



SPRED CORE TRAINING 2 - 1

Day 1

SPRED in Chicago

- An introduction to the mission of SPRED, its beginnings and place in the Archdiocese.

Development of SPRED

- Understanding Catechesis
- The Method Vivre adapted by SPRED

The Symbolic Method

- The Power of Symbol in Catechesis
- Symbolic Progression
- An experience of SPRED catechesis

**SPECIAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT
Archdiocese of Chicago**

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SPRED Mission Statement

To form small communities of faith
To welcome persons with intellectual
and developmental disabilities
To foster inclusion in assemblies of worship

COMMONLY USED SPRED TERMS

Agape

Literally it means selfless, unconditional love. In SPRED the word Agape is what we call the portion near the end of both the Total Community Session as well as the preparation session for the catechists when we share a simple refreshment together. We are selflessly celebrating our unconditional love for God and one another in the breaking of the bread.

Animation

To animate is to give life. In SPRED animation refers to bringing the good news of SPRED to families and parishes throughout a geographic area.

Catechesis

The official definition is: "... education in faith of children, young people and adults with 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 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 facts.

Intentionality

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, it is our reflections that are purposively formed by an intention, a mental state, e.g. thoughts, beliefs, desires and hopes that are directed toward a goal.

Interiorization

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.

Kerygma/Kerygmatic

A Greek word that means "to proclaim". In Catholic theology it is often associated with a proclamatory form of catechesis that confidently proclaims the great deeds of God in salvation history and calls for a response of praise and worship.

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.

Method Vivre

This is the method of catechesis born from a doctoral study in Lyon, France by Fr. Jean Mesny and used today by SPRED. The method is to develop small communities of faith within parishes that welcome persons with developmental disabilities or learning challenges. SPRED is a method that honors the person's way of knowing and offers a sense of belonging in the small community with the goal of inclusion in the liturgical and sacramental life of the parish. It is the elements of the Method Vivre upon which the SPRED program is based. These elements include the Evocation of the Human Experience, The Interiorization, The Liturgical Evocation, The Biblical Evocation, The Action and Message, and The Personal Expression.

Mystery

Something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain; The Mystery of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Obligatory Basis

The Obligatory Basis is composed of biblical, liturgical and doctrinal elements that are the compulsory principal components of the church. There are 5 Revelatory Axes:

- Election: the God who calls us.
- Covenant: the God who makes covenant (sacred agreement) with us.
- Salvation: the God who saves us.
- Creation: the God who creates us.
- Sanctification: the God who makes us holy.

Pedagogy

A practice of teaching by discovery. In SPRED it is the practice of experiencing through discovery our faith as a kingdom, a promised land, and a salvation for ourselves today.

Personal Expression/Interpretive Movement

Giving life to God's words through movement, gesture and song.

Symbol

An object, visual image, piece of music or gesture that suggests or points to a reality beyond itself. Symbol is the door to Mystery.

Symbolic Catechesis

The use of a symbol to catechize. Symbol serves as the bridge between one's inner thoughts and experiences and the people and the world around us. We use symbols in SPRED to evoke memory and draw out feeling in order to uncover the sacred dimension of all life and reveal God's love for us and grow in faith.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DEFINITION

The Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities in Illinois adheres to a categorical definition of developmental disabilities which groups intellectual disability 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.

Intellectual Disability (preferred term for Mental Retardation diagnosis): 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; physical health/cause of condition; and 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.



SPRED IN CHICAGO

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

- 1960 SPRED began when Fr. James McCarthy from the Archdiocese of Chicago began to work with parents, special educators and catechist volunteers. Since that beginning SPRED ministry has been incorporated into the system of Diocesan ministries under the direction of Fr. McCarthy.
The following shows the path of SPRED since its beginnings in the Archdiocese.
- 1966 SPRED was established as an agency of the Archdiocese and was designated as one of seven divisions of the office called the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine or CCD office. The acronym SPRED, Special Religious Education Division, was coined.
- 1968 The 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 became parish based at St. John Nepomucene parish. Fr. McCarthy became pastor while continuing as Director of SPRED. The space of the former school became the new Observation Center. SPRED separated from the CCD office. The acronym was refined becoming **S**pecial **R**eligious **D**evelopment.
- 1983 SPRED was incorporated into the Department of Community Services, one of several departments created following the arrival of Cardinal Bernardin to the Archdiocese.
- 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 was established to provide support for the Community Religious Workers Project. Fundraising events and donations received from appeal letters raise money for these needs.
- 1990 The parish of St. John Nepomucene was closed. SPRED remains at the site. Without parish funds SPRED relies on donations to cover the cost of capital expenses and secure a Diocesan place as a training and resource center for families, persons with special needs, catechists and parish leaders.

- 1993 SPRED was incorporated into the Department Human Services for 24 hours and then into the Department of Evangelization and Christian Life.
- 1994 In addition to providing support for Community religious Workers, The Mamre board committed itself to offer financial support for the translation of all SPRED materials and the training of catechists for the Spanish community.
- 1997 Agencies were realigned again and SPRED was placed in the Department of Education.
- 2000 Agencies were realigned and The Department of Evangelization, Catechesis and Worship was formed. SPRED is part of this Department along with many other agencies.
- 2010 The Department of Evangelization, Catechesis and Worship was renamed the Department of Parish Life and Formation. The importance of maintaining a presence among other agencies of the archdiocese is an ongoing challenge and very important in view of the goal of SPRED.
- 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. What is the Goal of SPRED?

Our mission is: **To form small communities of faith**
 To welcome persons with intellectual and developmental
 disabilities
 To foster inclusion in assemblies of worship.

