

The Visitation: A Spiritual Reflection, Jim Haag

A picture of two women greeting each other – Mary Mother of God and Elizabeth, her cousin, to become mother of St. John the Baptist. Mary has a halo over her head; both are pregnant, Elizabeth six months and Mary about two months.

The simplicity understates the miraculous story of God’s intervention in Mary’s and Elizabeth’s lives and ultimately in our lives as related only in St. Luke the Evangelist’s gospel. **(Luke 1: 26-80)**

In Luke’s preceding parable the Angel of God, asks Mary to be Mother of God, relating that “nothing is impossible for God, and that Mary’s elder cousin Elizabeth is six months pregnant. Mary says, “let it be done to me according to your word” and then she walked or traveled in group to visit Elizabeth in Ein Karem, west of Jerusalem -- about 90 miles. Hence the greeting shown in the window.

At this miraculous meeting, Elizabeth felt her infant leap in her womb and was filled with the Holy Spirit, saying “Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

The Blessed Mother’s response was the Magnificat—an impressive prayer of rejoice and an inspired testimonial to God’s mercy, might, workings through the ages, and through Abraham and his descendants. **(Luke 1: 46-56)**

Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned to Nazareth. Mary assisted her cousin in the later stages of pregnancy and perhaps at the birth and circumcision of John the Baptist. But this is not the end of the story!

Preceding Elizabeth’s pregnancy, her priest husband Zechariah was visited by the Angel Gabriel in the temple sanctuary. **(See Luke 1: 10-25)** Angel Gabriel said that the prayers for Elizabeth and Zechariah to have a son would be answered, even though Elizabeth was barren and beyond childbearing age. The son would be named John and “will be great in the sight of the Lord... and will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.”

Zachariah did not believe Angel Gabriel and was rendered “speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place”. **Luke 1: 57-66** relates the birth

of John the Baptist and Zachariah’s healing speech when concurring with Elizabeth’s wish that their son be named John. Then **Luke 1: 67-80** recounts the Cantic of Zechariah, a prayer of praising God and His redemption of this people and a predicting of the subsequent prophecies by John the Baptist.

The Visitation is celebrated by the Church on May 31. The birth of John the Baptist is celebrated on June 24.

The contrast between Mary’s “fiat” and Zachariah’s pessimism is manifest. When God allows a challenge or difficulty, do I say Thy will be done, or do I question, object to, resist, or fight the issue facing me?

