

## Visitation

Luke 1:39–56

Today is the feast of the Visitation, which celebrates Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

Today, listen to the voice of the Lord.

How is he calling you this summer?

You are with Mary in the house of Elizabeth. This moment is one of recognition, a manifestation of Christ's presence in the womb of Mary. With Mary, we praise God for the salvation he has brought to us in Christ.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

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 fulfillment 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 for ever."

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

## Reflection

As we continue our meditation on sloth, we see an example of Mary's diligence. After the angel appeared to her to reveal God's plan of the Incarnation, Mary immediately got up and traveled to the Judean hill country. The most important thing in human history had just occurred—God coming into the world through her—and yet she focuses on the needs of her kinswoman, Elizabeth. In this journey, she evangelizes, bringing the good news of salvation to the family of John the Baptist.

Elizabeth and the baby in her womb model vigilance in recognizing the Messiah's appearance before them. Luke employs language similar to David's leaping before the ark to describe the reaction of the unborn baby, John. Mary is the new ark of the covenant, and Elizabeth's overawed reaction shows the importance of this visit.

Mary points to the Lord's mercy, which has been bestowed in order to free his people. Only because God acts can we celebrate the gift of freedom. We must preserve this gift by showing mercy to others, living out the humility that he himself shows in coming to save us. Mary shows true Christian greatness by pointing to the Lord and magnifying him. For this, and her unique role in history, all generations will remember her as the Mother of God.

Pray today about how to bring the Lord's mercy to others and how we can recognize his presence in the world.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

#### Day 4 Action Item

Enter into the Ember Days this week.

Today is the first of the Ember Days following Pentecost.

Ember Days are among the oldest traditions of the Church's calendar, going back to the earliest centuries. They focus on thanksgiving and penance, thanking God for his providence in providing for our needs through the fruits of the earth and fasting to show dependence upon God as the highest good.

Because they were linked to the seasons, they were celebrated four times a year; in Latin, they are simply known as the *quatuor tempora* (four times). They involve prayer and fasting on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. They occur during the middle of Advent, the first full week of Lent, the week following Pentecost, and the middle of September. These days seek to bless and sanctify the year by drawing Christians together in prayer and penance.

Through the Embers Days, we can get back in touch with the rhythm of the seasons, stopping to thank God for the bounty he has given us. We, as Christians, have become somewhat lax in our observances of penance; these days help us to offer a fitting sacrifice of praise and penance to God. Finally, as these days have been connected to clergy, they offer us a great opportunity to pray for our leaders, their sanctification, and for

vocations.