SPRED Coordinator’s Report

We know our Friends, Catechists, and supporters of SPRED are contending with disruption and uncertainty to their daily lives amid the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to convey how deeply I appreciate all of you and extend my heartfelt well-wishes.

Everyone in the ministry must adjust and be flexible until there is a vaccine. For to the health and safety of both Catechists and Friends, the Labor Day retreat, annually held at the San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, is cancelled and will be rescheduled for 2021.

Since SPRED sessions are hands-on, one-to-one person, in a small group setting. It was originally planned for our small group sessions to start in the Fall, but due to health concerns, it is wiser and safer to wait and start the SPRED year in early spring 2021. Due to the virus and how it transmits, it is not safe to have our SPRED sessions, even in a small group. Many of our Friends and Catechists have many health issues and to place them at risk is unwise.

On a positive note, several SPRED centers and groups have been keeping in contact with each other via Zoom, an online platform, while others are calling each other by telephone. Many of our Friends and Catechists are having a difficult time adjusting to changes in their daily life, including not attending SPRED. It was heart-warming to hear from a fellow SPRED Catechist who said she continues to keep in contact with her fellow Catechists and Friends. Many of our Friends and Catechists miss each other, miss participating in SPRED sessions, and miss their former routines. God willing, we will be able to gather together in celebration soon.

Stay safe and healthy!

Blessings,

Michelle Martinez-Kilty
SPRED Coordinator

Advisory Board Corner

By: Rev. Paul Vassar, Retired Priest of the Diocese of Oakland & SPRED Advisory Board Member

When speaking to my spiritual director about what is happening during this time of sheltering in place, the image of the desert continues to surface. I have found myself praying for those who are most isolated because of their living conditions. I also realized how much I have depended on ministerial relationship. I miss the meetings with the SPRED Board and the friends I have come to know through the work of SPRED in the diocese. So much has changed, and we are unsure about the future.

When we look to God and faith, we get a new appreciation of Job, and his struggle to maintain faith. Maybe our prayer is more honest, coming from a place of desperation, abandonment, and powerlessness. Maybe we are talking to God from the heart, with words that spoken in earnest.

Through it all we are grateful for the relationships that have been forged in the past — especially through SPRED! They are God’s gift to us. And we are confident that those relationships, although changing, will continue to nourish our faith.

Here we are, doing our best, keeping our trust in the God who will bring us through. We talk to God with words of truth, and frustration, and hope. In this new reality we look to new ways, or old ways, of keeping in touch, reaching out, affirming and welcoming people in our lives. Thank God for SPRED!

Be well. Be Safe. Be Loved.

— Fr. Paul Vassar
## Photos from around the Diocese

- St. Joseph-Pinole SPRED Center
- Reconciliation for Model Center 17-21 with Fr. Mathew Murray
- St. Joseph-Pinole SPRED Center with Maria Ramos, SPRED CRW
- Our Lady of Guadalupe — Fremont connecting on Zoom
- Ash Wednesday 2020 — St. Joseph Basilica, SPRED Center

## SPRED Parish Centers in the Diocese of Oakland

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<td>St. Clement</td>
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**Interested in Opening a SPRED Center in Your Parish?**

Give us a call at 510-635-7252 or email: info@spredoakdiocese.org for more information on how you can help create a new SPRED Center for your local friends.
WHEN I WAS A KID we took several trips to Montana to visit aunts, uncles, and cousins. We would all pile into the station wagon and basically drive for 24 hours straight — probably to avoid motel costs for the ten of us. Eight kids and two parents in a station wagon for 24 hours. Re-read that and let it sink in. This was before seat belts so there were a bunch of kids in the very back of the car, too many in the back seat and the youngest in the front seat with the parents. The trip always started in early evening so the drive through the Nevada desert was in the middle of the night. It didn’t really help that we were supposed to be sleeping through 8 of the 24 hours as that left 16 hours of “Are we there yet?” “Mom! She’s touching me!” “Move over!” “I have to go to the bathroom” — which was usually followed by an exasperated parent saying “We just stopped! Why didn’t you go then?!” And then more plaintively “Aren’t we there yet?” “How much longer?” It felt like the trip would never end. That we would never arrive at the final destination where we would be greeted with hugs and kisses from relatives we hadn’t seen in such a long time. That we would never be rid of the confines of the car. That we would never be able to get away from those loved ones we were stuck with, in the car! It was disorienting. For us kids there were no familiar landmarks to determine where we were in the journey, no map in hand to gauge distances, no valuable information so we could adjust our emotions based on expectations... just a seemingly endless road ahead of us. Clearly you know where this is going... we've all been on this interminable car ride since mid-March and there is no clear end in sight. Typically, the longer we are exposed to something the more we get used to it - but for me, not this. I can only speak for myself but some of this may ring true for you — I started the shelter in place with high hopes to take on some long overdue projects — the first one being to go through old photos and divide them up to send out to siblings. 

