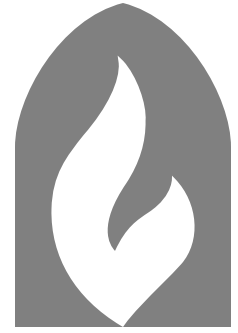


SPRED



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Message from the Interim Editor:

Last February, Sr. Mary Therese decided to retire from her role as Associate Director of SPRED for the Archdiocese of Chicago after nearly 60 years of service. We will be forever grateful to Sr. Mary Therese for her steadfast commitment and dedication to the SPRED ministry. Fr. Jim McCarthy frequently stated that “Sr. Mary Therese has been the bridge for many into the Method Vivre.” Through training sessions, seminars, presentations and writings, Sr. Mary Therese has introduced thousands of SPRED catechists to the Method Vivre which led to the formation of hundreds of SPRED communities in parishes around the world. Sr. Mary Therese’s tireless work not only laid a solid foundation that will allow the SPRED ministry to flourish for decades to come, but her work has also had a significant and lasting impact on the field of catechetics.

In April of 2015, Sr. Mary Therese Harrington shared her career highlights in an interview with the late Fr. Jim McCarthy. In honor of Sr. Mary Therese’s long and inspirational career, we are reprinting portions of her interview with Fr. Jim McCarthy.



Sr. Mary Therese presenting at an international conference on celebrating the sacraments of initiation with our SPRED friends.

The Career of Sr. Mary Therese Harrington, SH:

In May 2013, Sr. Mary Therese and her colleagues were awarded the University of Notre Dame’s Laetare Medal. The statement states:

“SPRED’s ministry exemplifies the New Evangelization which our Church has called for in this Year of Faith. Her ministry evangelizes over and over again, proclaiming that what love sees is true; deeply moving the participation among us of the faithful with developmental disabilities who need no less than the rest of us to be renewed, refreshed, and redeemed; reaching out to those who otherwise would not have known that we are members one with another; and celebrating the indispensable truth that all of us, regardless of our seen and unseen disabilities, are entirely one human body indwelt by God.”

Throughout her career, Sr. Mary Therese translated, wrote and edited several publications pertaining to the Method Vivre and catechesis for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She also spearheaded several initiatives to assist catechists, parish leaders and diocesan leaders in their effort to establish SPRED ministries in their parishes.

In 1965, Sr. Mary Therese began to collaborate with Fr. Jean Mesny and Fr. Euchariste Paulhus. Her proficiency in French was vital to their collaboration efforts. Sister Mary Therese translated vital sections of Fr. Paulhus’ doctoral thesis entitled *L’Educabilité Religieuse des Déficiants Mentaux*. Fr. Paulhus answered the question “Are mentally handicapped people capable of faith?” The answer: No, if you want discursive knowledge; Yes, if you seek intuitive knowledge. She also translated the first three texts by Fr. Mesny which were published in English as *We live in the Light*. They served as the basis from which we wrote our SPRED sessions.

Originally, SPRED served its families by clustering persons with disabilities by vicariate in one or two locations. Sr. Mary Therese recommended that the staff work together as a community of catechists. She spearheaded the initiative to establish two mobile classrooms in the garden of the rectory at St. John Cantius parish in 1968 so that the staff could work together on a syllabus while developing the catechesis not only for children but also for adolescents and adults. Within the mobile classrooms, observation booths were established to allow parish catechists to come and see the SPRED model of catechesis in action and learn about the materials that were used. Through the efforts of Sr. Susanne Gallagher, S.P., it also became a place to model a prepared environment for different age groups.

“It took off,” said Sr. Mary Therese. “Shortly after the mobile units opened for observation, 14 parish SPRED centers were established in the Archdiocese. A few years later it really took off. Now we have more than 1,000 volunteer parish catechists.”

Training in the Method Vivre for SPRED parish catechists began in 1968. The training was broadly structured under Fathers Paulhus and Mesny and influenced by Fr. Alphonse Nebreda, S.J., and Maria Montessori. Sister Mary Therese played an instrumental role in designing the training of SPRED catechists. Her design was to view training in terms of a Symbolic Mindset, Symbolic Method and a programmatic strategy.

In 1968 Sr. Mary Therese became the editor of the SPRED newsletter, an essay reflection from various authors about the Method Vivre. She served as editor of the SPRED Newsletter for 55



Sr. Mary Therese assisting a SPRED friend during the preparation period.



Sr. Mary Therese leading one of the first training sessions for SPRED Catechists.

years and edited nearly 500 editions of the SPRED Newsletter.

Between 1969 and 1972, Sr. Mary Therese assisted with the drafting and editing of three SPRED publications known as the SPRED supplements. The SPRED supplements were critical in solidifying not only the SPRED catechetical approach, but also the structure and design of the SPRED ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Through the SPRED supplements, SPRED was able to establish a solid foundation on which the SPRED ministry could grow and flourish.

While drafting and editing the SPRED supplements, Sr. Mary Therese also played a critical role in drafting and editing the *Contract for SPRED Adult Communities of Faith* and the *SPRED Standards* along with Frs. Warren and James McCarthy in 1969. With the Contract and the SPRED standards, a parish's community of faith was free to affiliate with the Archdiocesan SPRED Agency. The key was that SPRED would be parish based and the parish would “own” SPRED while the staff would write the materials, train catechists and hold itself accountable through observation in the use of them. There is a transformative effect of a prepared environment and appealing activities to engage a person in quiet activity. For every gathering with the persons with disabilities, there is a prior session for the adult catechists. Ongoing conversion of both catechists and catechumens in small communities of faith within a prepared environment was of the essence for a parish's affiliation with SPRED.

