

**Meeting the other
as a
Visitation**

Mary's visitation to Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-56



At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!'

The Magnificat



‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ^{to} Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.’

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

The Visitation: the implementation of Mary's "Yes"



After the Annunciation (the surprise of God's call to her to bear the Son of the Most High, to which she says, "Yes"), **Mary's 'yes' sets her off.**

She leaves Nazareth and sets forth.

She eagerly goes to a town in the Judean mountains.

She goes to another carrier of life, to be present to her, to support her;

to serve her cousin Elisabeth, who is six months pregnant.

A joyful momentum seizes her

and after three months, **she will take the same road back.**

Sharing the secret that fills her



Mary carries with her a secret that fills her. Will she be able to share it with her elderly cousin?

What can she say about her secret?

Is it not, first of all, God's secret?

For Mary does not yet know the connection between the child she bears and the one Elizabeth bears.

Now, she is walking quickly and her heart is full of joy.

A cry of joy and faith that reveals...

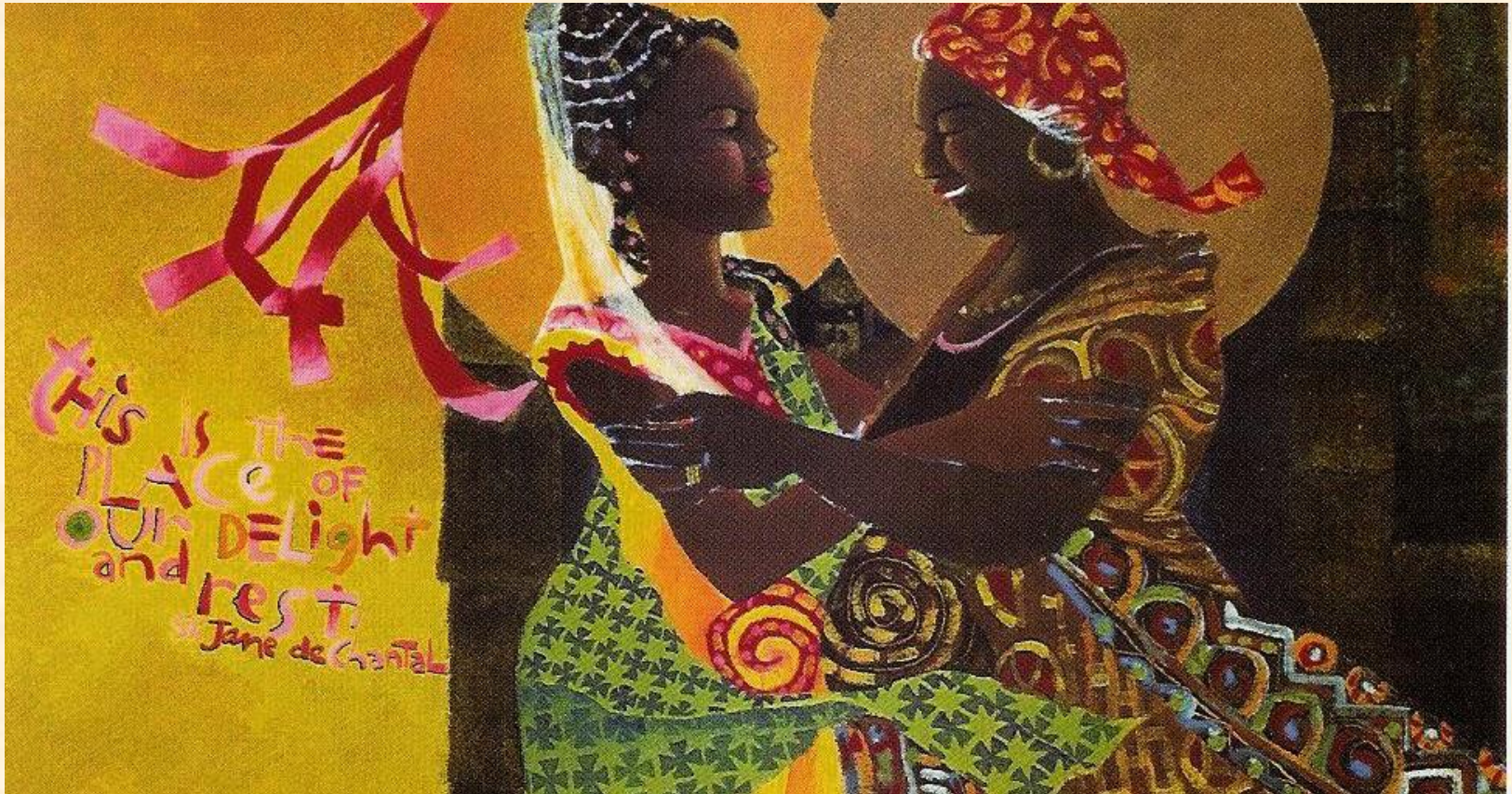


Mary hardly has time to greet her cousin, before her cousin, Elizabeth starts the conversation with "a loud cry".