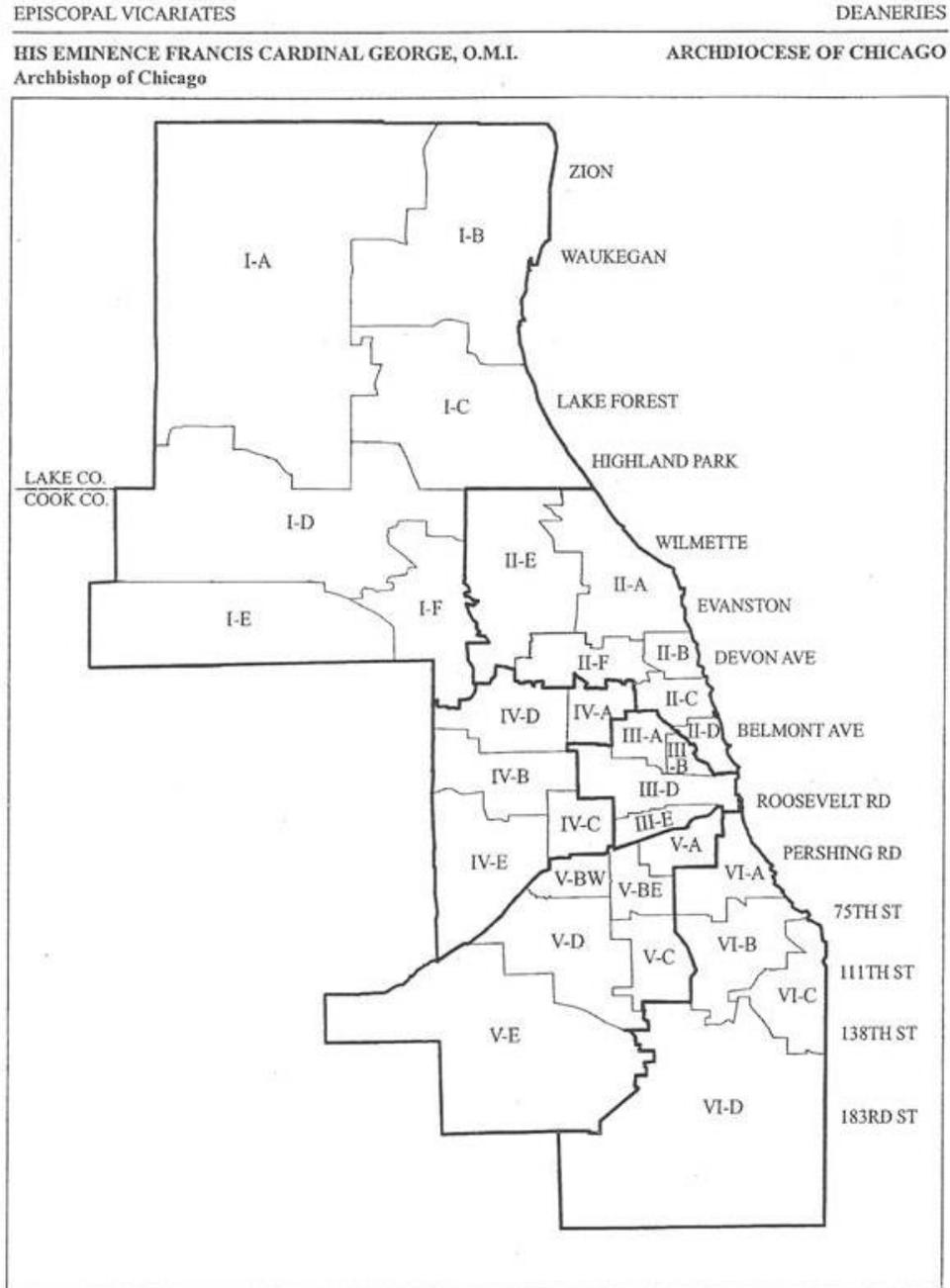
As an agency, we assist people in parishes throughout Cook and Lake Counties to welcome persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, provide program materials for faith formation and ongoing support. Our goal is to develop new SPRED Centers so that all who seek services can be served.

III. Is there a real need for Religious Services?

The Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities indicates for 2012 there are 202,724 persons with developmental disabilities in our state. The term Developmental Disabilities includes persons with mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy and severe epilepsy, Down's Syndrome and various other chromosomal disorders.

IV. Who is the Archdiocese of Chicago?

The Archdiocese of Chicago comprises 357 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. These groupings help manage resources in a geographic area.



V. What means do we use to reach our goal?

1. We **Animate**. We help people in local Churches to become aware of the needs of persons with developmental disabilities and to see how SPRED can assist them to respond to the needs.
2. We provide **materials** for catechesis with the total community and for catechist preparation.
3. We provide opportunities for **observation** as a tool for learning and for animation of parish leaders, families, prospective volunteers and others.
4. We provide **training** courses. We offer reflection weekends, workshops and enrichment experiences to encourage continued growth and development for the catechist community.
5. We provide a monthly newsletter, a reflection on the experience of ministry in SPRED.
6. We promote and support **area coordination**.
7. We provide **family liturgies** at the SPRED Center Chapel to model the process of incorporating persons with disabilities into worship

VI 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 develops a SPRED Center, relates to the pastor and facilitates his relationship with SPRED families and persons with disabilities in the parish.

Chairpersons are encouraged to be part of the parish council. By becoming incorporated in a meaningful way within the system of the parish, the needs of persons with developmental disabilities will be addressed. The SPRED chairperson is present as a voice for persons with special needs and works to provide a place in a SPRED center for each within their own parish or in another parish SPRED center that is age appropriate.

VII. What is the make-up of a SPRED Center?

The Chairperson, designated by the pastor, builds the faith community by recruiting the volunteers: a leader catechist, an activity catechist and five helper catechists or sponsors. This group of adult believers forms a community to welcome persons with developmental disabilities of the same age group for their parish SPRED center.

The chairperson also locates up to six persons with developmental disabilities of the same age group within their parish or nearby parishes. SPRED communities gather persons according to the following chronological age groupings: 6-10, 11-16, 17-21, and 22 and over.

VIII. How do we facilitate animation and coordination?

FAMILY - The parish chairperson relates to all families with members who have special needs and who live at home. He or she establishes a center and coordinates membership in centers outside the parish as the need arises. Age groupings are established according to the needs of the parish and the deanery. The goal is to establish enough centers of each age group to serve all the needs. This requires collaboration among chairpersons.

