



SPRED CORE TRAINING 2 - 1

Day 3

Contract for Catechists

- The importance of the adult community of catechists as the foundation for the SPRED process

Parish: A Believing Church

- The context for the Revelation of and Faith in the mystery of God

Preparing the Environment

- The essentials and importance of a SPRED space – The Meeting Room and Celebration Circle

Preparation Process

- The rationale behind the Preparation Process.
- Agape



CONTRACT FOR ADULT COMMUNITIES OF SPRED CATECHISTS

One of the most serious questions underlying the movement to develop SPRED communities is this: are persons who are intellectually and developmentally disabled really educable in faith?

Superficial observation may tempt some to profound doubt. Research* and experience both support that they are educable in faith, if faith is seen as experiential, as the experience of the sacred, a sense of the church, a sense of Christ and a sense of God.

Everything thus depends on the faith tonality of the catechetical group of adults who provide the atmosphere for this experience. The common bond in faith that grows among them is the core education media for people with developmental disabilities. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities share the life of the group in varying degrees, but the burden of growth in faith falls primarily on the adult community.

For this reason, the adult SPRED catechists participate in an Adult Preparation session prior to each Total Community session. The effort is to be in communion with the deep mystery of life, the faith dimension according to the theme which will be the focus in the coming session with our friends with disabilities.

This shifts the style from a teacher – pupil pattern to growing together as a community of faith. Over a period of many years, as group after group experiences similar patterns of struggles and growth, an agreement or covenant was drawn up to facilitate growth.

The Catechists' Covenant to the SPRED Community

This agreement /covenant emphasizes the seriousness of our endeavor. This contract strives for high visibility, so that the group can put all the cards on the table. It sets forth for closest examination, of an approach that has been thought through in its goal, means, principles and its facing of group problems. This contract is an effort to respect you, your time, your faith life.

You are asked to examine it carefully. It recognizes that for many understandable reasons you might desire to agree or disagree. The group cannot settle to begin a serious task until all the members have examined the contract and have agreed to it.

Why Adults?

This contract subscribes to a catechesis of adults. All too often due to the pressure of time and due to adult's passion to teach children their religion, the emphasis of adult faith is bypassed. We submit that this is an error of major proportion. Religious education moves forward only when adults grown in faith. The adult faith community is primary so that others have a Christian community into which they can be welcomed.

Why the group?

You will be working with a small group of adults. Sound theology dictates that faith in the Lordship of Jesus will be found in a community of believers. The American experience and expertise in group dynamics are called upon to ensure the effectiveness of the group and the growth of the individual in it. The needs of the Christian today often call for smaller, more vibrant faith groups in a church that knows its catholic and universal nature all too well. Yet the group, like the individual, goes through growing pains. Group problems are outlined in the contract so that the group might be enabled to face them honestly when they arise.

Why the Faith Session?

If God speaks, it is in order to enter into the lives of persons, to save them and to win a loving response. Historically there is a shift in focus in religious education from the primacy of instruction (wherein the goal is the true) and from the importance of formation (wherein the goal is the good) to a more primary goal from which truth and value follow namely, initiation. Initiation is the process of advancing into a more and more interpersonal relationship with God, which by its very intimacy, is in some measure mysterious. When God speaks to us, it is to establish a life of communion. This life of communion is the experience of faith. From communion with God's presence in life itself, the truth will be known as personally meaningful and the good will be seen as personally valuable. This communion is the goal of the faith sessions.

MEANS

What are the means used in a Faith Session?

The process is known as symbolic catechesis or the *Method Vivre*. The French title, *Vivre*, is the one used by the method's originator Fr. Jean Mesny. In summary, the means used to prepare oneself to grow in faith are:

- To unfold, to interpret life situations
- Within a group
- Through a symbol
- In faith
- In light of the Word
- Moving toward communion
- And witness.

PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS

The symbolic process generally involves various phases. When a person settles down before a symbol, a call is received from the symbol itself. Becoming aware of how the symbol is calling, one must struggle to accept or to reject the movement of the symbol. This requires time. If the person decides to follow the movement of the symbol, a process of interior movement of entering into harmony with the symbol is accompanied by affectivity, feeling. If a person flees or protects self from this affectivity, the movement is destroyed. However, as the symbolic process is entered into, it leads the person, in the company of others, toward the deep of things where the Word of God can have a resonance.

