



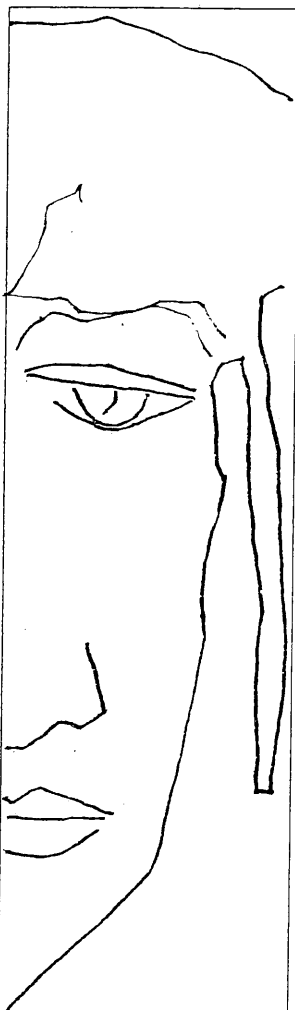
*What is beautiful about the desert, you may ask.  
 The answer is that "somewhere, far below its surface,  
 It holds a spring of fresh water."  
 (Antoine St. Exupery, The Little Prince)*

I was recently caught up in a bedtime fiction that artfully unraveled the reveries of a young man branded with wounds of family affliction and its woeful shadowlands.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of a grave internal struggle, the central figure finds meaning and hope in the ties he carves with an unlikely tangle of friends. The author draws the reader masterfully into the vortex of their turbulent adventures as they wrestle with the dark side of life. Clinging tenaciously to 20 years of hard-formed friendships, the hallowed group endures one final devastating tragedy which rocks their faith and shatters their quiet Charleston, South Carolina haven. As their healing begins, the young man reflects:

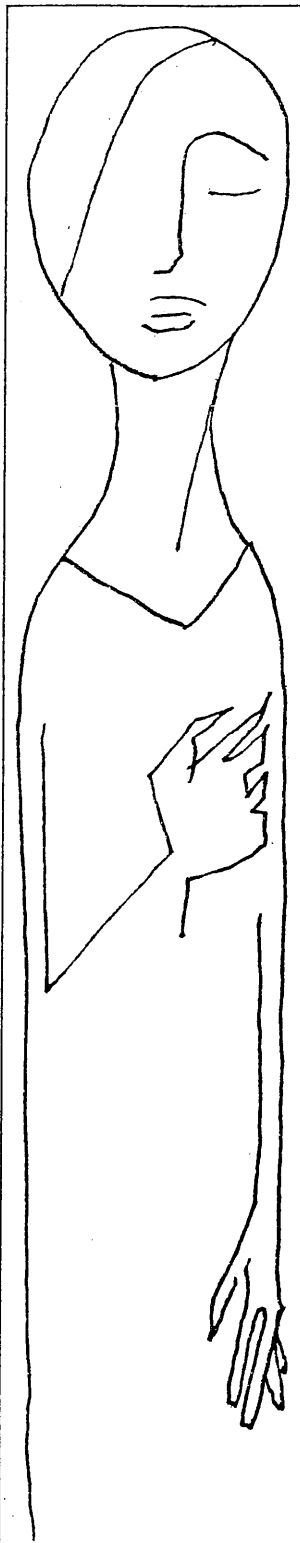
*We have been touched by the fury of storms and the wrath of an angry, implacable God. But that is what it means to be human, born to nakedness and tenderness and nightmare in the eggshell fragility of mortality and flesh. The immensity of the Milky Way settles over the city, and the earthworms rule beneath the teeming gardens in their eyeless world. I am standing with my best friends in the world in complete awe at the loveliness of the South.*

I revisited this passage several times. As I rested with it, I gradually became aware of the reason for its tug at my heart. It is a lyric analogy of the clash of dark meeting light - the advent of hope. It resonated with an evening seminar that I had shared with a group of Spred catechists. We explored the polar realities of light and dark within the Spred venue by identifying the elements of a community of hope and how a Spred community shifts between the two realities. As I absorbed the richness of each person's contribution, I realized that I had a mandate to share. The Spred process is a genuine and unique treasure. The catechists, their Spred partners, and their profound experiences in communities of faith are the soul and the heartbeat of this ministry - of the Church itself. Let their words wash over you ever so gently and allow them to stir the embers of your reflection.