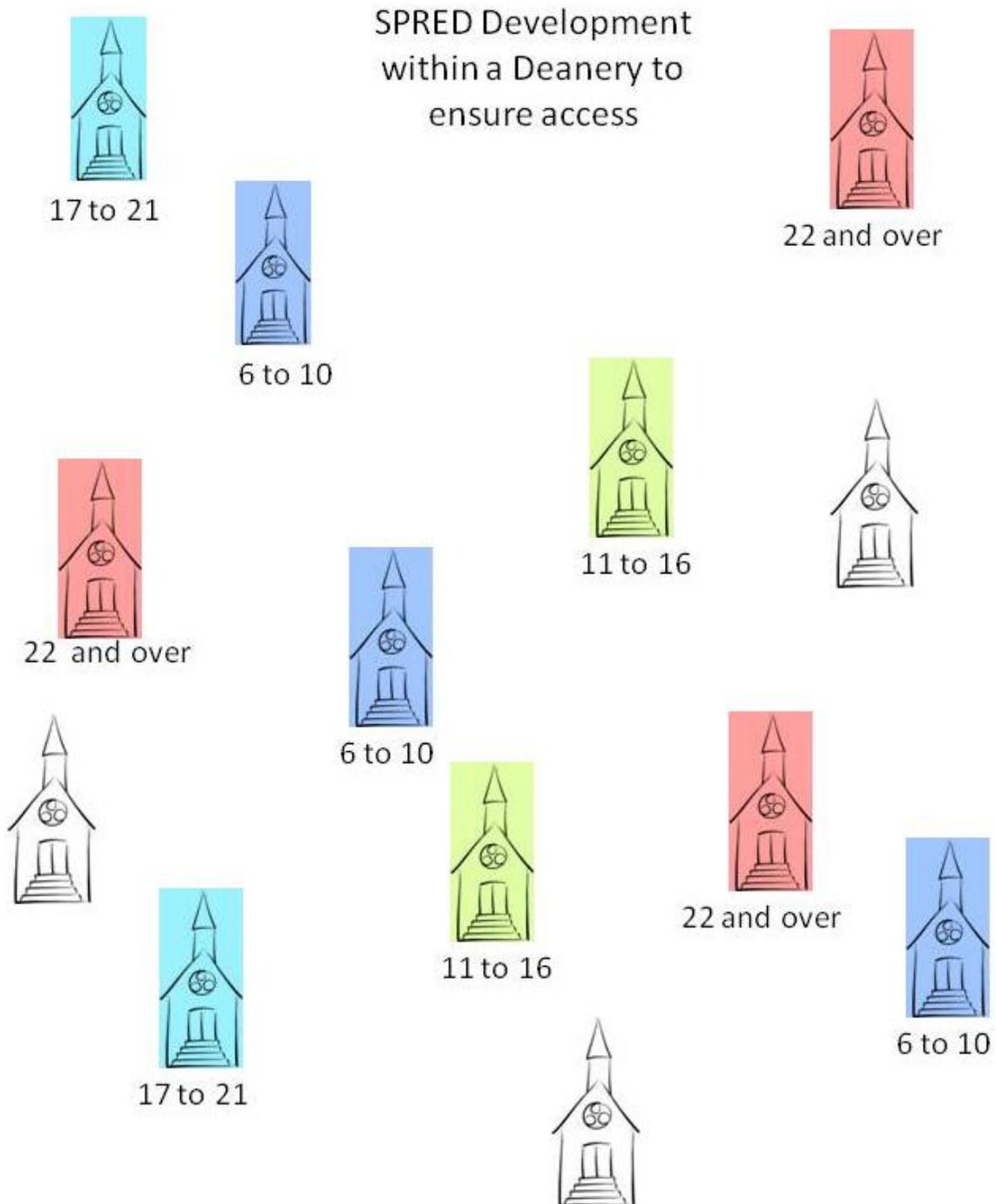
SMALL GROUP HOMES - Sometimes persons with disabilities live apart from their families in group homes. This requires special collaboration with the staff of the home, the guardian and agency that provides for the person with developmental disabilities. Leader catechists and parish chairpersons must build a relationship with the staff of these homes to understand the Friend's home environment and draw out information which will be relevant in catechesis.