The movement then is usually attraction by the symbol, a spontaneous response, moments of resistance, of struggle, acceptance, letting non-essentials drop, new awareness, harmony, joy.

This symbolic movement is mingled with the experience of faith. Faith, a mystery in itself as it is a gift, is not only an act of intellectual adhesion; it is a movement full of trust and love. It is a response of the whole person.

This movement is essentially free, dramatic, obscure, but leading to certain knowledge. It involves a turning (conversion), a dropping of non-essentials (purification), and the joy of new discovery (witness).

The core reality underlying everything is the life of the Trinity. This mystery at its deepest level is God himself. Through creation, the Trinitarian movement is given in a diffused manner in the universe. The transcendent God concentrates him immanence in Jesus. Through him, all life comes from and returns to the Father. Through his obedience of faith in the Father, expressed in his total openness to the experience of death and through the life of the Spirit poured forth in the resurrection, all reality is ultimately grounded in the risen life of Jesus. The inner core of any symbol ultimately touches this. Through the mystery of the Kingdom, expressed in the Church, his new life is explicitly focused. In space and time, God calls each person to this life through the mysteries of covenant, salvation, election, sanctification and creation.

LEADERSHIP

Any group needs leadership. A SPRED group has tri-leadership, a leader catechist, an activity catechist and a parish chairperson. The leadership team has three functions; host, celebrant, educator. The ideal is that this threefold leadership will assist in creating a fellowship of believers who will be in communion with the presence of God in an awareness of life. In this sense, we subscribe to a shared and diffused leadership.

The function of host is to create an atmosphere of welcome and warmth so that persons will get to know one another, be more and more at ease and will lower their defensive barriers to each other. All

leadership team members share this role in a SPRED community. During the preparation session, the activity catechist in particular helps create a welcoming atmosphere and warmth. As host, the leader catechist presents the theme whereby the group is quieted, united interiorly and readied for a celebration.

The function of celebrant is to be in harmony with the core dynamic, the deep meaning of a life situation. The leader is to call the members into interiority and expression in view of this life situation, beginning thus with a concrete event, not from abstractions from the world of ideas.

The function of the educator is to stimulate the group to be aware of their own experiences and what is happening in each catechetical session so that it may be a more and more meaningful experience. The leader is to stimulate the group to reflect on the experience in the light of theology, pedagogy, as well as medical, psychosocial and personal data. As the group matures, lectures, readings, papers, bibliographies, etc. can be suggested to various members of the group.

GROUP PROBLEMS

The following problems sometimes emerge in this catechetical process. It is suggested that the group suspend to the symbolic process to take time to face these problems if they appear. One meeting focused on an exploration of a group problem can free a group to return to the symbolic process with authenticity. The problems can gravitate around the leader, individual persons, or interactions in the group.

Leadership Problems

Overdependence on a leader

If the group suffers from overdependence on the leader, it will never arrive at mature fellowship. The leader's role is visible but the leader is to facilitate growth toward adult interaction and communion.

Domination by a Leader

Sometimes a leader might try to 'mother' or 'father' a group. The group must alert such a leader and help the person to "let go".

Personal Problems

Tyranny of the technical person

This type of person is closed to appreciating the world of the spirit and therefore the world of symbol. Such a mentality sees the symbolic process as esoteric, arty, overly feminine. Poetry, art, dance music and silence make the person ill at ease. The western culture can produce this type of person.

Limitations of individual members

Lack of maturity, a closed mind, personality blocks, insensitivity to life, inability to communicate are some of the limitations that will block a full sounding of the mystery and fellowship. The group will move only as rapidly as the slowest member allows it.

Going it alone, apart from the adult faith community

Adult faith needs and adult community. No catechist can rely solely for growth in faith on his or her direct charges or disabled friends.