Four months later my dining room is full of bags with family names that each have some photos, boxes full of photos still to be gone through and an air of despair that it will never be completed. There are too many evenings when I look back at the day and wonder just what I did... let's see, emptied the dishwasher, did a load of laundry... yep, that's about it. Too much time spent on social media where there is such political discord and ugliness — along with the chance to virtually connect with family and friends but sometimes those are the same people who are at political odds with one another (or me!). Several friends have agreed that we feel like we're free floating — we don’t have those anchors we relied upon; going to work, shopping without regard to special hours or social distancing, attending Mass and receiving communion, having people over for a meal, greeting loved ones with a hug, being with our SPRED family. I spoke to a dear friend who lives in a group home. She said to me, “I hate this,” and I could only reply, “I know sweetie. We all do.”

Now this is where you are probably expecting an uplifting message, perhaps connecting our feelings of despair with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane or a reminder to look at the Beatitudes; “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Sorry. I’ve got nothing. Except this: We are truly in this together. We will get to the other side because we just have to — there is no other choice. We will be with each other again, even if with a different structure or environment. We can do this. And what I know for sure — you are holding me in prayer. And I know this because I am holding you in prayer. And sending you virtual hugs and waves of love and healing thoughts. Let’s hold each other in our hearts and reach out when needed. If you need anything from me — 510-303-5726.
Two SPRED Confirmations Held in June!

By: SPRED Staff Writer

Two Friends, David Ortega and Jeffery Ortiz, received the Sacrament of Confirmation on June 12 at St. Paschal Babylon Parish. Both David and Jeffery participated in the 17 to 21-year-old Model Center SPRED group in Oakland. Each had a small intimate Confirmation ceremony with their immediate families and sponsors. Fr. Mathew Murray was the presider, and SPRED Catechist Reyna Lupian assisted. Congratulations David and Jeffery!

Remember To Wear Your Face Coverings!

By: Kelly Cunniffe, SPRED Catechist

We are several months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Our world has been turned upside down. For much of this time, in-person church services have stopped. Our regular SPRED meetings ended. The SPRED Confirmation which we all looked forward to has been postponed. We miss seeing our families and Friends on a regular basis. For all we have lost during the pandemic, we have also learned some valuable lessons. We learned that we are more alike than different. The virus strikes anyone—it does not discriminate. We have also learned the importance of looking out for one another. In his ministry 2,000 years ago, Jesus admonished his followers and us to love another. When we wear a face covering, we not only practice good public health, but we also serve another. I wear a face covering to protect you. Our SPRED Friends are a constant inspiration to us. Our friend Cristian Machovec, with a little coaxing from his parents, has taken to proudly wearing a face covering. We are all God’s children. Let’s be responsible like Cristian in wearing a face covering, so we may one day soon join one another in celebrating the wonder of being together again.

WANT TO HELP?

SPRED is always looking for generous donations to help us SPRED the word. SPRED is a nonprofit 501(c)(3). If you would like to make a donation today to help support the mission of SPRED please send back the enclosed envelope.
FRIEND SPOTLIGHT:  
Anthony Magna

By: Mary Huston, SPRED Catechist & Retired Assoc. Director of SPRED

Anthony arrived at SPRED in the fall of 2016; he was rather quiet, a newcomer to the group. Now at 15 (16 in November) he arrives with the smile above that causes all of us to feel like smiling. Greeting each catechist and friend he chooses an activity and sets about his work with Leila, his catechist and good friend. They both love to talk, but knowing that this is the quiet time for each person to settle down in preparation for the call to “pray together,” they do their best.