IX. How do we coordinate the work of Chairpersons in an area?

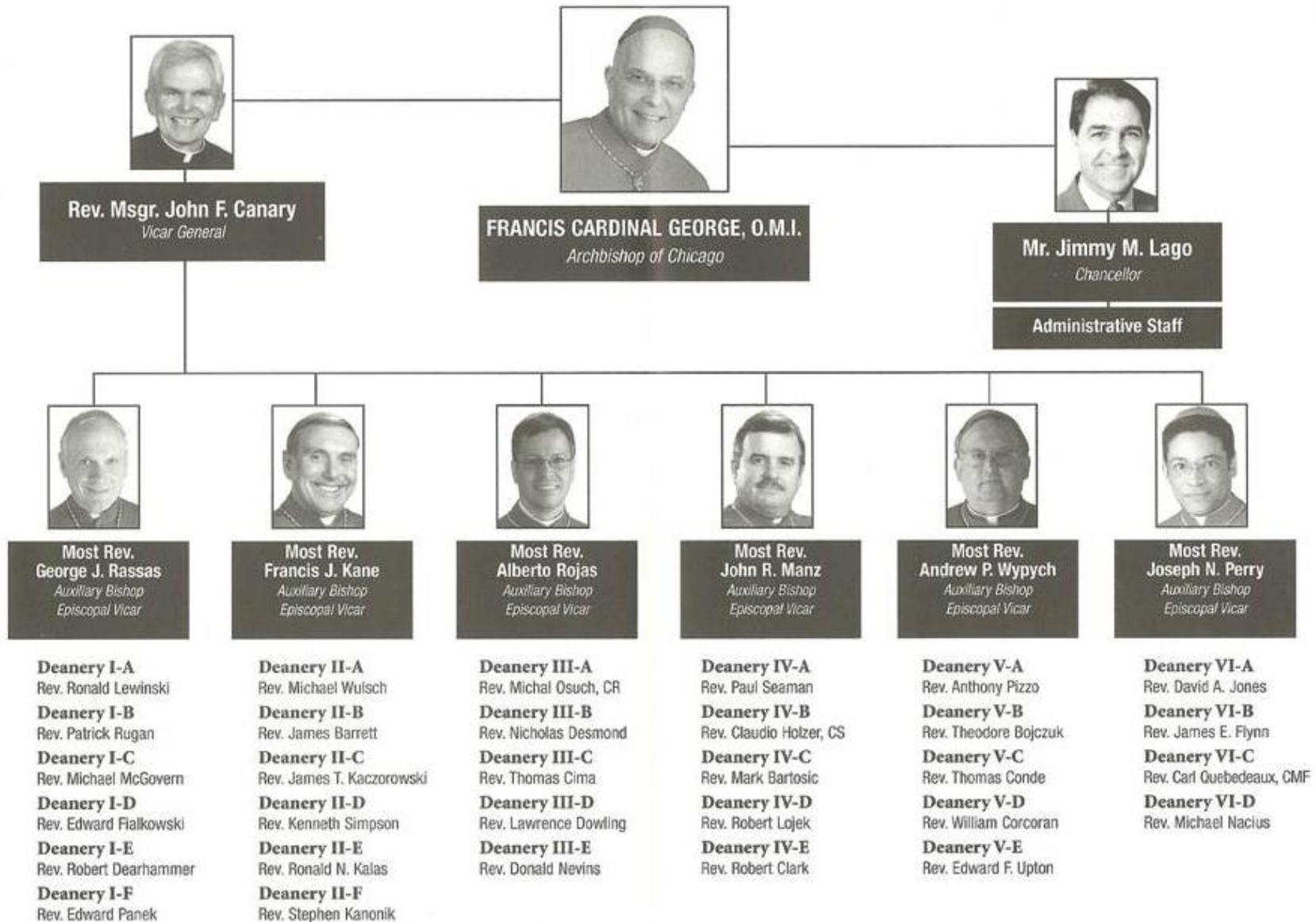
Community Religious Workers – CRWs coordinate and support the work of SPRED in the vicariates, encouraging each parish to establish a SPRED community of faith. CRWs approach the leaders of local churches to bring them to an awareness of the presence of persons with disabilities who wish to participate in worship experiences. CRWs assists volunteers who want to establish a community of faith in their church and nurture it through its development.

Diocesan Coordination - Community Religious Workers host annual Planning Meetings with Chairpersons in each Vicariate of the Archdiocese. These meetings give Chairpersons the opportunity to share highlights of their SPRED year; work out placements and transfers; create an action plan for the further development of SPRED. Collaboration assures growth and stability among centers.

X. What does the development of SPRED look like in a deanery?



ARCHDIOCESAN VICARIATE / DEANERY STRUCTURE





New Evangelization and the Development of SPRED **Archdiocese of Chicago**

Sr. Mary Therese Harrington, August 2013

Introduction

What are the elements that went into the design of SPRED? Where did these elements come from? How were they incorporated into the SPRED Model of Catechesis?

To answer these questions, we need to look at a little history. The best place to begin is at the beginning:

Message: Acts 2:22-24 *Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

Community: Acts 2:42 *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

There were stages of integration into the Christian Community:

- 1: Initiation: The gospel announced to non-Christians
- 2: Deepening: Preparation and celebration of the sacraments of initiation
- 3: Precision: A fuller communication of the mysteries of faith to the baptized

In the early church, education in faith took place in a liturgical setting. The candidate learned the creed, the Lord's prayer and reflected on what it meant to be a Christian. All this was done in the context of the catechumenal communities – small communities of faith. However, by the 5th century, infant baptism became common practice and by the 6th century all traces of the catechumenate were lost.

Culture played a significant role in the following centuries: stained glass windows, plays stories, cathedrals and music helped to develop Christianity. The formula most used for religious education was: the Creed, Sacraments and Prayers. This triad was used by St. Thomas Aquinas (1272) and the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The post reformation catechisms also used the main outline of Creed, Sacraments and Prayers.

After the Second World War, it was obvious that a new vision was needed. Those on both sides of the war knew their catechism and yet terrible suffering was inflicted on all.

Before Vatican II evangelization/catechesis was quite precise. The learner focused on the creed, commandments, prayers and sacraments. Poor people or people with intellectual disabilities were kept out of this closed circle. But in 1959, a new wind began to blow.

1959 Nijmegen International Study Week

Fr. Johannes Hofinger, S.J. gathered together catechetical experts to look at the pastoral mandate for missionary activity. They pointed out that the **first step was to form a welcoming community** that spoke the local language especially in Liturgy. Catechesis needed a clear focus. This was a warm up for the following Study Weeks. Some mighty seeds have been planted.

1960 Eichstatt International Study Week

Fr. Hofinger, S.J. took advantage of the presence of the bishops who had come from all over the world to participate in the Eucharistic Congress and also to prepare for the Council to take place in the Vatican soon after. The emphasis was on the faith formation of everyone, not just those in mission countries. The participants worked on the four sources of catechesis; scripture liturgy, theology and witness. There was to be a clear focus on the **merciful love of the Father, proclaimed by the Son and celebrated in the Holy Spirit**/the Church. The liturgy was to be in vernacular languages, there was to be careful training of catechists and catechetical material was to be adapted to the people.

1962-1965 Vatican Council II

The themes from the Study Week of Eichstatt did in fact make it in to the documents of Vatican II!

1962 Bangkok, Thailand

The four fundamental sources of catechesis were outlined in Eichstatt but were revisited in Bangkok with a focus on Asian **culture**. Fr. Alfonso Nebreda, S.J. summarized the conclusions:

1. Pre-Evangelization, awakening in the unbeliever a sense of God as preparation for the Gospel
2. Evangelization, presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ as a call to conversion
3. Catechesis, giving a systematic explanation of the message aimed at adult Christians.

