



# SPRED

Archdiocese of Chicago

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

2956 South Lowe Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60616

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**WE GIVE**

“Liturgy and Catechesis are intrinsically linked and are mutually enriching.”

I am amazed at how often I have used this quotation from “Catechesis in Our Times” during training sessions. I used it at initial Training so that new volunteers are introduced to Spred’s vision of enabling our friends to take their rightful place in the parish community. I have used it at Leadership Training for new Leader and Activity Catechists, deepening awareness of how liturgical Spred catechesis is. At our Liturgy/Mime Workshops twice a year, the emphasis is on liturgy but we don’t go far without realizing the strong connection with Spred catechesis.

On October 27th this year, Archbishop Conti of Glasgow Scotland, 13 priests, our 28 Spred groups - catechists and friends, our Spred drivers, Board members and many friends of Spred all gathered in St. Philomena’s church to celebrate a mass of thanksgiving for 25 years of Spred ministry in the Archdiocese of Glasgow. Reflecting on this experience of liturgy has given me ample opportunity to experience strong links with catechesis. As all 350 of us gathered, there were greetings of welcome and joy all around the church, it makes me think of the lovely psalm we have been using this year:

From the east and west, from the north and south  
We come to the table and feast.  
Where the first are last and the last are first  
And the greatest become the least.

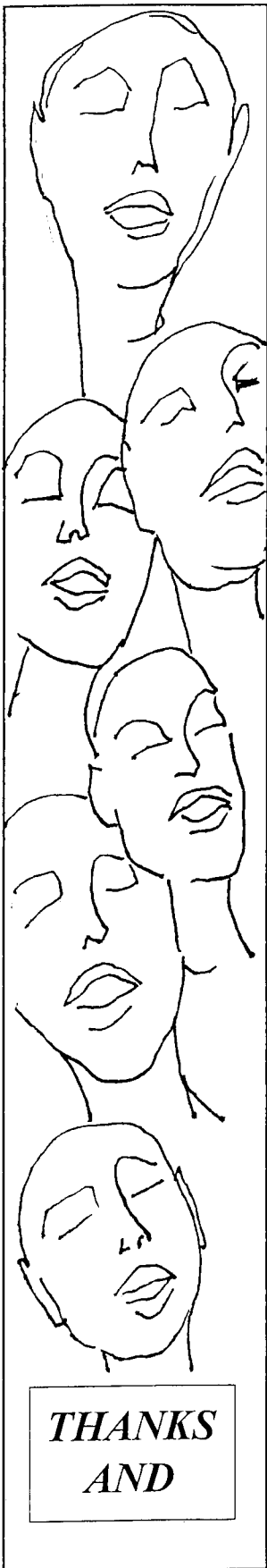
Outside the rain was pouring down relentlessly but inside there was a sense of contentment: we had arrived.

Gabe Huck’s book, Liturgy With Style and Grace, has been a source of inspiration to me over the years and I could almost see his words take shape as we settled into our act of praise.

“Liturgy is an action of the community.”

“Liturgy in fact helps create community because it can be a deep affirmation of what we share, what binds us together.”

“The skills needed to celebrate good liturgy are not easily learned when they are used only in the large gathering at church. These things like, how to sing in praise of God, how to be silent and reflect, how to listen to scripture, how to do our great prayer of thanksgiving are best learned in smaller groups.”



I thought of the small group Masses celebrated in our Spred groups over the years and it became obvious as the liturgy unfolded that this gathering was well practised in the skills of participation, silence, reverence and awe.

The Word was accessible to all through gesture and movement of those who created a visual focus during its proclamation. Out of the silence after the first reading the whole assembly expressed its exultation in song and gesture in our psalm of praise and thanksgiving.

There's a beautiful song in my heart  
A song of praise, deep down in my heart.

The Gospel from John was taken from the last discourse of Jesus before His death when he called us all "friends". The message proclaimed so sensitively and gently by Archbishop Conti to all the different areas of the church, was received with stillness and awe.

Jesus says to you today, "You are my friends.  
Rejoice and give thanks."

Any good liturgy depends on the preparation. When the ten people who were to take part in the liturgical mime gathered, we shared on the Word of God for our Mass of Thanksgiving. I was so touched by many of the comments that I wrote down what I could remember afterwards.

"I am amazed to be a friend of Jesus. It is so intimate."

"I am awed by the joy and blessings I have received through our friends."

"Jubilee is a time to praise, to celebrate with people who have enriched and shaped our lives."

"I have been so grateful to have time to pause and to glimpse below the surface of these 25 years, and take note of the many fruitful relationships I have made. It has been so special."

"This call to be a friend makes me aware of the privilege to be called to Spred."

"My life has been so changed - for the better."

It seemed to me we were all moved to a very deep level of gratitude for this time to pause and to take stock. I was reminded of those lovely words of Albert Schweitzer: "One thing stirs within me when I look back on my life: it is the fact that so many people meant so much to me without knowing it. They entered my life and became a spiritual power within me. ...if we had before us those who have been a blessing to us, they would be amazed to learn what passed from their life to ours."

As our liturgy moved on to the presentation of gifts, I was struck by the reverence with which this ritual action was performed. A catechist and friend carried the altar cloth and all eyes were focused as they unfolded and smoothed it out. Their body movements revealed the sacredness of this action. At every Spred session a catechist and friend put the table cover on our agape table. Through this ritual action we are all entering into ritual knowledge, that is, we are learning the language of ritual open to sacramental celebration.

