



SPRED
Special Religious Development
HELPER CATECHIST TRAINING

9:30-10

Registration

10:00

Welcome/Introductions

10:15

Orientation to the SPRED Agency & Program

The Standards

The Role of Helper Catechist

11:00

An Experience of the Catechist Preparation Session

- Feedback
- Story/Catechesis
- Relationship to the Total Community Session
- Agape

12:30

Lunch

1:15

The Total Community Session

- Preparation Process
- Silence Activity
- Catechesis
- Agape

2:45

Questions and Concerns

3:00

Goodbyes

Helper Catechist Training 2014

The material contained herein is compiled from the work of the SPRED Staff, Fr. James McCarthy, Sr. Mary Therese Harrington, Sr. Susanne Gallagher in the Archdiocese of Chicago

This manual is intended as a supplement to Helper Catechist Training for the attendees. Each Helper Catechist in a SPRED Community should be encouraged to attend training in person and benefit from the experiences of the trainers and other attendees.

Additional resource Information and calendars with upcoming trainings, liturgies, and enrichment opportunities can be found on the primary website at www.spred-chicago.org and also www.queenofangelsspred.org

It is our hope that the Helper Catechist Training inspires you on your journey in SPRED. Thank you for taking the step to be a Friend to a person with development disabilities and for your commitment to SPRED.

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SPRED IN CHICAGO

I. The Development of SPRED as an Agency in the Archdiocese of Chicago

- 1960 The research phase of SPRED began when Fr. James McCarthy from the Archdiocese of Chicago began to dialogue with parents, special educators and catechist on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities. Since that beginning SPRED has been incorporated into the system of Diocesan ministries under the direction of Fr. McCarthy.
- 1966 SPRED was established as an agency of the Archdiocese and the first SPRED Observation Center was established. Observation became a way of encouraging others to start centers. It became a way to gain insight into the symbolic method of catechesis.
- 1973 SPRED offices as well as a model resource and observation center became parish based at St. John Nepomucene parish, 2956 S. Lowe Ave. The parish was later closed. The SPRED Center remains at that location.
- 1987 Mamre, Inc. was established as the fundraising arm of SPRED thanks to the generosity of Margaret Reid, an avid supporter of SPRED ministry. Mamre provides financial support for those who animate, translate, and educate, etc. Fundraising events and donations received from appeal letters raise money for these needs.
- 2013 The SPRED Staff were honored with the Laetare Medal at the University Of Notre Dame in recognition of outstanding service to the Roman Catholic Church and society. The award is given to an American Catholic or group of Catholics "whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the church and enriched the heritage of humanity."

II. Who is the Archdiocese of Chicago?

The Archdiocese of Chicago comprises more than 350 parishes in Cook and Lake Counties. Groupings of parishes have been established to facilitate communication and the sharing of resources. There are six large groupings called Vicariates. Smaller groupings within Vicariates are called Deaneries.

III. Mission Statement

To form small communities of faith

To welcome persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities

To foster inclusion in assemblies of worship

IV. What do we ask of each Parish?

We ask each parish to take responsibility for the religious development of its members with developmental disabilities. We ask each pastor to appoint a chairperson. The chairperson in each SPRED Center works to become incorporated in a meaningful way within the system of the parish so that the needs of persons with developmental disabilities will be addressed. Each parish has its own way of organizing its ministries. The SPRED chairperson is present as a voice for all persons with special needs and works to provide a place in a SPRED center respecting the chronological age of each.

V. What is a SPRED community?

The chairperson gathers up to 8 volunteers who agree to complete the SPRED training course appropriate to the role in the community that they choose. Three of the volunteers form a core team to secure leadership for the group. These catechists enter into friendship and offer one-on-one partnerships to the 6 individuals with special needs who they welcome. The volunteers decide on an age group in response to the greatest need of the parish as well as the SPRED network in their surrounding area. SPRED communities fall into the following age groupings: 6-10; 11-16; 17-21; and adults 22+. The faith community agrees to follow the *Standards of Affiliation* with the SPRED Agency.

