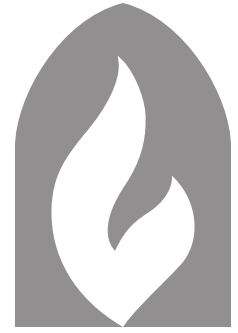


# SPRED



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## **‘Faith lies dormant in the soul’ until life within the Mass calls it forth.**

*SPRED catechists Julia and Robert Hess reflect upon their first experience of liturgy with the SPRED community and the richness of that faith tradition.*

What are the words and actions that give life to mystery? The language of the heart and soul washes over us softly and touches us like an unexpected kiss. We wonder. What just happened? Why the tears? What is different about this Sunday Mass?

“The Word of life was made visible. We have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you.”  
(1 John 1:2-3)

As Fr. James McCarthy raised the sacred bread and cup of wine, he spoke the words of the



A team of catechists collaborate to interpret the words of scripture.

consecration heard so many times. His deliberate gesture, the tone of his voice and the depth of his gaze conveyed his intense personal faith. His sacred actions ignited the heart and soul of the community gathered.

Faith lies dormant within the soul. It waits hopefully for a nudge to call it forth and taste communion with God.

How do we wake the spirit within our own soul? How can we break from the role of passive observer toward a shared experience of faith? Liturgy must be an action of the heart and soul in communion with the community and the celebrant. Liturgy is both a personal and communal encounter with one another and with our God. It is God’s work in us.

With deep gratitude we were indulging in an experience that would gradually pave the way for children and adults of all ages, gifts and abilities to know the mystery of God’s loving embrace for all.

We entered the SPRED experience through our respect for people with varying abilities and the deep belief that all are welcome at the table of the Lord. We relished in the pioneer days of embracing a liturgical style that would respond to all modes of knowing the sacredness of life and sensing the mystery of God with all.

Struck by the intense dedication of the SPRED founders and their inspired catechetical method, we were drawn in a special way to explore meaningful and inclusive experiences of liturgy. The SPRED process highlights liturgy and sacrament as essential to the life-long cycle of catechesis.

In collaboration with the SPRED founders, we turned our focus on choreographing a meaningful, shared experience of worship with our friends. As with the symbolic method of catechesis, the answers rested in turning respectful attention to our friends.

Who are they? What are their various modes of knowing, absorbing life and bonding? We were clearly aware that we must honor the unique personhood of each person.

As research unfolded, we explored resources that honored liturgy as an aesthetic expression and an experience that must be in harmony with the ongoing cycle of catechesis. Mystery is the core of both. It is present in the gathering community. How do we unearth the mystery of God with us in both?

Inspired, we worked with the SPRED staff to enhance the rituals of the Mass. We focused attention on processions, interpretive movement to Scripture; gestures of praise to accompany the Psalms; setting of the altar table; and presentation of the gifts.

We were especially attracted to the art of interpretive movement as it opened the way to breathe life into the spoken word. Working in tandem with the new homiletic style of Fr. McCarthy, we attended workshops in the art of liturgical movement. We were graced with the endearing title of liturgical thespians.

Catechists and friends from far and near made the pilgrimage to the SPRED Chapel on the first Sunday of each month to indulge in the gift of an enhanced experience of the Sacred Liturgy.



Catechists and their partners share their creative offerings at the SPRED Chapel.



As a couple, Julia and Robert artfully breath life into the Gospel message.

Living and relishing liturgy at the SPRED Chapel roused a hunger to bring this sacred experience home. In 1979, we brought SPRED to our own parish, Queen of Angels.

Lifted by the welcome embrace of our fellow parishioners, we were convinced that SPRED Family Masses must be brought closer to the homes of our friends. It became our conviction that we could teach fellow catechists the art of the SPRED Family Mass.

With the blessing of the SPRED staff, we brought our liturgy workshop into the field. Within their own familiar setting, catechists welcomed the opportunity to grasp a vision of inclusion and greater visibility in their own parish community.