Ritual actions, so prevalent in our Spred sessions, provide the context for ritual silence. We rest in silence after the message: we work in silence in the preparation room, we listen in silence as the Word is proclaimed. The rhythm of catechetical and liturgical silence creates an inner space to

“let God in”. The respect shown by the Leader catechist and by the presider at the liturgy enable us all to grow in the stillness of God-with-us. This was so evident at our Thanksgiving liturgy.

The author Daniel O’Leary in his book, “Begin with the Heart”, has some very uplifting words on liturgy. He reminds us that if the closeness of God is to be experienced in liturgy it must first be sensed in the ordinary events of each day.

At every Spred session, we evoke an everyday life experience and in so doing gradually deepen awareness of “God-in-the-ordinary”: in the beauty of the autumn leaves; in the joy of friendship; in the experience of waiting for something to happen or someone to come; in the peace experienced when we say sorry; in the delight of sunlight, etc. We are being sensitized to the divine imminence in the emotions and experiences of our lives and so we, friends and catechists alike come to liturgy open to await God’s presence.

The modern day author Annie Dillard puts it more succinctly: “If we are not in holy communion with the God-of-life in the routine lives we live we will hardly experience a great intimacy at the Holy Communion of the Mass.” These words so clearly express that intrinsic link between catechesis and liturgy.

Paul Wadell, another author, captures a different aspect of our Thanksgiving liturgy when he says that in giving praise our attention is drawn to God and not to ourselves. “To celebrate is to share in a greater joy, to participate in an eternal drama. In acts of consumption our intention is to please ourselves: in acts of celebration, the intention is to extol God, the source of blessings.”

Our music, or as Gabe Huck calls it “the sound of our prayer” has a quality of joy and enthusiasm, truly raising our hearts to God, while gentle harp melodies kept our focus on the processions and the altar. Altogether this Eucharist was an act of praise born from our gratitude, wonder and awe.

To remember liturgically is not just looking back, but rather bringing the past to bear on the present. At every Spred session we evoke something from liturgy. This experience has the power to re-shape our lives. From our Mass of Thanksgiving we can evoke so much: the gathering, the processions, the joy of the singing, the proclamation of the Word, the sharing of bread, the sharing of peace. Jesus was with us. We hear His Word. Jesus is with us. Alleluia.

What then has brought this congregation to a sense of the sacred, to their quality of silence, to their enthusiastic participation, their eagerness to listen? The answer lies in their fidelity to the Spred catechetical sessions; and after such a liturgy, what a treasure to evoke. Yes catechesis and liturgy are mutually enriching.

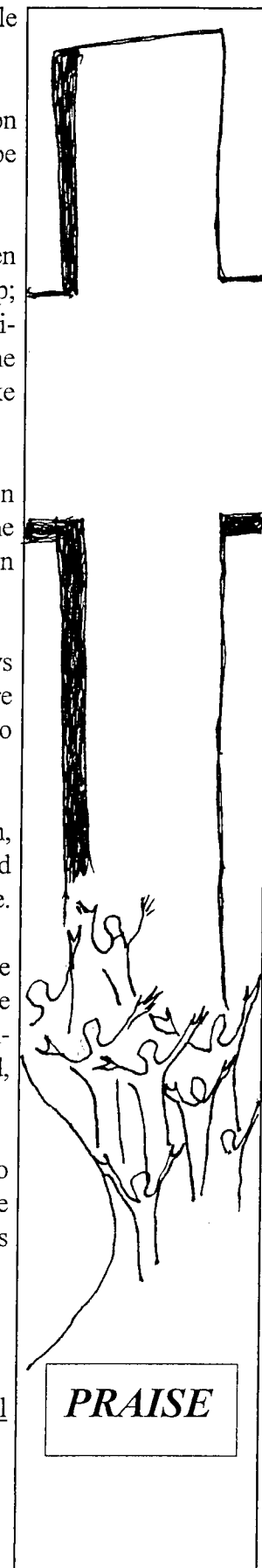
Sr. Agnes Nelson, SND  
Director, Spred Glasgow, Scotland

References: “From East and West, From North and South” Collegeville Composers, We Will Follow You, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, US, 2006

Gabe Huck, Liturgy with Style and Grace.

Paul Wadell, Becoming Friends.

John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis.



## SPRED CALENDAR

### SPRED FAMILY LITURGIES

Feb. 6, March 6, April 3, May 1

### SPRED SPRING TRAINING, 2011

2-1 INTRO TO SPRED, FEB. 12, 19, 26

3-1 ROLE ORIENTATION MAR. 12, 19

### HELPER CATECHIST TRAINING

April 16, Saturday, 11:00 to 4:00  
St. Mary, 126 Herrick Rd Riverside II  
RSVP Eileen Rose 708-447-0299  
emr366@gmail.com

March 5, Saturday, 11:00 to 4:00  
Queen of Angels Spred Center  
4412 N. Western Ave, 2nd fl. Chicago  
Julia Hess, 773-539-3634

MAMRE SPRING DINNER DANCE  
DRURY LANE, OAKBROOK, SUN.MAY15

### OBSERVATION

6-10 Mondays 6:00 p.m. Feb. 7, 21, March 7, 21  
11-16 Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Feb. 8, 22, March 22  
17-21 Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Feb. 8, 22, March 22  
22+ Mondays 7:00 p.m. Feb. 7, 21, March 21

### **TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF SPRED/CADIAM IN MEXICO CITY**

**Feb. 20, 2011, all Catechetical Leaders  
March 13, Mass and Pastoral Letter  
given by**

**Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera  
May 15 Celebration with All our Friends**

**Congratulations can be sent to**

**Rev. Eduardo Mercado Guzman  
Director de la Comision de Catequesis  
Durango 90, 10 Piso, Col. Roma  
Delegacion Cuauhtemoc CP 06700  
Mexico**

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