VI. What is the means?

SPRED develops its own syllabus. The sessions take into account the developmental life experiences of each age group. The sessions are based on five biblical-liturgical axes: covenant, creation, salvation, election and sanctification. Manuscripts are shared with parish communities once training is completed.

VII. What is the Process?

The goal of catechesis with those living with developmental disabilities is to *develop a sense of*

the sacred, a sense of church, a sense of the Christ, and a sense of God. The SPRED process helps each person to enter into communion with Jesus Christ within the Christian community of faith. Sacramental initiation takes place according to the personal rhythm of each individual. Each one progresses according to the capacity that they possess.

The process is inductive. It includes a preparation phase, a catechesis, and a breaking of bread (*Agape*). In the context of meaningful relationships within a small faith community each person develops an awareness of themselves as persons of dignity who are loved by God and an awareness of themselves as an integral part of the parish community as well as the entire Church. The quiet, sacred place; the bonds of friendship; the sharing of life experiences; the proclamation of the Word; and the liturgical/sacramental celebrations that take into account the needs of the SPRED population help each person discover the gifts and the needs of every member of the community. To become aware of God in our midst is to believe.

VIII. What is the commitment?

Volunteers meet for 24 sessions throughout a year. Twelve sessions are designed for the volunteers to prepare for the 12 alternating and corresponding sessions that they will share with their SPRED partners. The calendar is drawn up to respond to the schedules of the volunteers as well as the SPRED Friends.

IX. Who are the Volunteers?

Adult men and women who are willing to share friendship and faith with others from the same religious denomination can participate as a catechist. Prior experience with children or adults with special needs is not expected.



SPRED STANDARDS

There are seven standards in **SPRED** designed to ensure consistency and the quality of catechesis offered in the program.

1. Availability

Religious services shall be available to the person with developmental disabilities.

Usually the person with disabilities who enters a **SPRED** group has membership in a parish or church. By sponsoring a **SPRED** group, the parish or church makes religious services available. The parish or church indicates its sponsorship by appointing a chairperson.

The work of the chairperson is to locate persons with disabilities in the parish, locate workers to join the group, sees to it that the workers (catechists) receive **SPRED** training, and arrange for the use of appropriate space. Through a chairperson, **SPRED** services become available to the person with disabilities.

2. Preparation for Catechesis

There shall be a preparation phase to each session with persons with developmental disabilities or learning problems.

The person with disabilities is welcomed as a guest as soon as he or she arrives.

The prepared environment fosters a sense of belonging, well-being and concentration.

The activity catechist assumes responsibility for the overall preparation phase.

3. Catechesis with Persons with Disabilities

There shall be a symbolic catechesis appropriate to the age, mentality and faith development of the group.

The leader catechist assumes responsibility for the catechesis given. A prepared environment and the attitude of the adults foster a sense of the sacred, prayerful awareness and an attitude of celebration in a community of faith.

4. Closure

The session shall be brought to a gradual conclusion through the sharing of food.

Sharing of food in an atmosphere of the sacred has significance. A well prepared table involving everyone's contribution is a shared gift. Flowers, candles, attractive table coverings, quality tableware, dishes, etc., form the elements that convey respect, trust, and affection. Music expresses and deepens the group's happiness in becoming a community of faith. With the coordination of the activity catechist, all members participate in the preparation, sharing of food, and cleaning up. The good-byes are to be respectful and personal.

5. Catechist Preparation Session

Each session with persons with disabilities shall be preceded by a catechist preparation session.

An adult community of believers gathers together to renew its own appreciation in faith of the mystery to be celebrated in the session with the total community. United in their experience of faith, through a symbolic method, they form a warm, welcoming community. Catechist preparation sessions take place on a day or evening other than that for the session with persons with disabilities. The session closes with the sharing of food.

Helper catechists (sponsors) make up the majority of the adult group. The helper is primarily a friend of a person with disabilities.

6. Liturgy - Worship

Liturgical experiences with specialized groups shall take place from time to time, but inclusion into assemblies of worship in the local parish or church is to be fostered.