Armed with research and ideas from workshops at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University, we developed an approach to draw more catechists into an appreciation of Liturgy as an aesthetic manifestation. We explored creative avenues to express the inexpressible mystery of God with us.

In crafting the format of the liturgy workshop, we valued the need to address the history and rationale of the nature of symbolic activity within ritual action.

We believed that our format must, however, move beyond lecture and toward a living experience, engaging the senses and imaginations of the participants. We hoped to ignite the spiritual potential lying dormant within each person. The gift rests in personal experiences of life and faith.

As with any art form, there is a learning process to instill comfort and security. Bodily engagement has the power to integrate the whole person into the action of prayer. Movement is a powerful shaper of the inner life of the spirited body. It is an expression of that which dwells within.



Catechists and their partners enhance the Psalm with sacred movement.

How do we draw out the life within the words of Scripture? We journey through a progression of interpretive exercises. The challenge is to quiet the left brain, cradling the spoken word within one's core. We begin with solo spontaneous expressions of single words. Each person is invited to allow the word to wash over them and to feel it within.

The next phase of the exercise is to bring words to expression as a small group endeavor. Once the teams feel comfortable with single words of emotion and action, they are ready for short phrases from Scripture.

An unhurried pace allows time to draw out the life of the spoken word and the freedom to dig deep, relishing each moment. Facial expression supports physical stance. Learning is born through movement and observation of one another. The posture of one informs the stance of others. Comfort is found in the joy of companionship.

The participants are now prepared to delve into the mystery and wonder of sacred movement. It is time to quiet the brain and unleash that

which stirs within. Gesture takes on new seriousness when we surrender to the call of mystery.

Fr. Jim McCarthy instilled this morsel of wisdom into our hearts. We must be supple and embrace spontaneity. As embodied spirits, we anticipate and taste the mystery within the Word.

“Do you know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”  
(1 Corinthians 3:16)

Our day with each team of dedicated catechists closed with newfound courage to grace their home parish with liturgy that takes the ordinary and intensifies it into the extraordinary.

In “More Than Meets the Eye: Ritual and Parish Liturgy” (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), Patrick W. Collins writes,

“We can truly do ritual when we are taken up into the Spirit, which breathes where it will. Then we can create liturgy as an expression and an experience of the Mystery of Christ present in the assembly.”



A prayerful sculpt stirs emotion as catechists collaborate to convey mystery.

We invite all restless artists and dreamers to join in this unique and rewarding endeavor to awaken wonder of the Paschal Mystery.

**Julia & Robert Hess**  
**SPRED Catechists**

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**St. Francis de Sales:**

135 South Buesching Road, Lake Zurich, IL 60047

**Queen of Angels:**

4412 North Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625

**Core Team Orientation (Eng., Span.):** SPRED Center

Intro to SPRED (2-1): Feb. 10, 17, 24 | 1 – 6 p.m.

Role Orientation (3-1): Mar 9, 16 | 1 – 6 p.m.

**Helper Catechist Orientation (English):**

Feb. 3 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | St. Francis de Sales

**Observation, SPRED Center** (Make Reservations)

6–10 Group | Feb 12, 26 | 6 p.m.

11–16 Group | Feb 13, 27 | 7 p.m.

17–21 Group | Feb 13, 27 | 7 p.m.

22+ Group | Feb 12, 26 | 7 p.m.

**Observation, Queen of Angels** (Make Reservations)

17–21 Group | Feb. 7, 21 | 7 p.m.

22+ Group | Feb. 6, 8, 20, 22 | 7 p.m.

**Observation, St. Francis de Sales** (Make Reservations)

6–10 Group | Jan 16, 30 | 6 p.m.

11–16 Group | Jan. 17, 31 | 6 p.m.

**SPRED Family Liturgy, SPRED Center** | 11 a.m.

English: Feb. 4, Mar. 3

Spanish: Feb. 18, Mar. 17

**Mamre Autumn 2023 Raffle Winners**

1st Prize — Julia Hess

2nd Prize — Juan Gomez

3rd Prize — Ilona Didzbalis

## ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



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