Anthony is big brother to Manuel 7 and Cesar 3. His mother says he “loves SPRED”, saying to her “let’s go” when she gets home from work. Now, due to Covid-19 he asks when he can come back. He loves video games, is an avid Raiders fan who tailgates with his family at home games. The Raiders and Warriors are also favorites.

Around the age of two Anthony was diagnosed with cancer; it was the chemo treatments that left some physical disabilities. However, his friendliness and zest for life are contagious for those who know him. At Agape, where we eat together following catechesis in the Celebration Room, Anthony is eager to tell of all he has done with his family and of his latest experiences. Like Anthony, Catechists and Friends are anxious to return to SPRED where the love and friendship of Jesus dwells among us. It is palpable, it is life-giving. And so is Anthony!

CATECHIST SPOTLIGHT:  
Belem Reta

By: Mary Huston, SPRED Catechist & Retired Assoc. Director of SPRED

Belem Reta has been a SPRED catechist at St. Clement Parish in Hayward since 1988. Within a few years she assumed the role of Leader Catechist, responsible for the catechesis that takes place during each session in the Celebration Room — where friends and catechists experience “Jesus with us” — the heart of the SPRED sessions.

One mother explains:

As a parent it is hard to trust someone with our girls with special needs. Belem listens to their needs, she is very helpful, they have grown, they love her. One daughter says, “pray,” wishing to go to SPRED. Belem is a wonderful person, awesome.

The former DRE expressed how impressed she and her catechists were when she invited Belem to provide an example of the SPRED method of catechesis at a workshop. I wish we could provide the same depth and intentionality, she said.

Through the years Belem has generously translated many of the English SPRED materials into Spanish for the office.

I have known Belem for these many years. She projects a calm and peacefulness to those around her; always with great humility. Our friends with special needs experience Jesus’ presence through her. They have been called to the Table of the Lord for First Communion and Confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, Belem, for sharing your love, your faith and your steadfast faithfulness with the SPRED community. You are a blessing!
THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

For the donations made from November 17, 2019 to July 30, 2020

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SPRED FUNDRAISING

Black SPRED Shirt
Black cotton tagless shirt features SPRED flame on front pocket and SPRED logo in back
AVAILABLE SIZES: S, M, L, XL

Red SPRED Shirt
Red cotton tagless shirt features “KEEP CALM AND SPRED ON” on front side of shirt printed in white.
AVAILABLE SIZES: S, M, L, XL

Red SPRED Water Bottle
With white flame logo.

Support SPRED and place your order today!
To order, call 510-273-4979 or email spred@spredoakdiocese.org.

Thank You! We made our goal of 65K for the 2019 year

Thank you!
Covid-19: A Prayer of Solidarity

For all who have contracted coronavirus,
   We pray for care and healing.
For those who are particularly vulnerable,
   We pray for safety and protection.
For all who experience fear or anxiety,
   We pray for peace of mind and spirit.
For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between
   food on the table or public safety,
   We pray for policies that recognize their plight.
For those who do not have adequate health insurance,
   We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.
For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status,
   We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.
For our brothers and sisters around the world,
   We pray for shared solidarity.
For public officials and decision makers,
   We pray for wisdom and guidance.
Father, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope,
   comfort and love to all.
   Grant peace. Grant comfort. Grant healing.
Be with us, Lord. Amen.

Upcoming SPRED Events

OCTOBER

SPRED Confirmation Liturgy with Bishop Barber
Saturday, October 10, 2020 | 10 am
St. Paschal Baylon, Oakland, CA

Please note all Observations take place at the SPRED Model & Training Center
3705 Doris Ave., Oakland, CA 94605
RSVP and Check out the SPRED Calendar online at www.spreddiocese.org or call 510-695-7252.
Cover Photo: Fr. Matthew Murray placing chrism oil on Friend Jeffery during the sacrament of Confirmation

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