7. Area Coordination

There shall be coordination between centers in a given area. Chairpersons gather annually to share and plan for growth and expansion of **SPRED** ministry.



THE ROLE OF THE HELPER CATECHIST

As a Helper Catechist you have the following responsibilities:

Time frame:

- Each group sets their own calendar usually between September and May.
- Catechist preparation sessions last 2 ½ to 3 hours. Total community sessions last 3 hours including set up and clean up.
- Attend and participate in 12 catechist preparation sessions, 12 total community sessions and 2 Liturgies at your own parish or at the **SPRED** Center Chapel.

Responsibilities for catechist preparation sessions:

- Arrive on time with your syllabus and remain with the community of catechists for clean up.
- If you need to miss a catechist preparation session, contact your Chairperson or Leader Catechist and prepare prayerfully on your own so that you will be ready to support your Friend fully at the total community session.
- Prepare to offer constructive feedback from the previous total community session. Ask questions so that you will deepen your understanding of the process.
- Open yourself to the symbolic movement of the session. Demonstrate a willingness to be quietly reflective and enter into the sharing of personal stories. Respect the promise of confidentiality. Participate in the sacred gesture which accompanies the song.
- Participate in the Agape at all sessions – the sharing of refreshments and conversation.

Responsibilities for total community sessions:

- Become a friend and model for a person with a developmental disability.
- Arrive early to the session so that you will be there waiting for your Friend when he/she arrives. Remain with catechist community for clean up unless you're a driver.
- If you must miss a total community session, let your Friend know that you won't be there, but look forward to being together at the next session. Assure your Friend that someone will be there with him/her.
- Always call your Friend the night before the total community session and let them know how excited you are to be with them the following day.

- Demonstrate a willingness and openness to enjoy the activities offered by the activity catechist to work toward a readiness for the catechesis.
- Model joy and quiet engagement with the activities. Your attitude will invite your Friend to imitate you and discover the same delight which you have found.
- Assist your Friend in articulating his/her life experience as it relates to the symbol.
- Participate in the Agape at all sessions – the sharing of refreshments and conversation. Help your Friend to participate with you in the table setting and the clearing of the table.

Training:

- Five hours of orientation to the **SPRED** process of catechesis designed for our Friends with developmental disabilities. Training is offered in the Fall & Spring at various sites.
- Observation of a **SPRED** session at a model center.
- Be willing to attend workshops and enrichment opportunities to deepen your understanding of the **SPRED** process.



CORE TEAM ROLES IN A SPRED COMMUNITY

Each person in the catechist community assumes a role in order to share the responsibility for the ministry of **SPRED**. **SPRED** supports catechist communities by providing training courses, catechetical materials for each of the four age groups, reflection weekends, and opportunities for observation of catechesis, publications, animation (witness) and coordination. Persons in the Core Team elect to take on a leadership role which requires additional training and has additional responsibilities.

The Parish Chairperson

- Discovers who in the parish or local church needs **SPRED** services
- Finds and coordinates the preparation of a place for the community to gather for catechesis
- Recruits adults to become catechists
- Communicates with the pastor and other church leaders with parents, family members and other caregivers
- Encourages catechists to participate in training courses, observation and **SPRED** Family Liturgies
- Animates neighboring parishes to secure new **SPRED** chairpersons
- Collaborates with other chairpersons in the deanery and attends an annual planning meeting in view of collaboration and growth
- Is a helper catechist in the **SPRED** faith community

The Leader Catechist

- Leads catechist preparation sessions
- Leads the total community sessions
- Prepares the environment of the celebration room
- Participates in preparation with the total community and leads the agape
- Communicates with parents and parent figures
- Collaborates with parish/church leaders in view of worship

The Activity Catechist

- Prepares the environment of the meeting room
- Guides the total community during the time of preparation
- Helps all to feel comfortable with the preparation process
- Leads the silence activity
- Coordinates the preparation of food, etc. for the agape
- Participates in the celebration of each session
- Guides the clean-up process for each session



CATECHIST PREPARATION SESSION GUIDE

Helper Catechist Training

SPRED Standard 5: Catechist Preparation Session

Each session with persons with disabilities is preceded by a catechist preparation session. The catechists gather together to renew their own appreciation in faith of the mystery to be celebrated in the session with the total community. Catechists bond together and build a community of faith that is founded in friendship and trust.