This study week began a new era in missionary activity.

1964 Katigondo, Uganda

While the Council was still in progress, the Study Group met in Africa. The participants made a realistic assessment of the sociological patterns of life and the culture of the people. They recognized the traditional value of African culture as signs that God intervenes in human history. The African sense of word, image, symbol, community, popular wisdom, meals and pacts are to be used in teaching Scripture and presenting God's covenant with his people and building the community of the church. The participants did not hesitate to raise the problem of the mentality of many missionaries which was seen as paternalistic and neo-colonial. It was a hard lesson for foreign missionaries. At the end of their work, the participants agreed in principle that human values in any culture reflect Gospel values. The seeds of the Gospel planted in African soil must produce African flowers and African fruit.

1964 SPRED Archdiocese of Chicago

A work group met in Bangalore, India where the director of the l'Institut Superier de Pastoral Catechetic of Paris said in his key address, "I am surprised and delighted to see that the anthropological approach has become a central issue in Asia. We speak of 'attention to persons', the 'value of human experience', the 'significance of life situations'".

Two priest friends in Paris were Fr. Jean Mesny from Lyons, France and Fr. Eucharistic Paulhus from Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada. They were both finishing their studies and starting to teach. Mesny at l'Institut Catholique and Paulhus at the University of Sherbrooke. Some of their written work made it to Chicago and the two of them were invited to come to the Archdiocese of Chicago. We all moved into the seminary at Mundelein and set to work. Neither of the priests could manage in English and all of their documentation needed to be translated.

The Chicago leaders decided that the best thing to do would be to suspend all the work, buy a pile of airplane tickets and hit the road.

Fr. Paulhus stressed the first step (in line with all the Study Weeks) was to know the persons and begin to create a sense of the sacred. Fr. Mesny showed us how preparing the **environment** would be our best support. Then we visited centers in Quebec and our imaginations began to work overtime. The pastoral relationships were the starting point – beginning with friendship, and we watched Fr. Mesny with his friends as he assured us that the human experience most like faith was friendship. The catechumenate (RCIA) was just underway and we saw the connection with **sponsors, helpers, as companions in faith**. We also watched both priests at liturgies and how they awakened a sense of Christ, a sense of faith, hope and love, the use of intuition and symbolic knowledge. We became convinced with them that the sequence would be:

1. Community (we are happy to be together)
2. Creation (revelation in life- symbol)
3. Church (around the altar, around the book of the Word, around the priest)
4. **Remembrance** in Praise

Since that time the friendship with Paulhus and Mesny has been our great support. In 1970, we were asked to help other English speaking and Spanish speaking countries.

Gradually we began to realize that every step of the way we were building on the work of the Study Weeks. Because of language and translation issuers we were slowly getting the reports of all this work. It had to make its' way into all sorts of English translations.

1967 Manila, Philippines

The Study Group revisited Asia to re-emphasize the issue of inculturation. The bishops of Ghana, Pakistan, Ceylon and directors of pastoral institutes of Hong Kong kept challenging the mentality of foreign missionaries and the priests they had formed. They also kept confronting the abject poverty of the people.

1968 Medellin, Columbia

Finally, the effort to have a Study Group meet at Medellin hit a brick wall. The Latin American Bishops presented a united front of “no change” in evangelization or catechesis. A lay catechist tried to speak and was put between the talks of two bishops who used up the time. So the core of the Study Group met with him in the garden and he gave them an update on the number of lay catechists who were being arrested, tortured and murdered because the military dictatorships considered their effort to build small communities of faith to be Marxist. The bishops did not want to hear one word about a **fundamental option for the poor**.

1971 Rome: International Catechetical Congress

At this congress, the bishops led by John Cardinal Wright formed a wall and the members of the study groups could not find a seat or translation facilities. So again, they met on their own and developed their own recommendation only to find that the final paper had been written before they had even arrived. On returning home they sent a letter with all the recommendations and were absolutely stunned to find that most of their recommendations were finally published in the General Directory for Catechesis that was published in English in the United States in 1998. The original was published in 1971.

By then we were looking at a flood of documentation holding the line against any change.

1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church

1997 General Directory for Catechesis

2005 National US Directory for Catechesis

2006 Catechism of the Catholic Church Compendium

2013 Pope Francis

And now we come to Pope Francis who wants to focus on the fundamental option for the poor, to build a church of and for the poor, the weakest and the least important!!! At last, SPRED has found its natural space. Pope Francis summarized his vision in his Apostolic Exhortation: **The Joy of the Gospel – Evangelii Gaudium** – 2013. (Published in the US in 2013. Order from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 202-541-3000.)

Pope Francis uses the following material from the catechetical study weeks, Vatican II and the Latin American Bishops conference of Aparecida 2007 as well as many other resources.

1. Welcoming Communities

The parish is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, a center for constant missionary outreach. (Pg. 16)

2. Clear Focus

This is the principle proclamation: the Spirit is given to lead us to believe in Jesus Christ who by his death and resurrection reveals and communicates the Father's infinite mercy. (Pg. 82)

3. Respect for Culture

Grace supposes culture, and God's gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it. Through inculturation, the Church introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. (Pg. 58-59)

4. Respect for the People

I believe the secret lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weakness and failings. Full of joy in the Spirit, he blesses the Father "*I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to babes.*" Luke 10-21 (Pg. 71)

5. Respect for the process

Truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness. Far from dealing with abstract truths or cold syllogisms, truth is communicated by the beauty of the images used by the Lord. Truth is communicated to encourage the practice of the good. The memory of the faithful, like that of Mary, should overflow with the wondrous things done by God. One proclaims a synthesis not ideas or detached values. Where your synthesis is, there lies your heart. The dialogue between the Lord and his people should be encouraged by the preacher (catechist), by the warmth of the tone of voice, the unpretentious manner of speaking, the joy of the gestures used. Pg. 70-71