This cry is a proclamation of Good News.

What a beautiful cry of joy and faith from Zechariah's wife: "Blessed is she who believed." It is a beatitude!

Different ways of expression



Elisabeth expresses her happiness by her cry and her words, which both express a Beatitude: "Blessed is she who believed." Mary sings the greatness of God and of her life for God in the Magnificat.

Mary meets Elisabeth



It is a crucial meeting for these two women, both aware that what is happening in them is beyond themselves.

The Spirit is present in this visit, as it was at the Annunciation.

Visitation: a mystery of hospitality



To let oneself be welcomed is more difficult than to welcome.

Coming from somewhere else, we can be perceived as a threat. When we expose ourselves to be welcomed by the other, we take the risk of being rejected.

The Visitation is a mystery of hospitality.

Visitation is an adventure



To make a visitation, we go out to meet others.

We leave our house to go to another's house.

It's an adventure and a disturbance.

It is about being accepted as we are, with our history, our age, our ways of living and thinking, our beliefs...

It's the whole person that is offered to the welcome of the other.

Visitation and the meeting of cultures



Going to meet each other expresses the desire, and the pleasure, to understand a cultural universe that is both strangely close and profoundly foreign, to gradually discover what animates those who belong to the other culture. Even though this desire makes the task easier, meeting another cultural universe is always a challenge and a questioning of oneself.

The meeting of cultures contributes to the disappearance of barriers between cultures and to the development of tolerance, respect for others and mutual understanding.

In our world, which often is in the grip of dissension, these values are a stepping-stone to a more peaceful future.

Visitation as a dialogue about mission



Then begins an amazing dialogue: **a dialogue where we do not talk about ourselves.**

Mary and Elizabeth **help clarify** for one another **the mission that is entrusted to them.**

They go further in understanding what was announced to them.

They reveal their joy at having been chosen by God to participate in a wonderful **work that goes beyond them.**

Visitation: giving and receiving



By visiting others, we are also visited by them and we realize that they too are open and caring towards us.

This is possible because **the Spirit of God visits all of us.**

So, **let's not be afraid to meet others** so that we can enlighten each other.

We will understand better **the riches that each one carries:** we give and we receive.

This is what happens in an interreligious and intercultural meeting.

The Visitation: a metaphor of inter-religious dialogue



Mary represents the Church, chosen by God to bring the Good News to all nations.

Elizabeth represents other nations and other religious traditions that the Church visits.



Other religions have their own particular place in the same plan of salvation as the Church and the faith she holds. They too carry elements of salvation, truth and holiness and so they share in the same history of salvation as that of the Jewish people and the Church.



Interreligious dialogue is a necessity



Today, dialogue with Islam, and also with other religions, is essential for a mutual deepening of our respective beliefs and to build a better world together.

It is a long and difficult path that requires humility and trust.

But, as in the Visitation, it will result in reciprocal fruitfulness.

The Magnificat



The Magnificat, a song of faith in **God's action in the world.**

The conviction that **God is transforming the world into** what Jesus calls **the Kingdom of God.**

The Kingdom of God is what the world would be if everyone would act as God acts.

In the Magnificat, **Mary sings of her life for God.**

We sing of **our commitment to give our lives to God and to transform this world into the Kingdom of God,** by acting as God acts.



Visitation can bring about unity of faith

- By going to visit Elizabeth, the sign that she was given at the Annunciation, **Mary**, who is upset, full of questions and full of trust, **receives reassurance.**
- Elisabeth, who is aged and **labelled as sterile, is amazed by the visit first of the Lord and then of Mary**; they give her the opportunity to express her gratitude to Him who deigned to look at her.



Other Visitations in the New Testament



- The **meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman**: The Samaritan woman recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, while Jesus recognizes the spirit of truth that inhabits the Samaritan woman it ("In this, you say the truth.")
- The meeting of **Peter with the centurion Cornelius in Acts 10:35**: Peter knew that Cornelius was on the right path, even before knowing the Christ; Cornelius had found Jesus as the one who could perfect his path.

These are the kinds of visitations we need today.

Visitation as true encounter

- Elisabeth released Mary's Magnificat...
- *"If we are attentive in our 'encounter' with 'the other'- the Muslim - and if we are at that level of attentiveness and willingness to join him... in what he is and in what he has to say to us ... it is very likely that he will tell us something that will resonate with what we carry within us, (the Good News), allowing us to expand our Eucharist. The Magnificat that is given to us to sing is the Eucharist."* (P Christian de Chergé)
- Visitation means to meet, to humble oneself, so as to be able to say: "I come humbly to ask to enter into relationship with you." There is no calculation or strategy.
- In a visitation, it is what each one carries in oneself, in ourselves, that will meet and that will touch the other ... In that way, an encounter and any intra-religious dialogue can enter into depth.



**Jesus
invites us
to live
visitations
as
He
has lived
them!**