

May 31: Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Gospel for May 31st, feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 1:39-56*)

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed

is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be^[a] a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear
him

from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm,

he has scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts,

he has put down the mighty from
their thrones,

and exalted those of low degree;

he has filled the hungry with good
things,

and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his posterity
forever.”

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

Commentary

The angel Gabriel, when announcing to Mary that she is going to conceive and give birth, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to the Son of God made man, mentions in passing that her cousin Elizabeth “in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible” (*Lk* 1:36-37).

With Mary’s yes, “behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word,” the Word became flesh in her most pure womb. From that moment on, Mary’s quiet joy, her gratitude to God for everything he had done for her,

overflowed in works of service, with total self-forgetfulness. She thinks about Elizabeth, about the help she could give her, and sets off towards the mountains of Judah, to the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Saint Josemaría, who taught us to enter into the Gospel scenes as another character there, invites us to accompany her: “By now, my little friend, you have no doubt learned to get along by yourself. Joyfully keep Joseph and Mary company... and you will hear the traditions of the House of David. You will hear of Elizabeth and Zachary, you will be moved by Joseph's pure love, and your heart will pound whenever there is mention of the Child who will be born in Bethlehem... We walk in haste towards the mountains, to a town of the tribe of Judah. We arrive. It is the house where John the Baptist is to be born.”^[1]

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz said: “Mary goes to see Elizabeth. Who could understand her better than she? They talk about the sons they are expecting, Jesus and John. The Holy Spirit inundates the scene of the Visitation with joy.”^[2] —

“When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (*Lk* 1:41). John’s joyful reaction in his mother’s womb recalls King David when he danced accompanying the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem (cf. *1 Chron* 15:29). The Ark, which contained the tablets of the Law, manna, and Aaron’s flowering rod (cf. *Heb* 9:4), was the sign of God’s presence among his people. Now John leaps for joy at the presence of Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant, who carries in her womb Jesus, the Son of God made man. “John senses the divine presence and exults with

joy, already acting as Christ's precursor. To announce Christ is to have and give true joy."^[3] —

“Elizabeth gratefully greets the Mother of her Redeemer: Blessed are among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! How have I deserved to be visited by the Mother of my Lord? (*Lk 1:42-43*).”^[4] — In the Old Testament, the words of praise “blessed are you among women” are directed to Jael (*Judges 5:24*) and Judith (*Judith 13:18*), two courageous women who intervene to save Israel in difficult times. Mary, even more so, is the courageous woman who, by her unconditional self-giving to the divine plans, brings the Savior of the world into her womb.

“The unborn Baptist quivers... Mary's humility pours forth in the Magnificat... And you and I, who are – who were – proud, promise to be humble.”^[5] —

[1] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*,
Second Joyful Mysteries, The
Visitation.

[2] Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the
Gospel*, Mary the joy of God (May 31,
1999).

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*,
Second Joyful Mysteries, The
Visitation.

[5] *Ibid.*

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