6. Faith Friends

The Church will have to initiate everyone into the art of accompaniment which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. One who accompanies has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without. (Pg. 85-86)

References:

The Waters of a Lifetime - Autobiography of Sr. Maria de la Cruz, S.H., 1919 -2009, Red Star, Black Rose, CA 2012

Mass Evangelization, Scott Hahn, America, The National Catholic Review April 22, 2013

A Summary of Fr. Paulhus criteria, Fr. Mesny's method and the challenges faced in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Criteria of Fr. Euchariste Paulhus	Method Vivre of Fr. Jean Mesny	Chicago's Struggles
Religious Educability requires the development of a sense of the sacred	Develop an ambiance of the sacred, a place of beauty, silence, music and gesture.	We were in cold, impersonal classrooms.
An ecclesial sense, a sense of the church, requires the development of small communities of faith.	Friendship is the experience that is most like faith. Faith is relational.	We were in teacher-student classroom relationships.
A sense of Christ is to be awakened.	When we are happy together, Jesus is with us.	We tried to focus on the historical Jesus.
A theological sense is to be developed i.e. relating to faith, hope and love.	The goal is to awaken the sense of faith, hope and love.	We tried to talk of relating in faith, hope and love.
Intuition is to be taken into account.	The method is a juxtaposition of evocations.	We were trying to work with logical concepts.
Symbolic knowing is required in the education of faith.	Evocations develop symbolic knowing.	Symbols were being giving artificial meanings.

1970 In Fribourg, Switzerland SPRED was asked to help other countries by the International Catholic Child Bureau's Medical-Educational and Psycho-Social Commission. 1994 in Fribourg, Switzerland, Project Peer Support began for SPRED affiliated diocese. International meetings are held every three years to reflect on the method (Vivre) the mentality (symbolic and liturgical) and the program (SPRED).

2009 Project Peer Support was hosted in Belfast, Ireland attended by fifty leaders from nine countries. 2012 Project Peer Support was again hosted in Belfast, Ireland and attended by fifty two leaders.

The Method Vivre **of Fr. Jean Mesny, Lyons. France** **SPRED Chicago**

Since 1962, the Method Vivre has been used in a research mode in the Archdiocese of Chicago with people who have autism, cerebral palsy, severe epilepsy, various types of mental retardation and other emotional and intellectual disabilities. The method used within SPRED is:

*Small adult communities of faith
in parishes who welcome persons with various disabilities for catechesis
so that they may be included in parish worship.*

*The catechetical method used within these small communities of faith
focuses on the fostering of a sense of the sacred,
a sense of God and Jesus
and a sense of church
leading to fuller and more meaningful participation
in the sacramental and worship life of the parish.*

Elements of the Method Vivre

1. **Evocation of a Human Experience**

To evoke means to remember in such a way that the memory becomes present. One must have truly had an experience in order for it to be remembered. Little by little, the members of SPRED begin to attend to their own experiences, remember them and see in them God's loving presence.

2. **Interiorization**

As memories are brought forward, they bring with them feelings. The feelings begin to find a resonance in the group in such a way that the members of the community of faith begin to feel unified. At this point in the method, the members are comfortable saying "we" and "we are aware of how we feel".

3. **Liturgical Evocation**

Memories of church, ecclesial events are brought to mind according to the intentionality (a line of thought) of a session. These liturgical/sacramental memories and feelings are juxtaposed, put along side, the previous evocation.

4. **Biblical Evocation**

Memories common to the whole community of faith from the Bible are proclaimed by the catechist. These memories are brought to mind according to the same intentionality of the previous evocations. These are all juxtaposed one with the other. There is no effort made to teach a logical connection between the evocations. Global awareness is compatible with the kind of intellectual functioning of those with learning problems.

5. **Action and Message**

Up until this point, the catechist has been preparing the community of faith to welcome the message of Jesus to them, today. The catechist does not cause faith. The catechist prepares the way for the grace of faith to unfold. The witness of each one in the community of faith contributes to the faith of all.

6. Personal Expression

Through music and gesture, the community of faith proclaims its love, hope and faith.

Sr. Mary Therese Harrington, SPRED Chicago, October 2009

See: Berard L. Marthaler, *The Catechism Yesterday and Today, The Evolution of a Genre*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 5321, U.S.A. 1-800-858-5450 1995.



Obligatory Basis for SPRED

In SPRED, the Obligatory Basis forms the theological structure for catechesis.

The Obligatory Basis is made up of five Axes.

Election:	the God who calls us
Covenant:	the God who makes covenant with us
Salvation:	the God who saves us
Creation:	the God who creates us
Sanctification:	the God who makes us holy

Each year, one Axis or a set of a primary Axis with a secondary Axis is chosen for each age group. The sequence of how the Axes are laid out depends on the developmental task that is primary for that age group.

The primary Axes are as follows:

- 6 to 10 yrs: covenant as they are moving out of the family to make new friends.
- 11 to 16 yrs.: election as they need to agree to grow into a teen
- 17 to 21 yrs.: salvation as they must pass from a teen to adult
- 22+: covenant as they must make friends for life

Within each Axis, there are twelve intentionalities – one for each set (CPS & TCS) of sessions in the year. (See newsletter Sept. 2007 on intentionality)

The intentionalities break down the Axis into bite sizes.

The goal of the session is written based on the intentionality.

The Obligatory Basis is composed of biblical, liturgical and doctrinal elements. All of these elements must be synthesized to develop a symbolic catechesis.

Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget's broad categories for the development of intelligence are:

0 to 18 months Relating to reality is through Sensory Motor Thought

- Child grasps reality by exploring everything. Moving, touching, tasting, smelling and knowing are simultaneous.
- Child must act to understand.

18 months to 6 years 18 months to 4 years: PreOperational Thought - Symbolic level of functioning

- Child makes reality fit himself through play – My window, my street, my tree. What is known is mine.
- Child has capacity to be symbolically creative. May see a broom, may or may not know what a broom is but wants to play with it like a horse. The broom is given a meaning beyond the first level of meaning.

