



First Saturday Devotion Meditation
St. Thomas More Catholic Church
Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 4, 2022

The Visitation
By Carlos Michael Padilla

For those of you who were present with us last month, you will recall the focus of our meditation was the **Annunciation**—when Gabriel the Archangel announced to Mary that she was highly favored, blessed among women, and would become the mother of our Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In that meditation, we were guests in the home of the Holy Family and welcomed joyfully by our Lady, who, as I believe would be the way of our Lady, albeit in our present century, offered us coffee and snacks as we marveled at the drawing hanging on the wall drawn by the five-year-old Christ child. We watched as Our Lady beam from ear-to-ear as any loving mother would as she explained the origins of the drawing.

And...

When our meditation ended, we were favored with a visit and greeting from St. Joseph and our Lord Himself, who said, **“Ah, I see you have come to me through my mother. That is a good. I like that. Welcome to our home.”**

Today, we will meditate with our Lady on the mystery of the **Visitation**.

As we did last month, I ask you to close your eyes, take a couple of deep breaths, relax, and place yourself in the moment. That moment where we meet Jesus through His mother; the mother that Jesus wishes to be known and loved; the white lady of peace in whom the peace of the world has been entrusted. Let us offer today’s meditation in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Let us begin.



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

Today, let us imagine that the Annunciation has just taken place. If you recall, our Lady was told by the Archangel Gabriel that her Cousin Elizabeth, who was once barren, was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

In this mystery, let us imagine that we have just managed to catch our Lady as she is leaving her home, and with her permission, we have been blessed with the singular privilege of joining her as she went into the hill country...into a city of Judah (Luke 1:39) to attend to her Cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:36).

The narrative continues...

“O! Hello, my children”, our Lady says as she greets us at the moment she is closing the door behind her. **“ I am so happy to see you again. You must want to know more about the story of my Son through His Mother, yes? Okay, no problem,”** Our Lady says with a mother’s smile.

“I was just heading out to visit my Cousin Elizabeth. According to the angel, she is in her sixth month of pregnancy. I want to see what I can do to assist her. Why don’t you travel with us? Joseph and I would certainly appreciate the company.”

In this narrative we are assuming that St. Joseph is making this journey with our Lady. It makes perfect sense that he would, although I am certain had he not, the angels themselves would have been assigned to keep watch over her and the child Jesus already growing in her womb as she made the journey to visit her cousin.

It makes perfect sense that this perfect mother, upon hearing of her cousins condition would immediately rush to her side, without any thought to herself, as an act of charity born through love of God for her relative.

Let us reflect on that narrative in Luke’s Gospel, chapter 1, verses 39-80.

Source: The New American Bible, Revised Edition (2012) Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Huntington, Indiana, pgs. 1554-1556.



Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town in Judah, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 cried out in a loud voice and said, **"Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."**

Let us reflect for a moment what that experience must have been like for both our Lady and Elizabeth. One would imagine that our Lady might have felt a bit awkward or perhaps taken by surprise by Elizabeth's greeting, **"Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."**

Imagine what that experience was like for Elizabeth. At the moment she heard Mary's greeting causing the infant within her womb, the same infant who would later be known as John the Baptist, to leap in the presence of the Lord.

Reflect, if you will, on what it would have been like to be in the presence of such holiness. How would you have reacted?

Fortunately, we don't have to imagine what that experience was like, for this presence; this holiness; this Son of the Living God is present to us every day in the tabernacles of our Churches, waiting for us to metaphorically leap as we enter into His presence in the same way the Baptizer leapt in the womb of his mother as he came before the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And in response to Elizabeth's greeting, Mary said:



The Canticle of Mary

46 **"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; 47 my spirit rejoices in God my savior. 48 For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. 49 The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him, 51 He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart, 52 He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. 53 The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, 55 according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."** 56 Mary remained with her about three months then returned to her home.

Let us close today's meditation of all that Mary stated in this magnificent glory of glories to God in her response to Elizabeth as I read from an article posted to the Franciscan Spirit Blog, dated: May 20, 2022, titled, ***The Magnificat: Canticle of Mary***, by Fr. Jack Wintz, OFM.

Source: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/the-magnificat-canticle-of-mary>

The greatness of Mary's Canticle is that it embraces the whole sweep of the Incarnate Word—and the whole sweep of Mary's trust in God.