The SPRED Catechetical Process involves an evening of faith formation for the catechists in preparation for each total community session with the Friends with developmental disabilities. Each catechist commits him/herself to be present and participate fully in all faith formation sessions.

Elements of a Catechist Preparation Session

Greetings and Business

Catechists take time to greet one another and gather around a meeting table or in a circle of chairs.

Business updates are shared by the Chairperson, Activity Catechist and Leader Catechist.

Helper Catechists are encouraged to contribute valuable input related to items such as fundraising, upcoming liturgies, upcoming events, housekeeping matters, parish matters; etc.

Feedback

Feedback is a way for the catechist community to share observations about the previous session, to identify problems or difficulties and together find possible solutions or ideas to trial in future sessions. The viewpoint and contribution of each catechist is of value. By reflecting on the previous total community session and considering the response of the Friends and questions like “did we meet our goals”, or “how did we work toward a sense of the sacred, a sense of Church, a sense of God/Christ with us”, we strive to enhance the experience for our Friends and ourselves.

Catechesis

The Leader Catechist begins the session from the syllabus with the “goal of the session”

The Literary Selection is read stirring thought and feeling. The selection becomes part of the symbolic process in place of an object, picture, piece of art, piece of music that will be used in the Total Community Session.

Interiorization: A summary of the selection is read and ends with a sentence that makes a statement about the story. A question is posed about that statement, the intentionality of the session.

Silent Reflection: The catechists are asked to reflect and recall an experience in their own life that responds to the question and relates to the **goal** of the session, not the story. In preparing to share, our focus is on the emotions stirred by the event rather than simply the facts.

When ready, each catechist moves to the Celebration/Holy Circle.

Human Evocation/Interiorization

The Leader begins the Evocation of the Human Experience by repeating the question and invites each catechist to share his/her story as it relates to the reflection question. As they are ready, each catechist offers their story as a gift to the community.

This is a time for open, honest, prayerful, confidential sharing – not conversation. There is no need to respond or reply to a person's story. This sharing is left in the circle and not commented on later respecting the sanctity of this endeavor and to build trust for further deep and authentic reflection on a life experience.

The interiorization statement bonds the group in an awareness of a common emotion.

Liturgical Evocation

The liturgical evocation echoes the emotions stirred by our lived experiences and highlights those same emotions stirred at some point in liturgy or sacrament.

We become aware of Gods' presence among us.

Biblical Evocation

A brief scripture passage is proclaimed to support the intentionality of the session.

Message

The message is given to each catechist just as it will be in the Total Community Session.

The message captures the heart of the session inviting each member of the community to be transformed.

Personal Expression

Song and movement help us to express and celebrate our new awareness of God with us.

Afterward a piece of reflection music invites us to rest in the prayerfulness of our experience.

Please note the liturgical and biblical evocation, the message and song are the same in the Catechist Preparation Session as the Total Community Session with the Friends.

Relationship of the Catechist Preparation Session to the Total Community Session

Having taken time to explore the mystery for themselves, the catechists are ready to discuss the Total Community Session with their Friends with respect to the same goal. The discussion centers on what symbol, e.g., object or piece of music, artwork – painting or sculpture, or photo would best help their Friends open up to the intentionality of the session and unveil the mystery of God's love. Each catechist has relevant input to add specific to their knowledge of their own Friend and observation of other Friends. With the input of the group, the Leader is responsible for procuring whatever item is needed.

Agape

A simple offering of food is shared symbolizing the breaking of bread. *Flowers, candles, attractive table coverings, quality tableware, dishes, etc., form the elements that convey respect, trust, and affection. All participate in setting the table, clearing/cleaning dishes.*

Closure

As the catechist community looks forward to our session with our Friends, the evening finishes with the group's closing song expressing and deepening the group's happiness in becoming a community of faith.