In 1985, Sr. Mary Therese, in collaboration with the Liturgy Office, assisted in the writing of the Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Chicago entitled *Access to the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation for Developmentally Disabled Persons*. Later that year, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin promulgated the guidelines.



Sr. Mary Therese presenting the SPRED materials for the 11-16 sessions at the annual material pick-up day.

In 1990, Sr. Mary Therese, in conjunction with Raymond Brodeur and Fr. Jean Mesny, edited the publication *La Dynamique Symbolique*. The idea of the publication came about during a gathering that was held at Laval University in Quebec. The SPRED staff wrote an essay entitled "The Use of Method Vivre in the Archdiocese of Chicago." Sr. Mary Therese also contributed an essay entitled "The California Myth and Symbolic Progression."

In 1992, The Liturgical Press published their series of "American Essays in Liturgy," which included Sr. Mary Therese's essay *A Place For All: Mental Retardation. Catechesis and Liturgy*. In 1994 The Liturgical Press published *Developmental Disabilities and Sacramental Access, New Paradigms for Sacramental Encounters*, with Edward Foley, Capuchin, as the editor, working with six members of the faculty of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL. Sr. Mary Therese wrote an essay entitled "Affectivity and Symbol in the Process of Catechesis."

Sr. Mary Therese also played a critical role in expanding SPRED to both the national and international levels. Early on, the team of Fr. James McCarthy, Sr. Mary Therese Harrington and Sr. Susanne Gallagher was connected to the International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB) in Geneva, Switzerland and followed the work of the Medical Educational-Psycho-Social Commission of the ICCB. Fr. Paulhus was the MEPS General Secretary. The SPRED team was soon asked by the ICCB to handle the English speakers interested in participating in the program from Chicago.

Wanting to reach beyond Chicago, Sr. Mary Therese first created the Institute for Special Ministry (ISM) in the 1970s. As other dioceses expressed a commitment to the Method Vivre, "La Spred" was formed with other dioceses in the United States and met several times in the 1980s. Additionally, international students began to travel to Chicago to learn about SPRED. The students studied at the Institute of Pastoral Studies of Loyola University Chicago and completed their practicum at the SPRED Center working towards a Master's degree in Religious Studies under her guidance. Finally, in the 1990s, "Project Peer Support" was established and consisted of Dioceses from eight different countries. They have met every 3 years since 1994. Their tenth gathering took place at Drumalis retreat house in Larne, Northern Ireland this past June.

At the urging of St. Pope John Paul II, a covenant was formed between Cardinal Francis George and Cardinal Rivera of Mexico City in 2000. The Archdiocese of Mexico sought assistance for SPRED. Having a working knowledge in Spanish, Sr. Mary Therese went to Mexico City and helped to establish the SPRED ministry in the Archdiocese known as CADIUM. Since then, other dioceses in Mexico, Central America and South America have sought assistance from SPRED.



Sr. Mary Therese and Cardinal Blase J. Cupich at the annual awards ceremony where Sr. Mary Therese was honored for her nearly 60 years of service to the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Over the last 60 years, Sr. Mary Therese has been at the center of catechesis for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2013, she was honored by the Archdiocese of Chicago for 50 years of service and in his congratulatory remarks, Cardinal George stated to Sr. Mary Therese that: "You have created a model for the world." Through her work, Sr. Mary Therese has helped thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to grow in their relationship with God.

CHICAGO SPRED CALENDAR**Training (Orientations) 2023**

Contact: 312.842.1039 or SPRED@archchicago.org
 General Orientation (2-1): Sept. 16, 23, 30, 1 – 6 p.m.
 Role Orientation (3-1): Oct. 14, 21, 1 – 6 p.m.

Helper Catechist Role Orientation

Contact: 312.842.1039 or SPRED@archchicago.org
 English: Sept. 16, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. St. Paul the Apostle
 Gurnee
 English: Oct. 7, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Queen of Apostles
 Spanish: Oct. 7, 1 – 6 p.m. SPRED Center
 English: Oct. 28, 1 – 6 p.m. SPRED Center

Observation: Reservations recommended
 312.842.1039 or SPRED@archchicago.org

SPRED Center: 2956 South Lowe Avenue

6–10 Group, Sept. 18, Oct. 2, 16 at 6 p.m.
 11–16 Group, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, 17 at 7 p.m.
 17/21 Group, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, 17 at 7 p.m.
 22+ Group, Sept. 18, Oct. 2, 16 at 7 p.m.

Observation, Queen of Angels

4412 North Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625
 17–21 Group, Sept. 27. Oct. 11, 25 at 7 p.m.
 22+ Group, Sept. 26, 28 Oct. 10, 12, 24, 26 at 7 p.m.
 22+ Group, Sept. 30 Oct 14, 28 at 9:30 a.m.

SPRED Family Liturgy, SPRED Center 11 a.m.

English: Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3
 Spanish: Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec. 17

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Running for SPRED:

On October 8, our Director Joe Quane will be running the 2023 Chicago Marathon in honor of all our SPRED catechists and friends. Please consider sponsoring Joe by making a donation and/or cheering him on along the course. Donations can be mailed to SPRED using the enclosed envelope or visiting spred-chicago.org/donate. Good Luck Joe!

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 JQuane@archchicago.org