Mary's sublime prayer, the "Magnificat," takes its name from the first word of the Latin translation of this song of praise. This explains why one sometimes runs into the translation: "My soul *magnifies* the Lord." Mary's Canticle is reminiscent of the hymn of praise which the Old Testament figure Hannah sang to the Lord after her state of childlessness was mercifully removed by God.

Hannah, we know, joyfully bore her son Samuel, whom she dedicated to the Lord and who became a great prophet. In her song, Hanna proclaims, "My heart exults in the Lord" (1 Sm 2:1) and in a later line she rejoices that the lord "raises the needy from the dust" (2:8). We see similar elements in Mary's song of praise. We ask the Spirit of God to enlighten our minds and hearts as we reflect on the lines of this great song which flow from the lips of Mary.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.



We find the context for Mary's song a few verses earlier in Luke's Gospel: The angel Gabriel has just told Mary that she will conceive and bear a son, Jesus. He will be given "the throne of David his father and...of his kingdom there will be no end." Such glorious pronouncements did not cause Mary to swell with self-centered pride. Her heart was filled instead with worries and concerns. And yet she fully trusted "the Holy Spirit," who came upon her, as well as the "power of the Most High," who overshadowed her (see Lk 1:26-38).

Although Mary had a sense of the "greatness of the Lord," she stayed in touch with her humble humanity. Finally, Mary simply affirmed: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (1:38). Her spirit rejoiced, not in her own strength, but in the power of God's love.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; Behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

Mary understands, profoundly, where her salvation is coming from—not from her virtue but from God's overflowing goodness. If in the future all nations come to call her blessed, Mary knows, in all humility, that it is because of what the Mighty One has done for her, and not what she has done. In truth, all ages down the centuries have called her "blessed" and millions do so today each time they pray the Hail Mary. But the Mother of Jesus surely understands well the words of Psalm 127: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil."

He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

As was already noted in Hannah's hymn of praise, the Lord "raises the needy from the dust." So also, in Mary's Canticle, we see God lifting "up the lowly" and throwing "down the rulers from their thrones." We see the same kind of reversals in Luke's Gospel as a whole. Consider for example, Luke's series of blessings and woes in his Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6: 20-26): "Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry" (6:25). Or consider Luke 14:11: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Surely, Mary would have somehow experienced these reversals in her son—his



scourging, crucifixion, and death on the one hand—and his resurrection and his appearances to his disciples in glory, on the other. She would understand, moreover, the dynamics of St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians (2:8-9) where Paul speaks of Christ’s own humbling, as well as exaltation: “[Christ] humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him a name that is above every name....”

No doubt, Mary was already wrestling with these mysteries when she sang her Canticle—as well as decades later at the time of Jesus’ suffering and death. And soon after, she would have known, of course, about his exaltation and rising into glory. More than this, she would know that the dual mysteries of humiliation and exaltation would still be significant challenges even later in the life of Jesus’ disciples and in his Body, the Church. In fact, these are the struggles which all humans still deal with today.

He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promises to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary in Luke’s Gospel and told her she would give birth to Jesus, the angel said, “[He] will be called Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever” (Lk 1:32). Luke indicates that Jesus is a successor or descendant of David through Joseph, Mary’s husband. Luke does this in his genealogy of Jesus in which he says, “[Jesus] was the son, as was thought, of Joseph...” (See Lk 3:23). The Lucan genealogy also indicates that Jesus was a descendant of David (3:31) and of Abraham (3:34)—and it goes all the way back to “Adam, son of God” (3:38).

Mary ends her Canticle with a sharp focus on Abraham, her father in faith. Abraham represents the beginnings of the story of Israel—a story which continues in Jesus Christ and his followers. A footnote at the beginning of St. Matthew’s Gospel identifies “the coming of Jesus as the climax of Israel’s history.” Interestingly, Matthew identifies Jesus Christ as “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt 1:1).



We go back now to Genesis and take a closer look at the Lord's call of Abraham: God said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you" (Gn 12:1-2). As God later tells Abraham, "I will...make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; ...and in your descendants [especially in the son of Mary], all the nations of the earth shall find blessing..." (22:17-18).

The greatness of Mary's Canticle is that it embraces the whole sweep of the story of Israel and that of the Incarnate Word—and the whole sweep of Mary's trust and complete openness to God. We are blessed in contemplating the words of Mary's amazing song!

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