Threat of Self-Disclosure

There will be demands on every person within the group. You will be asked to be open about yourself. You will not be asked to reveal your past life or darkest secrets. You will be asked to accept others simply because they are, to encourage them to fulfill the contract, to positively respond to others in the group.

Process Problems

Inability to experiment

All the members of the group must participate wholeheartedly if it is truly to become church. Participation is learned by doing. Let there be a climate of experimentation. Members should not prejudice the experience by reserving their judgment or giving self-fulfilling prophecies. Participation will be enhanced by evaluation. Cooperation with one another must be reached. Let the reality have its emotional impact. Let language be colored by feeling.

Remaining on a superficial level

Sometimes members can sabotage the dynamics of the group and prevent the group from accepting the depth of the mystery. Often this will happen by a tacit understanding. Engaging in interaction is not easy. The forms of flight to be avoided are humor, silence and withdrawal, abstract interpretations, tacit decisions not to talk about certain subjects, cynicism.

Getting sidetracked from the primary goal.

The primary goal is the experience of faith before the mystery. Analysis, evaluation, theoretical discussions are benefits but are secondary.

SPRED Chicago 1987

**Paulhaus, Euchariste, L'Educabilite Religieuse des Deficients Mentaux, Emmanuel Vitte, Lyons. France, 1962*



PARISH - A BELIEVING CHURCH

The Context for the Revelation of and Faith in the Mystery of GOD

1. What kind of context does SPRED advocate?
 - i. A Program rooted in the parish/congregation, structure
 - ii. Groups whose characteristics are family –like, i.e.
 - Highlighting face to face
 - Unspecialized
 - Small number of people
 - With relative permanence and intimacy
 - iii. Who explore creational and relational experiences (the visible) while searching for other levels of meaning (the invisible) as they are **lived and celebrated** in the life of the wider assembly of believing people.
 - iv. Who place these experiences **in the light of the** (creative, summoning, saving, covenanting, sanctifying) **transforming WORD** as manifested in space and time in the history of a family, a people, a nation, a Person.
 - v. Who try to be the “consciously Christified portion”: in the world, **servicing** and recognizing ‘the beyond in the midst’, focusing on persons with developmental disabilities

2. What is the Church?

It is the Mystery of the people of God made one in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. Is the Church the Kingdom of God”

Some would identify the Church and the Kingdom, more, today, would see the Church as an agent of the Kingdom: the Church is the minority at the service of the majority, working to bring the Kingdom.

4. What are some images of the Church?

CHURCH

(Avery Dulles, S.J., Models of the Church, 1974)

As Institution

Visible structures, formal organized society, rights and powers of its officers

Hierarchical, Constitution, Set of Rules, Governing Body

Instructs its members, promotes continuity and stability

Corporate Identify

Chief Assets

- Endorsement in official Church documents
- Likes the uncertain present and the religious past
- Strong sense of corporate identity

Major liabilities

- Meager basis in Scripture and in early Church tradition
- Heightens clericalism, juridicism
- Binds theology too exclusively to the defense of currently official positions
Ecumenically not as effective
- Out of phase with the demands of the time

As Mystical Communion

Informal, interpersonal community – Fellowship, Community of Grace

Family-like, small number, relative permanence and intimacy

Promotes spirituality, life of prayer

Chief Assets

- Invisible membership
- Better basis in scripture
- Ecumenically very fruitful
- Foundation in tradition
- Revivifies spirituality and the life of prayer
- Meet a human need

Liabilities /weaknesses

- Obscure regarding relationships between spiritual and visible dimensions of Church
- Exalts and divinizes the Church beyond it due
- Fails to give Christians a very clear sense of their identity or mission
- Tension between Church as network of interpersonal relationships and the Church as a mystical communion of grace

Christians who live in basic communities in which their ordinary human relationships are healed and enriched by a common commitment to Christ and the Gospel do have a realization of Church

As Sacrament

Socially constituted, communal symbol of the presence of Grace coming to fulfillment – Visible Sign of Grace

