

## **FAMILY CORNER**

### **Tilling the Soil**

*By Judith Dunlap*

In the parable of the sower, it is Jesus who generously scatters the seeds (the word of God). Many never bear fruit. They fall on the pathway and are eaten by birds. They fall on rocky soil or among thorns. Only the seeds planted in good soil will grow abundantly. This parable has much to say to parents and religious educators about faith formation.

In my early years as a parish director of religious education I often told parents how important it was that they support their child's catechist or Catholic school teacher. As the years went by I realized that I had things reversed. It is the catechist or teacher who is in the supportive role. What children learn or don't learn in their religion classes depends to a great degree on what they are learning at home, where the soil is tilled.

Parents and parish work together to prepare that soil, but parents have the primary role. Parents turn pathways into fertile fields by living lives that promote gospel values, by bringing to light the good in the world and exposing and uprooting the evil. Parents cultivate and water rocky soil by providing a home where hope is encouraged and faith and love are shared. Parents hack away at the thorns of a secular society—including self-gratifying consumerism and the violence and voyeurism called entertainment—by diligently supervising and actively participating in their child's free time.

The seed of faith was planted in the heart of your child at Baptism. But it is up to you, the parent—with the help of the parish—to cultivate an environment so that faith can grow abundantly.