4 to 6 years - Intuitive mode of functioning.

- Child identifies with objects known, becomes a tree or flower.
- Child comes to know through Imitation.

6 to 12 years Operational Thought - Catechism are written for this level of thought. Concrete Accommodation and Assimilation, Adjustment and makes adaptations

12 years and over Formal Operational Thought Inductive Reasoning moving from a perception of similarities to form a principle and Deductive Reasoning – applying a principle

- Child is able to think without moving object, the ability to think beyond what is and think of what is possible.
- Child has the capacity to anticipate and to choose many combinations.
- Child understands Cause and Effect Relationships.

SPRED must take into account the gifts of the individual to relate symbolically and intuitively to the world as sacred. The Individual is initiated into relationships, into a community of faith, into a sense of the sacred and into mystery.

SYMBOL FROM VARIOUS VANTAGE POINTS

By Sr. Mary Therese Harrington

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, symbol has been used in pastoral settings with children, adolescents and adults who are developmentally disabled. Symbol has also been significant for adults to prepare themselves for this ministry, in the process of gaining insight into the symbolic progression; symbol in itself remains a fascination. There are many ways to look at symbol. This paper is a personal synthesis. Each point rests heavily on various authors who are listed in the bibliography. As a synthesis, however, an effort has been made to bring insights together and so footnotes are not included. In the process of building a personal synthesis, the contributions of many authors have been molded into a kind of whole, and as such have lost some of the sharp delineation constructed by the authors. And so I acknowledge my debt, I also offer an apology for what I have misunderstood or misconstrued in building this synthesis.

A Preliminary Framework

It has always seemed necessary to me to provide a proper context for the exploration of symbol. There are certain categories of thought, that when one gets inside them, provide a kind of warm-up for a consideration of symbol.

One set of insights is the distinction between Having and Being. Everything in our experience comes down to the distinction between what we have and what we are. Having implies something external that has been added to me. Because something has been made mine, it refers to the past. It implies a kind of personal archeology. My external possessions can be numbered; they are in the realm of multiplicity. And as such they provide a zone of suffering. For what one has, one can lose.

Being on the other hand provides me with a hidden identity that is inexhaustible. As such, it is the center from which joy springs. It is the center that offers me an eschatology, a future.

Having puts me in touch with problems, whereas Being puts me in touch with mystery. In itself mystery cannot be reduced to problem, although one can always degrade mystery and make a problem of it. When one takes mystery and changes it into problem, one puts it into the world of having. Thus one tries to know mystery, not in itself, but as a problem. Problem as a mode of having can be known conceptually and as such it is easily communicated to another person. But to know in this way, one is outside what is to be known and one puts distance between self and what is known in order to be objective. One is self-conscious and one experiences a kind of absence because of the distance that one has set up. One thus struggles with problem as details that bar the way in one's pursuit. A limit is experienced and in struggling with that limit one experiences tension.

I am not outside mystery as I am outside problem. I am involved with mystery. Mystery is the sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses meaning. The recognition of mystery is a positive act that lacks self-consciousness.

Recollection is the process by which I regain contact with Being, with Mystery. In recollection, I do not struggle with details as I do with problem. In recollection I experience a reduction of tension. In recollection I rediscover my place in the world as in a womb in which I am being shaped and formed. In recollection I discover presence in place of absence.

In the world of problem, I have functions. In the world of being I discover mystery through the creative act. One cannot enter into the world of mystery without opening up inner spaces. This interiority is expanded through music and the arts and this interiority is the space for spirituality.

And so one lives with the distinction and tension between Having and Being, Problem and Mystery, Absence and Presence, Function and Creative Act, La Politique and La Mystique, I-it and I Thou experiences.

Symbol from the Point of View of Psychology

According to Jung there is a basic law which decides between psychic health and psychopathology. The balance is tipped by the ego's strength, capacity, and willingness to unbar the door and windows of the unconscious and to receive the stranger that emerges: that is confront and channel the inner world of images and affects while at the same time retaining one's own grasp on external reality.

And so symbol is the bridge between the inner and outer world. Symbol is the region of double meanings. When one is in therapy and a dream is to be interpreted, it is not the dream as dreamed that can be interpreted, but rather the text of the dream account. Symbol, in this sense, is the expression of a depth of meaning which both shows and hides itself. To interpret a symbol is to understand its double meaning, what is obvious and what is hidden. Symbol is a double meaning linguistic expression that requires interpretation, and is a work of understanding to decipher a symbol. Symbol is the instrument to apprehend reality, while being aware that the secondary level of meaning somehow dwells in the first and obvious meaning.

In order to think in accord with symbols, in this sense, we must subject them to a dialectic, (light and darkness, in and out, up and down, etc.) One learns to hold both ends of the dialectic in tension. The danger is to arrive at a meaning in reference to only one pole too quickly and thus lose the symbolic tension. Then one becomes dissipated and lost in a superabundance of meaning. Symbols call for interpretation because of their structure in which meaning inherently refers beyond itself in a dialectic tension.

It is important to remember that the structure and texture of symbol always includes the dialectic of concealing and showing, disguising and revealing.

The hidden world of dreams carries the danger of sucking reality into its vortex. In response, one reduces illusion by pulling this inner world back into tension with the outer world.

The outer world can sweep the inner world into its void. And in response, one reduces magic by allowing the inner world its own space in tension with the outer world.

Symbol is the zone for harmony to exist between one's inner and outer world.

Jung sees mental illness as a deficiency in the symbolic function. But both Jung and Freud use symbol in a rather reductionary sense. One's response to symbol is reduced to a symptom. One becomes involved in the archeology of the person, but seldom in the eschatology of the person, i.e. how the spirit of the person opens out into a wider horizon.

Psychologists encounter symbol as the distortion and restoration of meaning. The phonomonology of religion sees symbol as the zone for the encounter with the sacred.