TOTAL COMMUNITY SESSION GUIDE

Helper Catechist Training (Standards 2, 3 and 4)

Helper Catechists are crucial instruments in effective catechesis in SPRED communities. The forming of a one to one relationship with a person with developmental disabilities, based on friendship and trust, mirrors our relationship with God.

The following is a guide through the Total Community Session and the ways in which Helper Catechists contribute to meaningful SPRED sessions and to building a strong community of faith.

GREETING/WELCOMING

What is it? What does it involve?

Friends are gathered outside the SPRED space. The Activity Catechist calls each one by name and invites the Friend to come into the space. Each Friend is presented to each catechist and Friend already at work on an activity and who welcome them warmly.

Why is it important?

This process gives each Friend a sense of his or her own value and their right to choose to participate. It creates experiences of being welcomed, of genuine warmth, and of desiring to be together. The act evokes God's welcome and invitation to each of us individually.

What does a Helper Catechist do?

Catechists arrive early to prepare the meeting space and ready themselves to greet their Friends. An activity is chosen and begun so the catechist will be prepared to greet their Friends and have a place for their Friend to sit. Catechists who present a sense of calmness, taking time to smile, looking each person in the eye and offering a simple yet warm handshake enhance the sense of being welcomed, cared for and respected.

PREPARATION PROCESS

What does it involve?

Each person is invited to select a work that will draw their attention, spark creativity and draw them into quiet harmony with others in the environment. There is a generous offering of art materials, sensorial and tactile works, as well as activities of daily life.

Why is it important?

Concentrated creative work draws us toward an inner peace and brings us to an anticipation of something more. Socializing does not hold the same power.

What does a Helper Catechist do?

Engage fully in an activity. By modeling enthusiasm for the work and concentration and contentment from being creative, our Friends can be drawn in to creativity themselves and appreciate the quiet contentment that comes from just being together.

Assist your Friend if they need help; appear to be bored or unsettled. Remember to return activities to their original place in the same or better condition so that the activity will be ready for the next user. Assist your Friend in cleaning up. This supports the efforts of the Activity Catechist to create a stress free, welcoming and attractive environment.

SILENCE ACTIVITY (Transition to Catechesis)

What is involved?

At the end of preparation time, the Activity Catechist invites each person to clean up and join together in a circle. This is the first time that we relate as a group and not just as pairs. A sense of calm is maintained as all anticipate being invited to the Celebration/Holy Circle to discover together the mystery of faith. The Activity Catechist invites each person to the Celebration/Holy Circle.

Why is it important?

This ritual activity is the transition that allows each one to respond to a personal invitation to catechesis. It echoes the rite of election in Baptism. One by one, the members move into the Celebration/Holy Circle. Invitation and personal address are important repeated elements in SPRED. God calls each of us individually; each of us has the opportunity to respond.

CATECHESIS

What is it?

The word catechesis comes from the Greek meaning “to echo the teaching.” Catechesis is an interactive process in which the Word of God resounds between and among the one who proclaims the message, the one who receives the message and the Holy Spirit. Catechesis is a life-long process of initiation, formation, deepening, and on-going conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God’s people to an ever-deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis takes many forms and includes the initiation of adults, youth and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship.

Human Evocation / Interiorization

What does it involve?

In the Celebration/Holy Circle, a symbol, e.g., an object, picture, music or sound is presented to the community. A conversation begins drawing a personal, lived experience from each person in response to the symbol presented. Each person is allowed the time to share their story, respecting various ways of communication and the sensitivities of our Friends. A series of evocations follows. The gradual unfolding will draw the entire community into an awareness of Jesus present in us and with us. A simple message will capture the intentionality of the session. The community celebrates their new awareness with song and gesture. As a piece of reflection music plays the community basks in the joy of the prayerful experience.

Why is it important?

