



WEEK TWO: The Visitation

Praying with the Joyful Mysteries: Jesuit Communications offers a series of reflections around the five Joyful Mysteries. **This week, we explore the Visitation.**



FRA ANGELICO – VISITATION. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Gospel reading: Luke 1:39-45

Reflection

In the second Joyful Mystery we consider a remarkable event: a pregnant Mary's visit to a pregnant Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45). Travelling a long distance, Mary wishes to be present with her cousin. When Mary 'greet' Elizabeth she brings the saving consolation of her son Jesus. Then when 'the child leaped in her womb' John recognises his Lord for the first time. Elizabeth exclaims 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.' As they share their experience of fulfillment, they become the first followers of Christ – the founding members of the Christian community.

- 1 Having heard Elizabeth's good news from afar, Mary ventures a long distance to visit her cousin. When is the last time you shared good news with a relative or friend? What did you share?
- 2 On seeing Mary, Elizabeth feels John leap for joy within her womb. Can you remember an experience where all that was within you leapt for joy?
- 3 Mary is blessed among women for she carries Jesus. Can you imagine carrying Jesus within you this Advent?
- 4 Mary's visit is an extraordinary blessing for Elizabeth. Can you remember a time you experienced a powerfully uplifting visit from a friend?
- 5 Mary and Elizabeth form an early Christian community even before their children are born. Who do you seek to build community with?

Using these resources

Parishes and prayer groups: Feel free to print out and share these reflections, attach them to parish bulletins, or post them on parish websites or Facebook pages.



Join in the conversation:
#seasonofjoy



A generous response

Sr Margaret Claver FCJ is a member of the Society of Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus. Margaret has been a teacher and nurse. She now works as a spiritual director at Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality in Melbourne. She reflects on how both Mary and Elizabeth felt joy at receiving a special gift from God in the form of a promised child, a gift which many other women and men have also yearned for.

Can you remember a time when your heart skipped a beat when someone visited you to share joy?

Let us try to put ourselves in Elizabeth's place and imagine her story. Like her husband Zechariah, she is an exceptionally good woman, getting on in years and childless.

One day her husband comes home from his priestly service in the temple with this extraordinary story of a Vision, predicting joy and gladness for them in the birth of a son. Like Sarah long ago did she also laugh at the idea? Zechariah is unable to speak after this vision, but after five months, the pregnant Elizabeth speaks: 'This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.' (Lk.1:25)

Imagine Elizabeth's joy some weeks later when her young relative, Mary from Nazareth arrives at her home in the Judean hills to visit her. At the sound of Mary's voice the child within her leaps for joy and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, shouts out in joy and amazement. Elizabeth

recognises her visitor in a new way: 'Blessed are you among all women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'

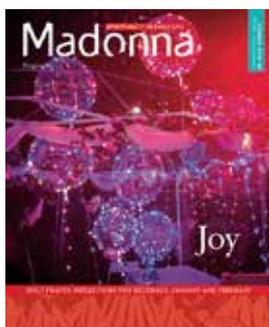
As they embrace in mutual joy and reassurance that God is indeed with them, Mary responds with the wonderful canticle of thanksgiving we know as the Magnificat.

Nearly 20 years ago, I remember a young Muslim couple coming to see me at the local hospital in another country. The young wife was very distressed as they were childless. In her culture, her inability to conceive was deemed a potential reason for divorce. She listened eagerly to instructions about how to recognise her times of fertility and listened to stories of encouragement. Her husband accompanied her on some visits and facilitated simple non-invasive tests of her hormone levels. I reassured her that these tests confirmed that she had indeed learned well. I moved to another part of that country for some months. On my return to the hospital, I was surprised by a long distance phone call. This woman wanted to tell me herself that she was pregnant.

One month exactly after the birth of this longed for child, when mother and baby were allowed to leave their home, I received a phone call at our house to see if this new mother could visit. That same Sunday morning she arrived with her husband. I will never forget the radiant joy on that mother's face as she held her month-old child. Her husband was also beaming with joy and gratitude as we sat on our simple veranda in the village. He had borrowed a car to drive his wife and child 60km to visit, as the child was too small to be carried by motor-bike.

I remember thinking that day and since that if I helped no other woman and couple in ten years, it was worth it just to see the joy on that woman's face with her first child. I can't recall what we said on the veranda but I can still remember the feeling of being able to share their absolute joy. The Mighty One had indeed done great things for all.

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