*Hurt - to be human is to feel or have felt pain. All of us have felt the loss of a loved one or a dream unfulfilled. We may not always share our pain, but until friends do, they have not yet discovered the mask that they hide behind. Hope is to remove the mask, to stand equal, one before the other, each before God. The loss that one has had is the loss of all. Each in*



**ADVENT  
 PATH**



## FROM HURT

*their own way must enter the space and take the time to express the hurt and find peace. Spred offers us the time and the space and the friendships. (George H., catechist)*

*I am sometimes overcome with sadness that our friends will not be able to lead a 'normal' life. They will always carry their unique challenges. Yet so do I. Time has made me aware that these boys are filled with life, with love, with the Holy Spirit. I am filled with a hope that they give me - a hope that life is not about living 'normal', but living fully through and for God. It is as simple as that. There is nothing more to it; nothing less. (Elise M-S. catechist)*

*I find that grief or the sadness of events of my day, my life, seem to become manageable because of my experience of a small intimate community. I find hope in the stories of others and am able to look at my own grief in a new way. Our friends often name their hurt in expressions of desire. Some want family; some want to live on their own; some want to marry or have children; others want to go places or be more independent. We embrace the reality of their hurt and acknowledge their desires and disappointments. Our acceptance honors them and gives them hope. It is difficult to embrace hurt. But when there is a community of friends to bring comfort, we can slowly make progress toward hope. (Betty R., catechist)*

*God is with us at all times to share in our pain, our sorrow and our happiness. He is with us to support us through both hurtful and hopeful times. Our Spred community emulates this concept. We are there for one another - friends and catechists - to allow a time and a place for our expression of feelings; to help each other identify those feelings; and to allow ourselves to be there empathically to share the pain. We can't take it away, but can bring about healing through support and prayer. We need to follow the lead of our Spred friends and develop an honesty and openness that embraces both hurt and hope. (Laura P., parent and catechist)*

*The question has me wondering. We share our pain in the session with catechists. Do we fear treading there with our Spred friends? Is that really sharing as a community of hurt? I think we need to ask where it hurts, since pain is often the pathway to peace, we can add this element to our sessions to deepen our community; to transcend our pain and grow. We don't want to dwell in the uncomfortable, yet it brings us back to acceptance and growth in a profound way. Because we move through pain, we become a community of hope. We move through dark into light. (Jeanie B., catechist)*

*I almost lost my faith after my son was born. My immature theology and world-view didn't fit the reality of his condition. My hurt is so often far more tangible than my hope. My fears are so much larger than my faith. I need community to draw me out of fear and hurt and into joy. True community reaches out with flawed helpless arms to embrace other broken, wounded people in God's name. When we meet in the mystery of our brokenness and turn together to look at God, we are lifted up and our strength is renewed. Is that the message of every Spred session. We don't have 'it'...God has 'it'...we get 'it' by coming together with the single purpose of enjoying God and each other; 'It can be hope, strength, love, salvation, joy, silence, peace, and so much more. But we get 'it' by knowing that we*

*aren't able to make it without a community of faith coming together in praise and thanksgiving. When we gather together at the altar, we know God's presence and discover that we have the strength to go another day, take another step. It doesn't 'fix' anything...it doesn't change anything. Yet actually, it fixes everything and nothing is the same.* (Jeanne F., parent and catechist)

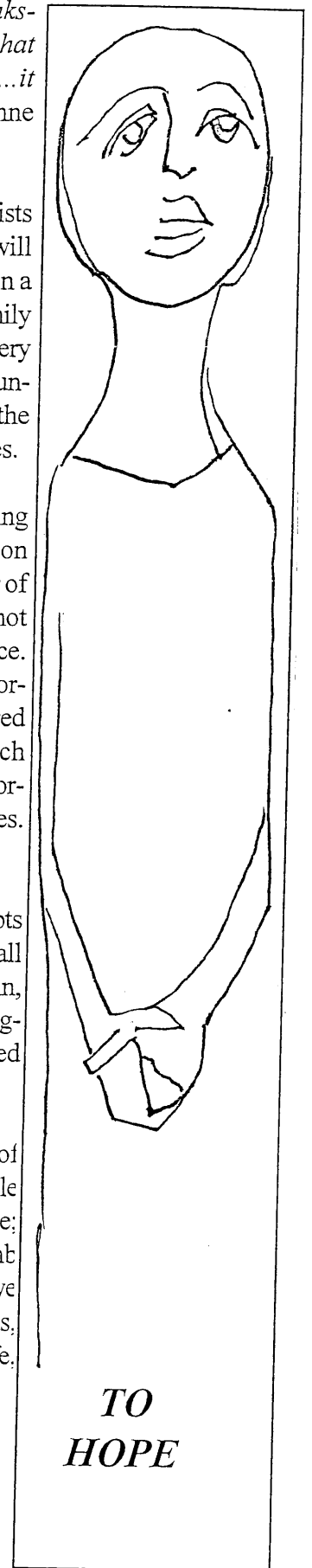
When I visit Spred communities, share seminars and workshops, I find communities of catechists at various levels of maturity with the Spred process and intimacy with one another. Some will relate to these responses, others won't. The depth of personal sharing is fully dependent on a spirit of trust. One is willing to peer into the dark abyss when one can count on their Spred family to prevent them from being lost in it. A community of faith holds one another up and honors every aspect of life. It feels so good to have a place to open one's heart and soul without judgment, unsolicited advice, or any breach of confidentiality. Trust bestows the courage to venture into the polar realities of life keeping the tension in balance...yes, even with our friends with disabilities.

