

The seed baptism plants (Matthew 3:13-17)

The story of Jesus' baptism makes me think of gardens.

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My parents love their vegetable garden and grow all sorts of produce that is good for both American and Korean dishes. I only have a slightly green thumb, but I think I would do well if I tried and really paid attention, and if I had the time and mental and emotional space.

It feels like it's in my blood. I'm fascinated with gardens, whether edible or aesthetic—the way the seeds take root, the slow and purposeful budding of plant and flower, and the necessity every once in a while to cut away dead pieces to encourage growth. I'm drawn to the simplicity of coaxing things from the earth, and to how amazing it is that all that is necessary is water, sun, and some good dirt.

Whenever I read of Jesus' baptism, I think of the moment as a kind of seed. On the Sunday our twins were baptized, my husband Andy mentioned nursery rhymes in his sermon. (At that time the twins were becoming more interested in books, but amazingly, we didn't have our own collection of nursery rhymes.) The text he preached on was the familiar parable of the sower, and he preached through a refrain that comes from "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary"—*How does your garden grow?*

It's a question that stays with me as I seek to cultivate what the sower has scattered on my soils, which actually seem mostly rocky these days. There are patches of the other kinds, too, which makes for hard but creative work. There is much to negotiate

as a mom and many things to hold in tension.

I don't have to have a green thumb. Really what I need is simple: the light and warmth of community, the earthy presence of the Holy Spirit, and the satisfying waters of baptism. Baptism is ongoing, as we live into the identity of already being God's beloved. All this is meaningful in the context of the babies' baptisms.

It is wonderful that one of the first seeds planted in our little ones' lives is the proclamation of God's love through baptism—a love that beckoned them into existence, a love that affirms them as God's children, a love that is continuously sealed by the Holy Spirit and experienced in the body of Christ. Their little gardens will be tended to by so many amazing souls, and for this I'm daily thankful. I'm also grateful for the reminders that our baptism not only roots us in God but ties us together—we are both individually and collectively called God's beloved.