into the five senses. We wanted to meet the God who creates, elects, saves, covenants and sanctifies us - through one sense at a time. One sense, many stories, going in many directions.

In catechesis this sensorial kind of exploration is expected and encouraged. It helps everyone to sink below the surface of the topic. Following such full participation in catechesis, we realize that a net must be cast to pull all accounts into a consolidated awareness. The leader gives a focus and begins to thread a needle toward the Message of the session. A single, specific, **intentionality**, a particular insight into the presence of God, acknowledges how we all feel in common about something. This **intentionality** net pulls us **together** and **forward**. It takes place as a process during the interiorization of the human experience. The many start to be pulled into one. The particulars start to be tied into a focus that is common to all the sharing. We move as a group while retaining our individuality.

There are two manifestations of intentionality, the universal and the particular. The purpose of all phases of a session is to celebrate the universal presence in the particular, the forever in the here and now, the good in the conflicted, the truth in illusion, the I that is you, this you that is I, the All-That-Is, in mere words. <sup>4</sup> The special presence of God is reflected in that which is sensorial, as well as in another way in the goal and title of a session. But more than that, His presence illuminates our liturgical awareness as well as our awareness of the historical Jesus.

To cast the net of intentionality, to rein in this to-ing and fro-ing, this helter-skelter consciousness, there are phases that are required in catechesis. This includes the adult preparation session, and in the total preparation session with our friends, the preparation phase and the catechesis proper.

First of all, in the preparation phase of the session with our friends, many activities are prepared and displayed. As the members enter the preparation room, they need time to adjust. Some catechists and friends stand for several minutes finding the transition to another kind of consciousness difficult. An activity may be chosen aimlessly, haphazardly. The participation in or the response to the material chosen can be superficial, outside the activity, shallow. It does not capture nor beckon to one's attention. There is no internal settling down. Another choice, however, can snag attention. One goes below the surface, the attention narrows, grows deeper. Concentration erases the incongruous elements. There is now only the present. Anxieties drop away. Our awareness is disposed, readied, quieted. In the group that is gathered, the many are becoming one.

In the adult preparation session, the preparation is not physical. Instead, a literary selection is

presented to induce the adult catechists into that “once upon a time” world. The story churns up the imagination through an account that is mundane but hopefully intriguing. The progression is made more personal by a question we are asked to answer by drawing from our own past life. Again, all kinds of images surface, and the dynamics of focus and choice are brought to bear before we share this personal memory with the group. We share some portion of the poetry or weary routineness of our lives. It is taxing to give a personal response, and once given, sometimes there is a fleeting sense that the offering is inadequate. An internal silence can descend, pressing in a set of meanings that can almost seem to be a negation of what was just shared. This is the “coming together of opposites,” fusing the affirmation and the negation simultaneously. It is analogical thinking. It is symbolic awareness. The many are becoming one.

In the total catechetical session with our friends, the leader catechist, with the aid of the helper catechists, evokes an experience with which everyone can identify. The leader is juggling simultaneously, attending or disruptive behaviors within the group, the mercurial awareness of some and the leader’s own disciplined choice of direction. Her decision is grounded in the specific **intentionality** of the session. It focuses on the train of thought that connects the parts in a sequence, that gives direction to the leader and thereby to the group.

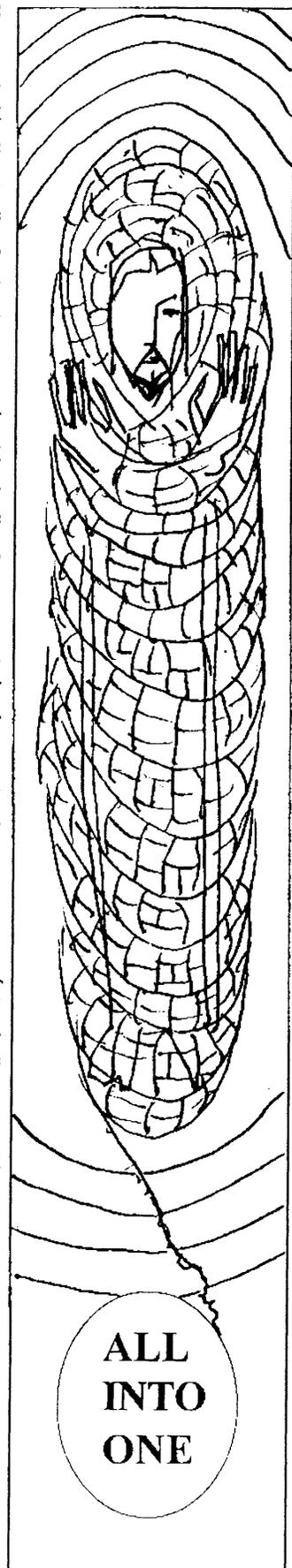
The leader has presented the focus gradually by way of a picture, a sculpture, flowers, branches, etc. The leader strives to elicit responses from everyone, urged by comments by helper catechists. This moment is crucial. There is such a multiplicity of possibilities in play with our friends with disabilities. The leader can feel like one holding the reins of six or twelve horses. Some respond energetically and others can go down paths that are totally tangential, digressive. Others may be non-verbal and may need to be stimulated with facts gleaned beforehand from the family to be able to be incorporated into the session. And, coincidentally, the distracted or disturbed need to be thrown a line to move them into the development of the session.

The leader needs in a sense to be already present in the mystery, and steadfastly make a lot of on the spot choices to meld the group into a unity. It is the epitome of multitasking: keeping one’s eye on the ball, where one is going, while trying to harness divergent needs that are pulling in different directions. The many are becoming one.

Walking Away, and walking towards, are happening at the same time. There is confusion and there is silence. Yet it is all about being in communion with Mystery, the many becoming one, the coming-together of opposites, analogical thinking, affirming and negating. The Universal and the Particular commingle. How can we put the incomprehensible reality of God in words? We must try- inductively, for persons with developmental disabilities for God’s intentionality is to gift us with His love.

Rev. James H. McCarthy  
Director, Spred Chicago

1. The Tablet, July 23, 2005
2. “Experience of a Catholic Theologian,” by Karl Rahner, S.J. Theological Studies, 61, 2001
3. Eucharistic Prayer for Sundays in Ordinary Time, #5
4. From a poem by Tom Keane, San Antonio; “The Poetry of Prayer.”



## SPRED CALENDAR

### CORE TEAM TRAINING 2006

3-1 Role Orientation in English and Spanish  
for parish chairpersons, leader and activity  
catechists.                      Saturday from 1 to 6  
October 14, 21

**Location:**        Spred Center 2956 So. Lowe  
Chicago, 312-842-1039  
Third floor, of Spred Church building

### Send Your Mass Intentions to:

Fr. James H. McCarthy  
Spred Center  
2956 South Lowe, Chicago, Il. 60616

### Mamre Dinner Dance

April 22, 2007 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace

### OBSERVATION 2006

6-10 Monday 6:00 p.m. Oct. 2, 16, Nov. 6  
22+ Monday 7:00 p.m. Oct. 2, 16, Nov. 6

### HELPER CATECHIST TRAINING

Spred Center, English and Spanish  
2956 So Lowe, Chicago, 312-842-1039  
Saturday, Nov. 11, 1:00 to 6:00  
Jackie Bonds and Ramiro Hernandez

Queen of Angels Spred Center  
4412 N. Western Ave. 2nd floor, Chicago  
Saturday, Oct. 7, 11:00 to 4:00  
Betty Rogus

### Spred Family Liturgies

Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3, Feb. 4, Mar. 4, April 1, May 6

# Spred

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