

Faith formation

By [Diane Roth](#)

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Not long ago I went to visit a woman who had just entered hospice care. I've known her family for several years. I used to visit her with her husband and give them communion pretty regularly.

I wasn't sure what to expect that day I visited. How would she feel? Would she even be awake? I found that she was up in a wheelchair, in one of those brightly-colored jogging suits, and even in a sort-of feisty mood.

She turned to me at one point, and said, in a sort of conspiratorial tone, "Just between you and me, I think I'm going to stop eating." A little later she said, "I want you to do my funeral." I was a little taken aback, but replied, "Well, don't be in too much of a hurry."

"What, are you going on vacation?" she asked.

She seemed so at ease with her dying. I caught myself hoping that I could be like that someday.

I visited her again when her husband and son were there, and we read scripture and shared communion. The appointed lesson for the day was Psalm 148. It was a hymn of praise. "Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you shining stars!" Perhaps it seemed like an odd choice to read to a woman who was dying. But when I asked her what she would praise God for, she was quick to answer, "I praise God for my family. I praise God for my children. It's been a good life. It's been a good life."

In my congregation, we are considering "faith formation" these days. How can faith be formed in us all through our lives, from the time we are held at the font, until the day we are carried to the many mansions God has prepared for us? What is the purpose of "faith formation" anyway?

And when I think about it, I hope our faith is formed for many purposes: to help us find our voice, to speak and act with justice and mercy, to help us to see the beauty

in the world and in others, to grow in grace and courage and compassion.

But just for today, when I consider the goal of 'faith formation,' here's what it looks like: to be at ease with dying. To be grateful. To be able to say to those around me, "It's been a good life."

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