

Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Monday 1 June 2020

The church today recalls the visit of Elizabeth to her cousin Mary, as recorded in Luke's gospel. This feast was first celebrated at a Franciscan General Chapter in 1263 but quickly spread throughout Europe.

Because this celebration is described in the gospel, the Reformed churches were less likely to prohibit it as they were other Marian feasts, particularly as it was the occasion for Mary to sing her great hymn of praise in honour of her Lord and God—the Magnificat.

Just as Luke sees John the Baptist as the last of the prophets of the old covenant, he uses John's leaping in Elizabeth's womb as the first time John bears witness to Christ as the promised Messiah. Luke thereby links the Old covenant with the New. He seems to be saying that just as the old covenant clearly points to Jesus, so does its last prophet, yet to be born.



- All Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymn is a YouTube link. Please hover the mouse over the link, press Ctrl and then return.

HYMN **Magnificat** (Taizé chant)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The welcome

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

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Gloria

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All **Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.**

**Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Visitation

Almighty God,
by whose grace Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary
and greeted her as the mother of the Lord:
look with favour on your lowly servants
that, with Mary, we may magnify your holy name
and rejoice to acclaim her Son our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the prophecy of Zephaniah

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives

victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. *Zephaniah 3:14-18*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. *Romans 12:9-16*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessèd are you among women, and blessèd is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessèd is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessèd; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the

thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'

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

Luke 1:39-56

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

At the beginning of his gospel, Luke, writing to 'Theophilus', commits to producing an account, not as an eyewitness, but by '...investigating everything carefully ... so that you may know the truth concerning things about which you have been instructed.'

Tradition tells us that one collaborator, in this thorough seeking after the whole truth, was none other than Mary the mother of Jesus herself, and some believe that Luke actually painted a portrait of her. [As a 'side-bar', several churches claim to house the painting but interestingly, in these troubled times, the Madonna Di San Luca (usually on display at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome) has recently, under Papal instruction, been taken to St Peter's as it is believed to have the power of protection against the ravages of plague.]

Whether true or not, Luke alone tells us of the parentage of John the Baptist, the 'Annunciation', the 'Visitation', the 'Presentation' and the story of finding Jesus missing after a trip to the Temple at Jerusalem (read about it all in the first two chapters). The intimacy and detail, particularly of how people react and what they say in various situations, have the ring of authenticity about them as if told to him by someone who was actually there: Mary herself?

When Mary travels to the 'hill country' to see Elizabeth, It is only a short time after she has been visited by the angel Gabriel and told that, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, she will become 'Theotokos' the 'God bearer'. We might imagine that, before her pregnancy becomes noticeable, she may have wished to get away from Nazareth. Perhaps she has told Joseph, her fiancée, but he is unconvinced and uncertain about how he should act, as he has not yet had his own angelic 'annunciation' experience. (Matthew 1:18b-21). In any case, it's not hard to understand that the young (barely teenaged) Mary, hearing that Elizabeth herself is pregnant, might be seeking a little

time, distance, support and refuge at the house of an older female relative.

Even at Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's unborn child 'leaped in her womb' recognising the presence of the Lord, and she (like Mary) is 'filled with the Holy Spirit' so that there is no need of any words of explanation. She understands entirely and is certain about what God is achieving through both of them.

What follows is what we call the 'Magnificat', Mary's 'Song of Praise', which encapsulates God's wonderful plan in using her as the human vessel for His incarnation. It is such a foundational piece of scripture that it is almost always included at Evening Prayer and reminds us of how Christ comes to show us how God's kingdom on earth would be. Similarly, although not part of our gospel passage this morning, it is also worth reading ahead a little to find another Holy-Spirit-inspired prophecy which we know as the 'Benedictus'. Again, it is an important passage and therefore it features in the liturgy of daily Morning Prayer. (Luke 1:68-79) It is rewarding to dwell on the words of both these expressions of God's purposes as He speaks through Mary and Zechariah respectively of His promises of 'mercy', 'salvation' and 'good things' to those who faithfully follow His ways.

On this day, following our celebration of the events of the first Pentecost, we remember that the Holy Spirit impacted on the lives of these two women thus changing the world, decades before His active presence was gifted for eternity to all humankind.

