

Meditations: May 31, Visitation of our Lady

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on this feast of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth.

- A life open to others
- Mary, teacher of faith
- Singing the wonders of God

IN THOSE DAYS, Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah (Lk 1:39). Very little time has gone by since the Annunciation. At the end of his

message, the archangel Gabriel revealed to Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, already elderly, was expecting a child, *for nothing will be impossible with God* (Lk 1:37). Our Lady decides to set out *with haste* to accompany her cousin, with the readiness of someone completely in God's hands.

Mary undertakes this trip in special circumstances. She has just learned she will be the mother of the Messiah. Still seemingly a young girl like any other, she lives in an insignificant town in Galilee. Humanly speaking, it might have seemed logical to focus on what had just happened and on the challenges the future now presented: what Joseph would say, the reaction of her parents, her other relatives, the rest of the townspeople. But her soul, full of grace, reacts quite differently. Once she has said yes to God – *be it done unto me according to your word*

(Lk 1:38) – Mary’s every action is guided by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Hence she sets out quickly for the mountains. She wants to offer her cousin her help and affection. And perhaps she also wants to share her own happiness, speaking with the only person who understands some of the marvels God is working.

In a similar way, if we are attentive to the breath of the Holy Spirit, our Christian life too will be ever more open to others. Our effort to grow in the virtues will not be centered on ourselves, but rather inseparable from fraternity and apostolate. And likewise our intimacy with our Lord in prayer will lead us to practice charity with everyone in a more refined way. “If we are imbued with this spirit, our prayers, even though they may begin on an apparently personal level, will always be directed towards service to others.

And if we take our Lady's hand, she will make us realize more fully that all men and women are our brothers and sisters – because we are all children of that God whose Daughter, Spouse and Mother she is.”^[1] —

OUR LADY ARRIVES in Ain Karim, the village where John will be born. *And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:40-41).* For the first time in the gospels, we see Mary closely associated with her Son in his work of redemption. Her presence in Zechariah's house is a channel of divine grace. She has brought Christ to that house, as we are called to do for others, through our faith. Saint Josemaría said: “If we become

identified with Mary and imitate her virtues, we will be able to bring Christ to life, through grace, in the souls of many who will in turn become identified with him through the action of the Holy Spirit.”^[2] —

Filled with supernatural joy through the Paraclete’s action, Elizabeth cannot contain her happiness and exclaims: *Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled* (Lk 1:45). These words invite us to focus on Mary’s faith, to see her as a teacher of this virtue and to ask her to help us to live by faith. Thus we will be able to recognize Jesus’ presence in our own lives, and we will be convinced that nothing is impossible for those who are working alongside Him.

“Christ lays down one condition: we must live by faith; then we will be able to move mountains. And so

many things need moving... in the world, but, first of all, in our own hearts.”^[3] Today we can ask our Lady for a great faith, a faith that is not daunted by obstacles. “Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to hear God’s word and to recognize his voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.”^[4] —

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ON HEARING her cousin’s words, Mary doesn’t respond directly, but breaks forth in a canticle of praise to God: the *Magnificat*. Our Lady sees herself through God’s eyes. She knows she is watched over and loved by Him, and realizes with immense gratitude that He has chosen her by pure grace. Acknowledging her lowliness with divine light, her heart overflows with joy, with the joy we

see present in the liturgy for today's feast.

Mary's humble and exultant song of joy expresses for us the generosity, closeness and tenderness of our God. In a similar way, the prophet Zephaniah stresses God's fatherly care: *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 (Zeph 3:17).* "God is interested even in the smallest events in the lives of his creatures – in your affairs and mine – and he calls each of us by our name. This certainty which the faith gives enables us to look at everything in a new light. And everything, while remaining exactly the same becomes different, because it is an expression of God's love."^[5] —

Fostering this attitude will lead us to always be thankful for everything we receive from Him. We will see all the

good things that we have as God's gifts. And the things that we see need changing in our life will lead us to be humble and to trust in divine grace, which always accompanies and sustains our personal effort. Then we can exclaim with Mary: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant* (Lk 1:46-8).

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 145.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 281.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 203.

^[4] Francis, *Lumen fidei*, no. 60.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 144.

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