Our Friends with developmental disabilities learn by recalling a lived experience and remembering it at the emotional level. A symbol is used to make a connection to life where emotions reside. Recalling our personal story stirs feeling and helps us become aware of our common bond with one another in the emotions that we share as human beings.

What does a Helper do?

Help your Friend be attentive by listening and modeling enthusiasm and interest in the sharing of each story. Redirect them if they withdraw, interrupt or are not following the flow of the sharing. Be ready and willing to share your story in view of the symbol. Help your Friend share his/her story by acquainting yourself, through their parents or caregivers, to an experience relevant to the session and the symbol. Help draw your Friend into telling his or her story or, if verbally unable to, assist your Friend in a respectful telling of his/her story. It is very important that each person shares an experience.

Liturgical Evocation

What is it?

The Leader Catechist reminds us of a liturgical or sacramental event that the group has experienced either together or individually that awakens the same emotion that our human experience has stirred in us.

Why is it important?

This evocation connects us to the larger parish community in the rites and rituals that are celebrated as part of our faith. This evocation brings meaning to past liturgical and sacramental experiences and deepens our awareness and appreciation of God's presence as we share future experiences.

What does a helper catechist do?

The prayerful tone of the liturgical evocation moves the group to quiet, attentive listening. Helpers model attentiveness by posture and eye contact with the Leader Catechist to establish a sense of the sacred, a sense of Jesus with us. A Helper may need to quietly direct their Friend to listen to the Leader Catechist if they are attempting to engage in conversation.

Biblical Evocation

What is it? Why is it important?

A brief scripture passage is proclaimed by the Leader Catechist building on the emotions awakened in the intentionality of the human and liturgical evocations. The proclamation of scripture connects us to the people of God throughout all time.

What does a helper do?

A Helper Catechist models attentiveness and quiet reverence as scripture is proclaimed.

Message

What is it?

The message is a brief statement drawn from the scripture passage that captures the intentionality of the session. The Leader Catechist approaches each person, looks them in the eye, holds their hands or uses a gentle gesture and calls each by name saying prayerfully and personally, e.g. *“Jesus says to you today, Live in my Love”*.

The simple message is absorbed reverently by each catechist and Friend. All wait quietly in anticipation of their turn as the message echoes through the community.

Why is it important?

Our Friends need to know things in the here and now. By calling each person by name and offering each the brief message, all in the community have the greatest opportunity to take this powerful message in and be transformed by it.

Personal Expression

What is it?

The catechesis concludes with a song expressing gratitude, joy, hope, or praise which has been awakened during the session. The community listens to the music selection quietly together once. The song is played a second time as the group sings and expresses themselves through a movement that is uncomplicated and prayerful. This personal expression stirs an interior attitude and emotion beyond what the sung words alone can convey. We become one in voice and spirit through the use of gestures. The action relies on the rhythm of the music and must be easy and

natural so that our Friends will not struggle to keep up or become frustrated with complex movements.

What does a helper do?

Helpers model interest in singing and a willingness to convey the feeling / meaning of the song through simple gesture. We respond prayerfully in song and movement to God in response to the mystery of His great love for each of us. When the song is finished, a reflective piece of music invites the community to rest quietly and bask in the joy of being in communion.

Agape

What is it?

The celebration is extended through a ritual sharing of food and fellowship. The community collaborates to prepare a beautiful table and present a lovely, but modest, offering of food and drink. Gathered together around the table, we share the joy of life through conversation and song. A successful agape prepares us to return to the celebration of Eucharist with a deeper appreciation.

What does a helper do?

With your Friend, find a job to prepare the table. Each group has their own process for setting the table. It is important that each one contributes to the preparation as part of the community. Include your Friend in the conversation. Draw out what has been happening recently that can be shared with the group.

Closure

Following the joint clearing of the table, the group gathers for a closing song and farewells. A reminder of the next meeting date gives everyone a sense of security and conveys the importance of each member being there.

Definitions of Commonly Used Terms in SPRED

Agape

Agape literally means selfless, unconditional love. In SPRED, the word Agape refers to sharing simple refreshment at the end of both the Total Community Session as well as the Catechist Session. We are celebrating our unconditional love for God and one another in the breaking of the bread.

