

## TO CULTIVATE THE SEED-GROUND; FEBRUARY 23, 2020

This weekend we are privileged to celebrate the holy sacrament of baptism whereat a baby girl Maria is welcomed into our saving Christian faith. Early in the rite the parents promise to faithfully raise their child in the Catholic religion. Remember that it is the faith of the father and mother which “stands in” for their daughter who cannot yet make such a commitment. Broadly this promise means that they will utilize whatever help they deem necessary in order to inculcate Maria with the virtue of right religion. More specifically this will require making sure that she attends regular worship and is educated into the divine mysteries of the Eucharist. This will also include at the appropriate time sacramental preparation, first communion and confirmation especially. Of like import will be the parental modeling of daily life as a Christian, particularly helping her in the formation of a rich prayer life.

What such a parental training regimen cannot include however are the types of things Jesus mentions in the final two antitheses which we heard today from the Sermon on the Mount. Maria nor you or I can be shown or taught how to be truly harmless, vulnerable and open or how to show no resistance to one who does evil unto us without being drawn into a defensive reaction. These states are divine ones which can only be received as the fruit of a holy communion consequent upon a personal theosis such that one becomes capable of truly ‘turning the other cheek’. This is what it means to be perfected as a Christian and is the ultimate purpose to our baptismal call.

What often starts with parental effort and later ripens into personal faith-work, study and growth is intended to lead to an integrated state of profound surrender unto the Spirit of God. Rightly then is docility called the greatest of the Spirit's gifts, though it too must be tirelessly cultivated. Maria's journey towards her eternal destiny begins today and will continue throughout her life and even through the afterlife in order that her soul may be made ready for eternal beatitude. With joy we welcome her onto that journey where she though unknowingly, now joins a great cloud of witnesses and pilgrims. Her end like our own, remains sure and certain as long as together we remain firmly fixed on the Lord.