

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ. Amen.

Imagine a young child. This child is well behaved in school and at social outings. However, this same sweet child throws temper tantrums and is the exact opposite at home. It's almost as if this child is two different people. And we all know that this child is the same person. Different atmospheres create different behaviors.

Sometimes I wonder if we are like children in living out our faith. Do we sometimes come to church on Sunday and when we leave do we forget that being a Christian is part of our every day life? Are we aware that both public and private places in our lives are places in which ministry occurs and faith is passed on from one generation to the next?

I know for me some weeks are so hectic and busy that there are times that my focal point of living a life of service for God is not on the top of my list. I get caught up in getting my list of tasks done forgetting that I am an example of passing on the faith to my son, to my husband, really to everyone around me.

Sometimes it's hard to see how the congregation and the home relate to each other. The Congregation and the home are the church. They work together to in passing on the faith. There settings may be different, which may create different behaviors like a small child, but no matter where we are we are the church. We are the church gathered in this place and in our homes. The ministries of Saint Nicholas and the ministries that occur in our homes support each other.

The second principle for faith formation is “The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the home and the ministry of the congregation.”

One way to think about this principle is to ask the question: where do we hear God speaking to us? Do we here God speaking to us on a trip? in public worship? In the middle of the night? to and from congregational worship? During an anxious moment? At the dinner table? With family and friends?

The church is everywhere. We hear God everyday in our lives, not just in a church building.

God spoke to Abraham as he journeyed through life. God promised Abraham descendents with Sarah. And that hadn't happened yet, but God spoke to Abraham and told him that it would be so. Ishmael would not be

his heir. A child with Sarah would be his heir. In the midst of his wondering whether or not this could happen since he and Sarah were old, Abraham learned to live with the promises that God had made with him in both his public and private life.

God is with us in our lives. We hear and experience God in our homes, in our congregation, at work, in groups of friends and family. God speaks to us and meets us where we are at in our lives. In these places, with people we interact with on a daily basis – different ministries happen. These ministries may take place in caring conversations, devotions, service, or rituals and traditions.

In the Philippians text, Paul encourages the Philippians to live life by “Standing firm in the Lord.” Paul talked about the enemies of the cross. He told the Philippians that their minds were set on earthly things, whereas their focus was heaven. The challenge that Paul set before the church at Philippi

to “stand firm in the Lord, in this way” was both public and private. The Philippians were to set their mind on imitating Paul and other Christians in their daily lives so that they could share Christ with others. The Philippians through their words and actions passed on the faith to future generations.

In today’s gospel lesson it is also made clear that Jesus’ ministry isn’t just for Jerusalem; the public holy place during his life and still for many today. Jerusalem was the center for worship. People came to the temple to offer sacrifices and worship God. Jerusalem also had become a place where God’s prophets were killed. Jesus needed to travel there, but before he did, he healed many in public and private settings. His ministry wasn’t just a public one in the holy city.

God speaks to us no matter where we are. There isn’t one place that I know of that God does not speak to us. Ministry is both public and private. It happens in gatherings of congregations, it’s happening right now. It also

happens in our private lives. The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry of the home. What does that mean for us?

It means that a meaningful partnership between congregations and homes is essential. Youth and family institute reminds us that congregations support and equip homes, so that homes can support and equip the congregation, in order that both can serve the world with faith, hope, and love. We can do support and equip each other by strengthening our frog legs - by exercising caring conversations, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions in our public and private lives.

Conversations, prayer, scripture reading, service opportunities, and rituals and traditions overlap in many ways and pass on faith and values. During worship, we have many rituals and traditions – we pray and read from the Bible each Sunday. We sing hymns and the liturgy. We celebrate

communion. After worship we talk with one another. We share what's happening in our lives. What can we do when we leave to exercise caring conversation, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions in our homes?

Back to the thought of the church frog. The frog head and torso, the leadership and the congregation, need the support of the frog legs, the home...and vice versa. We work together to pass on the faith.

Caring adults, youth, and children are needed anytime and anywhere, including mealtime, bedtime, devotional time, vacation time, service time...again, anytime. We are all examples to each other, from those of us who are young to those of us who have a great deal of wisdom by living through life's ups and downs. We support each other through our ministries. Where do we hear God speaking to us?

The church is the partnership between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry of the home. We all support each other and learn from each other.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.