



"It seems that different forms of ambition are hard-wired into almost all of us. At a baptism our ambitions are rightly turned into hopes and prayers for the child, today for Princess Charlotte. Everyone wants something for their children. At our best we seek beauty, not necessarily of form, but of life.

"In the reading from Matthew 18, Jesus is trying to turn one kind of ambition - an ambition for place and prestige - into an ambition for a beautiful life. To be great in the Kingdom of Heaven, he tells his very pushy disciples, is not about position but about beauty of life, a life that looks like his; and his example is someone unimportant in those days: a child.

"Amongst Princess Charlotte's own ancestors, now buried in the Holy Land, is a saint, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, whose life was one of transparent beauty and death one of beautiful courage and service. In her life she forgave the man who killed her husband. At her cruel murder she continued to care for those suffering with her. It is of such beauty that Jesus speaks when he talks of being great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Such beauty of character begins with baptism, and is established in the habits of following and loving Jesus Christ; habits to be learned from parents and godparents, and the whole community of the church.

"Beauty is the implied prayer of the baptism service, beauty of life which brings true and eternal greatness. In such times as ours, those who suffer - such as the wounded or bereaved in Tunisia and other places - need lives of beauty around them; lives that share healing and hope, offering to all around them, both in times of light and darkness, a vision of a Christ-filled future."

2 min read

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