



Visitation

★ LUKE 1:39-56

★ LECTONARY: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT,

YEAR C

★ SEE ALSO ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

(CARD 28)

★ CATECHISM 273, 495, 2097, 2618-2619, 2676

If you have ever been to a live theater performance, you know that before the curtain rises, the buzz of happy voices fills the room. Once the lights dim, the voices are stilled so the drama can unfold. The life of the Savior was the greatest story ever played out on Earth.

According to the Gospel of Luke, months before Jesus' debut, women spoke in happy voices and an infant even leapt joyfully. These things occurred when Mary visited her relative Elizabeth.

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would be the Mother of God, he also told her that her aged relative was expecting a child. After the angel left, Mary went as quickly as she could to Elizabeth, who was already six months pregnant. Mary knew Elizabeth could use her help. Perhaps Mary also wished to share her own good news with someone. In this visit to Elizabeth we see Mary, the first Christ-bearer, carrying out an act of love and service.

Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judah. Tradition has named her town Ain Karim, which is about five or six miles west of Jerusalem. Mary probably made the four-day journey with a caravan, a company of travelers.

At the house of Zechariah, Mary entered and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard her voice, the baby within her leaped. Elizabeth cried out, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my



Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:42, 43) Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth realized that Mary was the mother of the Messiah. Elizabeth's unborn son John also responded to the presence of the unborn Savior.

Just as King David once danced before the ark of the covenant in which the Lord was present (2 Samuel 6:14-15), John danced before the Lord.

Elizabeth had praised Mary and Mary's son. Mary in turn praised God who worked such wonders in her. She sang a canticle, a beautiful song of praise and thanksgiving called the Magnificat from its first words, "My soul magnifies the Lord." Mary began the hymn by voicing her joy and gratitude that despite her lowliness God had chosen her and had done great things for her. Then Mary observed that God puts down the proud and wealthy, and helps the lowly and poor. She concluded by mentioning God's mercy in keeping the promises made to Abraham and his descendants (Luke 1:46-55).

Mary stayed with Elizabeth three months, probably until John was born. She then returned to Nazareth to await the birth of her own son.

At the Visitation the Old Testament and the New Testament met. John would be the last and greatest prophet to announce the coming of the Messiah. He would prepare the way of the Lord.



ACT OUT	the scene of the Visitation. Does Zechariah try to communicate with Mary in gesture and writing?	CREATE your own version of the Magnificat. What are the great things the Lord has done for you? Or write a version of the Magnificat for your family, your neighborhood, or your parish.	CONSIDER the things Mary might have done to help Elizabeth during her stay. Plan a way you can imitate Mary's selfless love by serving someone.
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