As a Sign of Christ unites Institution and Communion – Divine and Human

Chief Assets

- Integrates ecclesiology with other traditional theological themes
- Strong witness value
- Purifies and intensifies men's response to the grace of Christ
- Links the two previous models of Church (institution and communion) together
- Suggests ways in which the visible means of grace can be successfully related to the doctrine of Holy Spirit and the spiritual reality of grace
- Furnishes motives for strong loyalty to Church and humble striving to adhere to its discipline while making room for honest criticism

Deficiencies

- Comparatively little warrant in Scripture and early tradition
- Narrow sacramentalism that accords insufficient place for service (diakonia) in the Church's mission to the world
- Not easily available for preaching
- Can induce an attitude of narcissistic aestheticism that is not easily reconcilable with a full Christian commitment to social and ethical values
- Very little response to Protestant thought

By virtue of its relationship to Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind; that is, she is a sign and instrument of such union and unity.

As Herald

Task of Church to Proclaim the Word to the World – Kerygmatic process of congregating, existence as community Bonded by Faith

Response to the Gospel – Bible as primary witness to Christ

Clear Sense of Identity and mission: Herald of Salvation

Chief assets:

- Primary bond of communion is faith
- Congregational form of Church order
- Strong evangelistic missionary thrust
- Good biblical foundation in prophetic tradition of Old Testament, in Paul, etc.
- Clear sense of identity and mission to Church
- Conducive to a spirituality that focuses on God's sovereignty and on man's infinite distance from him: repentance stressed
- Rich theology of the Word

Limitations:

- Doesn't stress incarnational aspect of Christian revelation enough
- Different view of authority in the Church
- Focuses too exclusively on witness to the neglect of action

The mission of the Church is to proclaim that which it has heard, believed, and been commissioned to proclaim.

As Servant

Recognized world outside Church, promotes work, ministry, service to others

Church as consciously Christified portion of the World

Provides to the world

Chief Assets:

- Mutual brotherhood with those who join in Christian service toward the world
- In tune with dominant biblical themes
- Offers the world a value system it needs
- Offers the church an opportunity for spiritual renewal

Objections:

- Lack of any direct biblical foundation
- Term "servant" is ambiguous
- Problem of relation of "servant" church to kingdom of God

SPRED

Institution: The institutional elements in the Church must ultimately be justified by their capacity to express or strengthen the Church as a community of life, witness and service, a community that reconciles and unites men in the grace of Christ.

Mystical Communion:

Accents the personal relationship between the faithful - individually and collectively - with the Holy Spirit, and helps to revivify spirituality and the life of prayer.

Christians can live in community in which their ordinary human relationships are healed and enriched by a common commitment to Christ and the Gospel.

Sacrament: Christians are those who see and confess Jesus Christ as the supreme efficacious symbol, the primordial sacrament – of God’s saving love stretched out to all.

Herald: The primary bond of communion in faith. Faith is seen as a response to the gospel, the proclamation of the Christ-event.

The Word is rightly seen as far more than a representative of ideas, more than a source of information, more than an explanation of what is antecedently real, but as expression of the person, as address as a bond of communion between persons in dialogue.

Christ is present in his Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read. He is present when the Church prays and sings for “when two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them.”

(Matthew 18:20)

Servant: The Christian faith can motivate men, as perhaps nothing else can, to employ their power for service.

Prophetic Voice #1 Fr. Peter Shannon

A Cursillo Talk given 9/24/68

I see the Church as a movement within the world community. The Church is or should be a movement of change within the world, an attempt to transform the institutional relationships within the world so that they can better express the relationships between people.

The Church is, or should be, a movement of truth within the world, challenging the world to see itself, in part at least, as a world of hatred, war, bitterness, property and bigotry.

The Church is, or should be, a movement of light within the world, a light which enables humans to see themselves in communion with one another, with all other be they socialists, Christians, Marxists or Buddhists.

The Church is, or should be a movement of freedom within the world. A movement to free humankind from irrational fears and oppression and injustice. In effect, the Church is a movement to free us - to love.

The Church then is simply Christ – Christ the Way, the Truth and the Light. The Church then is the risen Christ acting among and within human beings through his Spirit. Do we have Church today: Have we ever had Church: No, not really. We are always becoming Church. Becoming the Christ present to the World.