Symbol from the Point of View of Religion

The essence of life is a feeling of participation, a flowing outward in relation to time and place. One senses a limited beyond in the immediate and with time and experience, one senses a wider and more immense horizon. "The lamp is waiting in the window, through it, the house is waiting." (G. Bachelard)

Myths, rituals and beliefs are a particular way in which one places self in relation to fundamental reality. But in relationship to the beyond, we want to be both visible and hidden, open and closed. And so the symbol of space (box, door, or window) indicates that we ourselves are half-open beings.

Symbol is characterized by the translucence of the special in the individual, of the eternal in the temporal. When one enters into a symbolic experience one enters a zone of freedom. No one ties down exactly what is meant by the experience. One discovers one's own meaning. One maintains access to this freedom by being willing to live with mystery. One is present to mystery in the symbolic experience and so one touches both the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite.

One needs to be aware of the difference between sign, allegory, metaphor and symbol.

Sign	Allegory	Metaphor	Symbol
Arbitrary connection between two realities (Red = Stop)	Not arbitrary. Many separate but connected points of reference. Each detail is important in itself.	Not arbitrary reference between two points of metaphor. Seeks to illustrate information. Seeks to create participation in the metaphor's reference.	Not arbitrary Not conventional Seeks to create participation in symbol referent. Unlike comparisons, which we look at from the outside, movement assimilates us to what is symbolized, without our being able to get hold of the similarity intellectually.
Direction is one way to meaning. ----->	Direction is one way to meaning. ----- ->	Direction is one way to meaning. -----> Direction may include epiphany. <-----	Direction is both ways. -----> <----- Epiphany and Meaning
Meaning can be apprehended in other ways.	Meaning is difficult to get to, complex and abstract.	Parable tells a story that is possible in everyday life. (Shepherd) Myth tells a story that has elements from everyday life and elements that are not possible on the surface level. (Dragon) Parable is a metaphor on normalcy which intends to create participation in its referent.	Symbol is not reached by direct thought. Through the mediation of symbol, transcendence lies in human experience. The hermeneutic of everyday life in the early church gave rise to New Testament. Life was seen in the light of the Jesus event. Symbolic experiences may be expressed in Metaphor, Myth and Parable.

Pastoral Catechesis through a Symbolic Progression

One begins with the premise that symbolic functioning is within the capacity of the person. (See Jean Piaget). The developing individual has a primitive symbolic functioning by which reality is related to as more than it seems. In play, a broom becomes a horse. The child has reality fit into his own world. On the other hand, through intuitive functioning, the child relates to reality in such a way that he becomes one with what is known. The tree becomes the space for glory as she becomes one with its glorious colors, lights and shadows.

When a time, a place and a group are set aside for a particular and agreed on purpose, a symbolic progression is possible. One begins with an attitude that is open to presence, to mystery, to recollection, to the creative act. One becomes present to what one lives and one senses an epiphany that comes from beyond what one lives.

One builds receptivity to epiphany in the process of juxtapositions. One places the awareness of what one lives, next to the awareness of how the group feels about what we live together. (Interiorization)

Then together we become aware of how we live together in worship in union with the Son in his stance before the Father. (Liturgical Evocation)

One places all of this next to an awareness of the Jesus Event (Biblical Evocation) and the person is finally called deeper into the world of mystery through the message, action and personal expression.

This is a symbolic progression or unfolding, rather than an analysis of symbolic content. The spiritual evolution involved in this symbolic progression involves a gradual deepening of the creative belonging. A passage from constraint to freedom is accomplished.

Conclusion

Faith and Revelation are in relation to one another as the two poles in the symbolic experience. Revelation precedes Faith in that God expresses himself in the world. Faith precedes revelation in the sense that only the eyes of faith see God manifest in the world. And so the believer lives in the symbolic zone of Revelation and Faith. These two poles are comfortable for the person who is at ease with Being, Mystery, and Presence. This level of comfort is the result of conversion and is the goal of pastoral relationships.

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Thoughts on Symbol and Symbolic Knowing

I call a symbol, every significant structure where a direct, primary, literal meaning designates another indirect, secondary meaning that can only be understood through the first. (Ricoeur)

A symbol points beyond itself. It participates in the beyond, in hidden realities, in mystery. When a person relates symbolically, the soul is awakened. A symbol explores what is hidden in the person and in the beyond. (Tillich)

Symbols represent a reality whose depth of meaning will never be completely fathomed by the mind. (Vergote)

Only symbol succeeds in joining together the most diverse elements in one unique global impression. (Medina)

Signs are learned. They are objective. One thing stands for one meaning. Signs can become symbols by becoming more enriched. On the other hand, symbols can become signs by becoming impoverished.

Symbols awaken feeling, commitment. When one is involved with a symbol, one is never left feeling neutral.

Symbol includes every element (object, word, gesture, person) that permits the group as a whole or individuals in the group to recognize one another and identify themselves. Sacraments are symbolic realities that mediate Christian identity. The Church identifies itself through symbol. (Chauvet)

The function of symbol is to introduce us into an order, in which itself belongs, that opens out to a radical otherness of meaning. A sign relates to something other than itself because it implies a difference between a sensible signifier and the meaning signified. (Chauvet)

The work of art, like all symbolic work, shows what the truth is: not something already given beforehand to which one has to adjust oneself with exactitude, but rather a "making-come-into-being" an advent, a glimpse, a sort of suspense, in which the person respects a "vacant space" which is not at all utilitarian, where the real belongs. (Chauvet)

Water is always either: deep, clear, pure, fresh or stagnant. My existence is not simply "like" water; because the comparison stays exterior to the reality evoked. In symbol, the relation is internal and global. Water never comes so close to its "truth" as when it functions as a bath of rebirth, the fundamental symbol of human existence. Symbol touches the most real aspects of ourselves and our world. It touches us to the quick. (Chauvet/Vergote)

The rose offered, the kiss exchanged, the simple silence is a way to breach the otherness of a person, while offering a presence. Presence is offered through the grace of a symbolic gesture. Symbol allows us to sustain one another and symbol resides permanently in the most vital centers of our lives. (Chauvet)