Like Mary we must be willing to be surprised by God when he calls on us, and to trust that objections and difficulties which seem to prevent us from responding will, with His help, be worked through. Like Mary, we must try always to 'accept': to spend time seeking to work with what we ask for at the Eucharist ...' cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration (the breathing in) of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you. (And by loving Him to do what He asks of us.) Like Mary our ultimate aim must be to 'worthily magnify ...' to be a lens through which others can see more clearly the magnificent majesty of our merciful and loving Lord.

Magnificat. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Let us proclaim the greatness of the Lord
and rejoice together in the God who saves us.

Lord, you do great things for us:

All holy is your name.

You have mercy on those who fear you in every generation.

We pray for your Church ...

Lord, you do great things for us:

All holy is your name.

You show the strength of your arm
and cast down the mighty from their thrones.

We pray for the nations of the world and their leaders ...

Lord, you do great things for us:

All holy is your name.

You lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things.

We pray for all those in any kind of need ...

Lord, you do great things for us:

All holy is your name.

You come to the aid of your servants
and remember your promises with mercy.

We remember ... and all who have died in the faith of Christ.

Bring us with them to share the joy of heaven
with Mary and all the saints.

Lord, you do great things for us:

All holy is your name.

Father most holy,
so guide us in the way of humility and obedience like Mary,
that our lives may be a constant hymn of praise
to you from whom all good things come.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All holy is your name.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The peace

Steadfast love and faithfulness have met;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other. *Psalm 85.10*

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

All And also with you.

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

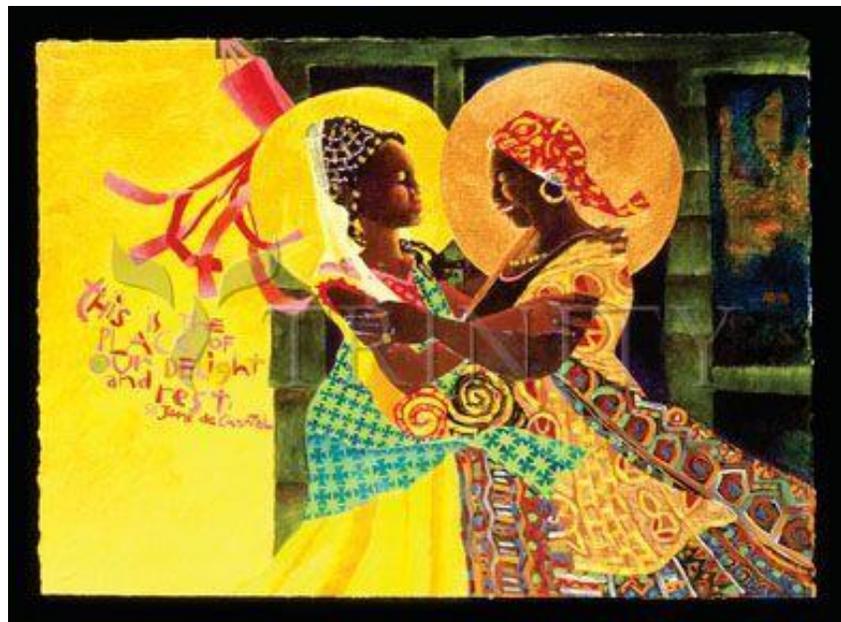
May God who sent Mary to visit Elizabeth
to share with her the joy of the divine plan,
give you grace to tell out the good news of Christ.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.



Visitation

Br Mickey McGrath OSFS

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
almighty Father, ever-living God,
to proclaim the wonders you have worked in all your saints,
and on this feast of Mary, ever blessed,
to echo her praise of your loving kindness.
For you have truly done great things and holy is your name,
and your mercy is on those who fear you
in every generation.

When you looked with favour on your lowly servant
you remembered your promise of mercy
and gave the world through her
your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Through him the hosts of heaven adore you
and rejoice in your presence for ever.

May our voices join with theirs
in the triumphant hymn of praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Julian of Norwich, St Barnabas and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink

in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God,
who gave joy to Elizabeth and Mary
as they recognised the signs of redemption
at work within them:
help us, who have shared in the joy of this eucharist,
to know the Lord deep within us
and his love shining out in our lives,
that the world may rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

**All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**