Catechesis

The official definition is: "... education in faith of children, young people and adults which includes the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view of initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life." (CCC5). In SPRED, catechesis is an awakening and awareness of God's presence and love in all people and all of life. In SPRED, we work to develop a sense of the sacred; a sense of God and a sense of Church.

Evocation

From the Latin word *evocation*, it means "calling forth". The SPRED process is developed on a series of evocations to summon up memories of life experiences juxtaposed with memories of sacramental and liturgical experiences. An evocation stirs feeling not simply the facts of a lived experience.

Intentionality

Intentionality is derived from the Latin word *intentio*, which means being directed toward some goal. It is a philosophical concept, of being deliberate or purposive. In SPRED, our reflections purposively formed by an intention, a mental state, e.g. thoughts, beliefs, desires and hopes that are directed toward a goal.

Interiorization

This is the incorporation into one's inner life. In SPRED, we juxtapose the awareness of what one lives and feels, next to the awareness of how the group feels about what we live together.

Juxtaposition

The placing together of two contrasting objects, images or ideas, so that the similarities between them can be evoked. In SPRED, we juxtapose the evocation of life experiences with Liturgical experiences and experiences of the People of God (Scripture) following an intentionality.

Liturgical Catechesis

This is a form of catechesis that aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ through a sense of the sacred. The catechetical experience echoes the rites and rituals of sacrament and liturgy.

Personal Expression/Interpretive Movement

Personal expression gives life to God's words through movement, gesture and song.

Symbol

A symbol is an object, image, piece of music or art that suggest or points to a reality beyond itself. Symbol is the door to Mystery.

Symbolic Catechesis

Symbols serve as the bridge between one's inner thoughts and experiences and the people and the world around us. In SPRED, we use symbols to evoke memory and draw out feeling in order to uncover the sacred dimension of all life in order to reveal God's love for us and grow in faith.

Defining Developmental Disabilities

The Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities in Illinois adheres to a categorical definition of developmental disabilities which group's mental retardation with cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or any other conditions resulting in similar impairments requiring the same constellations of services.

Autism: A variable developmental disorder that appears by age 3 and is characterized by impairment of the ability to form normal social relationships, by impairment of the ability to communicate with others and by stereotyped behavior patterns. Its symptoms can range from mild to severe.

Cerebral Palsy: The name covers a variety of conditions resulting in the faulty control exercised by the brain over the muscles of the body. Movement and use of the parts of the body which are affected becomes difficult or almost impossible. There may be impairment of hearing, seeing and/or speech. Some will also have a degree of mental retardation.

Mental Retardation: The newest definition incorporates into a single three step process: a diagnosis, a description of individual strengths and weaknesses, and an identification of needed supports as well as an indication of the intensity of supports needed.

1. Mental Retardation is diagnosed if the individual's intellectual functioning is 70-75 or below and exists concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, leisure, work, functional academics, health and safety. The age of onset is below 18.
2. The person's strengths and weaknesses are described in reference to four dimensions:
 - intellectual functioning and adaptive skills
 - psychological and emotional well-being
 - health, physical well-being, cause of condition
 - life activity environments.
3. The kind and intensity of support needed for each of the four dimensions is determined.

The four possible intensities of needed supports are:

- a. *Intermittent:* or support on an 'as needed' basis
- b. *Limited support:* an intensity characterized by consistency over time;
- c. *Extensive support:* characterized by regular involvement in at least some environments;
- d. *Pervasive support:* characterized by the constancy, high intensity and potential life-sustaining nature.

The use of a single diagnostic code for mental retardation removes the previous IQ-based labels of: *mild, moderate, severe, and profound*. Instead, an example of a diagnosis that might be used would be: a person with mental retardation with limited support needs in social skills and extensive support needs in communication.

Severe Epilepsy: The name refers to various disorders marked by disturbed electrical rhythms of the central nervous system. It is typically manifested by convulsive attacks, usually with clouding of consciousness.