Where is Church today? Church is anywhere, where a group of Christians believing in Christ and trusting in one another are striving to move the world toward freedom and truth and justice. That is where Church is.

Where is Church today? Wherever there is a group of Christians who believe that nothing in the world is profane.

Where is Church today? The Church is anywhere a group of Christians come together to celebrate in liturgy what they are becoming and what they will and may become through the Spirit.

Where is Church today? Look around yourself, see for yourself. See where there is Church; and where there is unChurch. Look at your family, your parish, your diocese. Look to any group of Christians with whom you share and with whom you work. Look and decide for yourself.

For only you can answer in your world, in your environment, where Church is or is not.

I see unChurch in those of us who sit back and let the institutional arrangements in our society continue to crush human beings, who remain unmoved as violence, bitterness and bigotry permeate our lives,; who reject those of other ethnic groups and religions; and who live in fear as injustice triumphs all around us. Whenever we as Christians allow these things to happen – there is unChurch. I see unChurch in so many areas, but I also see Church. Often we may find it hard to see the Spirit, to feel, to touch the Spirit, to feel its presence and understands its love. And yet we know, through faith, it is there. The church basically is a movement, the movement of Christ with the community of the world – AND YOU ARE THAT CHURCH.

In an Archdiocese

Cardinal/Staff

Cardinal / Staff

Vicars (Six Vicariates)

Pastors

In a Parish

Pastor

Parish Staff

Parish Council or Comission

SPRED

RELATIONSHIPS

Among SPRED Groups

Affiliation with Diocesan Resources

SPRED Standards

Community Religious Workers

The SPRED Staff

In a SPRED Group

Leader Catechist, Activity Catechist, Parish
Chairperson, Helper Catechists

Friends

Families/Caregivers

ENVIRONMENT AND PREPARATION PROCESS

The Environment of a SPRED center and the process of preparation with the total community share common elements. Each is a support to the moment of catechesis in the celebration room. Each is capable of feeding the human spirit, preparing the way for the Lord's manifestation. Each holds implicitly the mystery of Covenant, Election, Creation, Salvation, and Sanctification. Each needs our attention and challenges us to be mindful of God's desire to be with us.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Environment of a SPRED Center supports the goal of the catechesis. This implies that the environment has the potential to carry a message that it has the power to convey a spirit of:

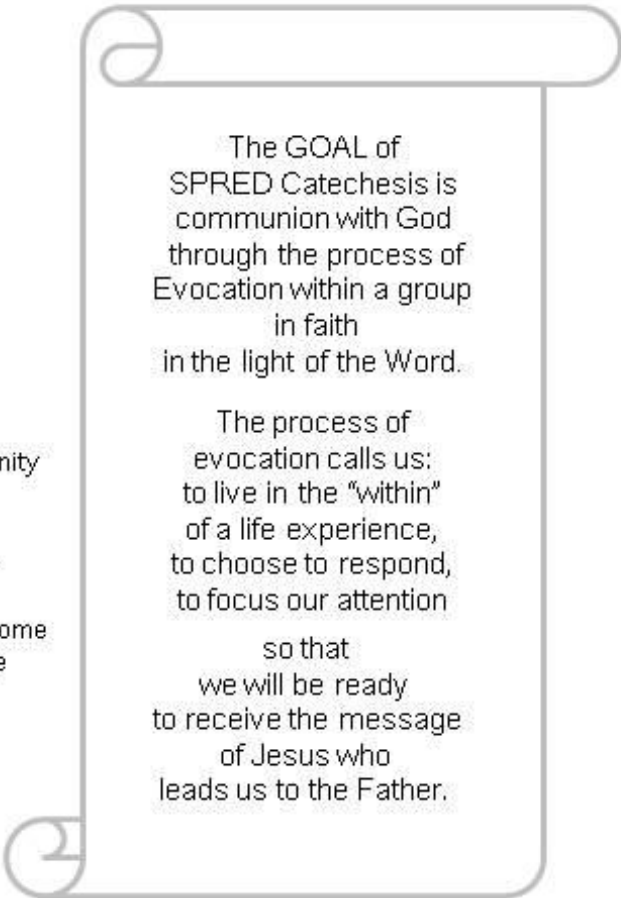
Communion ~ Unity
Simplicity ~ Welcome
Respect

So that the potential of each can be maximized in view of the goal, care is given to the basic elements of the place for the SPRED community

Line ~ Space
Color ~ Light ~ Sound

The challenge for each community of faith is to become conscious of how the presence of God can be sensed in space where one feels:

Gathered
Called
Fully alive
Loved
Renewed



The GOAL of SPRED Catechesis is communion with God through the process of Evocation within a group in faith in the light of the Word.