As a field worker, I focus on the formation of new Spred communities; the mentoring of existing Spred communities; and the renewal of faltering Spred communities. The theater of animation embodies the juggling of fear and trust, welcome and rejection. Spred strips away the veneer of an unstained world view and asks a parish to tangle with an honest reflection of life. Spred is not any easy path, but it is an imperative to justice and love. The Spred proposition implies sacrifice. A myriad of obstacles will thwart the efforts of the catechists. There will be challenges of transportation, meeting space, imperfect attendance, broken families, chronic physical illnesses. Spred invites parishes to work collaboratively to construct a network of age groups to honor each person through the various life stages. This implies serving people with disabilities from neighboring parishes breaking down the narrow-mindedness of parochialism - a threat for some parishes. Yet nothing in this menacing litany is cause for retreat or surrender.

The intimacy of the Spred community fosters perseverance. Spred invites, welcomes and accepts the raw sobriety of the human sojourn. This act of faith bumps head on with the reality that we all endure sorrow from time to time. Spred is countercultural in the sense that it dares to assert pain, sadness, imperfection, brokenness with clarity and honesty. Infacing life with candor, we recognize our own membership in the anawim of humanity and cling to one another in companioned hope.

During the liturgical evocation our life situations encounter the grace of mystery. In the whirl of gravity and gaiety; in the class of opposites, we intuit the birthing of hope. We sense an indefinable resolution in an awareness of our ever present loving God. In the context of communion and love; in the realm of respect and acceptance; we are able to embrace the totality of life where the Lamb can nestle beside the Lion and somehow we know that all will be well. In our sacred circle we gaze into the faces of one another. We cradle the gift of life - my life, the lives of my Spred friends, the life of every person in our holy place. This is where the core mystery of our faith abides -Life, Death and Resurrection. This is where hope resides. This is the Spred experience.

Julia Hess  
Spred Chicago, Community Religious Worker



## SPRED CALENDAR

### SPRED FAMILY LITURGIES

Dec. 4, Feb. 5, March 4, April 1, May 6

### SPRED TRAINING

#### Introduction to Spred

for parish chairpersons, leader and activity catechists.

Saturdays Feb. 11, 18, 25, 2012, 1 to 6 p.m.

Spred Center, 2956 So. Lowe, Chicago, 3rd fl.

312-842-1039 English and Spanish

#### Role Orientation (Resource Days)

For parish chairpersons, leaders and

activity catechists in English and Spanish

Spred Center, 2956 So Lowe, Chicago

312-842-1039 Third floor over the church

Saturdays, March 10, 17, 2012 1:00 to 6:00

### SPRED REFLECTION WEEKEND

Jan. 6, 7, 8 2012 St. Benedict Abbey, Benet Lake WI

Contact: Julia Hess, 773-539-3634 All are welcome!

### MAMRE SPRING DINNER DANCE

APRIL 22, 2012

DRURY LANE, OAKBROOK

### FUTURE PLANNING

Please let us know if we can be of assistance if you are thinking of including Spred in your estate plans.

Spred 312-842-1039

### OBSERVATION

6-10 Mondays 6:00 p.m. Dec. 12, Feb. 13, 27

11-16 Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Dec. 13, Feb. 14, 28

17-21 Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Dec. 13, Feb. 14, 28

22+ Mondays 7:00 p.m. Dec. 12 Feb. 13, 27

#### Helper Catechist Training

St. Francis de Sales Spred Center

Saturday, Feb. 4, 2012, 11:00 to 4:00

33 S Buesching Rd (lower church) Lake Zurich II

English; Kelly Corrigan, 847-726-4742

St. Mary Spred Center, 97 Herrick Rd. Riverside II

Saturday April 21, 2012, 10:00 to 3:00 RSVP

Eileen Rose, emr 366@gmail.com, 708-447-0299

All are invited

to a Christmas Family Mass and Breakfast

Sunday, December 11, 2011

at Mundelein Seminary, Main Chapel, 11:00 a.m.

After breakfast...Santa!

as guests of the University of Notre Dame Club.

Donations accepted.

Directions:

Route 176, across from Carmel High School  
on the easter edge of Mundelein II, Please follow ND  
signs. contact Terry Kiwala at tekiwala@gmail.com

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