The process of evocation calls us: to live in the "within" of a life experience, to choose to respond, to focus our attention

so that we will be ready to receive the message of Jesus who leads us to the Father.

The PREPARATION PROCESS and the TOTAL COMMUNITY

The goal of the process of preparation is to become ready to enter into the evocation process, the process which leads to an explicit experience of the Sacred, Jesus present in the community and in the heart of each person.

This implies a process that helps each person to become focused, more able to listen, more able to receive.

Within the environment of preparation activities are available that encourage concentration and lead to an experience that fosters harmony.

Materials respect the age of persons within the group and act as an invitation to relate.

The challenge for each community of catechists is to choose to engage in personal work that has value only in relation to its capacity to prepare one's spirit for a new awareness of the gift of Life.

CORE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE PREPARATION PROCESS

	Parish Chairperson	Activity Catechist	Leader Catechist
A room for preparation	X		
Suitable furniture and basic equipment	X		
Funds to purchase materials	X		
An environment equipped with suitable materials		X	
Catechists prepared to welcome persons with disabilities	X	X	X
A trained core team and a trained helper catechist for each person with disabilities	X		
Basic information pertaining to each person with disabilities	X		X
A person able to guide the community in the work of preparation for the total community session		X	

PHASES OF THE PREPARATION PROCESS

PHASE	ACTIVITY CATECHIST	HELPER CATECHIST	LEADER CATECHIST	PERSON WITH DISABILITIES
Greeting	Is ready to welcome each as he/she enters	Each is seated at a table with work	Assists AC in greeting each person	Is greeted by AC, LC and encouraged to greet each person
The choice of work	Is available to help each person in choice of work	Chooses personal work before friend come	Chooses work when most of the community has been seated	Is encouraged to choose appropriate work
Resting in work	Is alert to encourage and to guide when necessary	is encouraged by AC to focus and enjoy personal work	Needs to be free to remain absorbed in work	Works independently whenever possible
Choosing a second or third work	needs to be aware of each person and their needs	Only changes work when the personal need arises	Only changes work when the personal need arises	Often needs guidance
Invited to finish work	Asks each person if they are ready to go to the celebration room	Is invited to finish work and come to the circle for the silence circle, assists Friend if needed.	LC & AC confer regarding the readiness of the group	Is invited to finish work and come to the circle for the silence circle
The silence activity	Makes sure there is a place for each person in the circle, calls each by name to go to the celebration room	Joins the circle and sits next to special friend	Begins the silence activity and then leaves to go to the celebration room	Comes to the circle, sits next to his helper catechist and goes to the celebration room when he/she hears his name called

THE AGAPE

What is the Agape?

The agape is a special time of sharing that follows the sacred experience of catechesis. It is characterized by the sharing of food by the community and the sharing of joy and praise in the form of conversation and song.

Who prepares the Agape?

As the group assembles in the meeting room following catechesis each assumes some responsibility in preparing for the agape. The correct number of placemats, plates, tableware, glasses or mugs, napkins, candles, flowers are available (organized by the Activity Catechist) so that each person can have a part in preparing the table. Others help to arrange the chairs, making sure that there is a place for each person. The Chairperson assumes responsibility for the physical environment making sure that furniture and equipment is suitable. The Activity Catechist makes sure that there is an adequate amount of food for all. He or she coordinates the work of the group to prepare the table.

Who leads the Agape?

The Leader Catechist assumes responsibility for group interaction during the agape. Each catechist is attentive to draw his/her special friend into the conversation and song.