

Visitation & Magnificat (Luke 1: 39-56)

Mary Visits Elizabeth. ³⁹ During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of 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^[a] 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^[b] that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The Canticle of Mary. ⁴⁶ And Mary said:^[c]

"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 and then returned to her home.

1) "Blessed Among Women" (Luke 1:38-45)

1. Read Luke 1:38-45. (If you are not familiar with the story of Elizabeth, also read Luke 1:1-25. Why do you think Mary goes "with haste" (verse 39)? What might this reveal about her character?

2. a. In verse 42, Elizabeth says to Mary, "Blessed are you among women." Only two other women in the Bible are given this kind of praise: Jael and Judith. Read the following passages and note why they are called "blessed among women."

[Judges 5:24-26](#) (Sisera was the general of the Canaanite army):

[Judith 13:18](#) (The Assyrian general mentioned here is Holofernes):

b. **Think About It:** [Genesis 3:15](#), the first messianic prophecy in the Bible, stands in the background of this passage. In that text, God announces that "the woman's seed" will crush ("bruise" or "strike") the head of the serpent (which symbolizes the devil). Given this, why might Mary be associated with Jael and Judith? What do you think she has in common with these heroines of the Old Testament who also are described as "blessed among women"?

3. While God is often described as “Lord” or “the LORD” in the Old Testament, in verse 43, Elizabeth refers to Mary as “the mother of my Lord.” Read [2 Samuel 24:21](#).

a. To whom is the expression “my Lord” addressed in this verse?

b. In light of this background, what is Elizabeth saying about Mary when she addresses her as “the mother of my Lord”?

4. The mother of the king played an important role in the Davidic kingdom in the Old Testament: that of the queen mother. In ancient near-eastern societies like the kingdom of Judah, the king often had many wives, some of whom had been given to him in marriage in the process of cementing political alliances with neighboring kingdoms. But each king had only one mother, and the queenship was given to her. Read the following passages, and note the ways in which the Bible depicts the authority of the mother of the king.

[1 Kings 2:19-20:](#)

[2 Kings 24:12:](#)

[Proverbs 31:1-12:](#)

5. “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus”—The Hail Mary prayer begins with two sentences we see in our reading in Luke. The angel Gabriel greets Mary with the first, and Elizabeth calls out the second as Mary approaches her. Write the rest of the prayer below. What connection do you see between the words of the Hail Mary and the role of the queen mother? (For further insight, read [CCC 2676-2677](#).)

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

Luke 1:46-55 is known as the Magnificat, taken from the first word in the Latin translation of this verse: Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum (“my soul magnifies the Lord”). The many Catholics around the world who pray Evening Prayer in the Church's Liturgy of the Hours recite this prayer of Mary daily.

6. Read Luke 1:46-55.

a. In verses 46-49, who is the recipient of God's blessings, and how has this person been blessed?

b. In the second half of Mary's prayer (verses 50-55), the focus changes. Who receives God's blessing in verses 50-55, and how?

C. Think About It: What do you think might be the connection between the first and second halves of Mary's prayer?

Mary as "Ark of the Covenant"

7. In the Visitation scene, Luke's Gospel portrays Mary as making a journey that is similar to the one made by the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6. The Ark of the Covenant in ancient Israel is the sacred vessel that carries the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments; the staff of Aaron, the first high priest; and a jar containing the manna from the desert. Most importantly, it is associated with the holy presence of God, which hovers over the Ark.

a. Re-read Luke 1:39-43, 56; then read [2 Samuel 6:2, 9-16](#). Answer these questions, noting the parallels between the two scenes. The first question has been done for you.

"The Virgin Mary is the living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the New and Eternal Covenant. ... In the womb of the new daughter of Zion, the Lord establishes his perfect temple in order to have full communion with mankind through his Son, Jesus Christ."

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. *The Shrine: Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God* 18.

2 Samuel 6:2, 9-16 David and the Ark of the Covenant	Luke 1:39-43, 56 Mary on Her Way to See Elizabeth
<p>Where is the Ark of the Covenant? (verse 2) <i>The Ark is in Baale-judah (which refers to the hill country of Judah).</i></p>	<p>To where is Mary traveling? (verse 39) <i>Mary is going to a city in the hill country of Judea (Judah).</i></p>
<p>What question does David ask about the Ark? (verse 9)</p>	<p>What does Elizabeth ask about Mary? (verse 43)</p>
<p>Where does the Ark stay? (verse 10)</p>	<p>Where does Mary stay? (verse 40)</p>
<p>How long does the Ark stay there? (verse 11)</p>	<p>How long does Mary stay there? (verse 56)</p>
<p>How does David react to the LORD'S presence in the Ark? (verse 16)</p>	<p>How does the baby in Elizabeth's womb react to the Lord's presence in Mary? (verse 41)</p>

b. What do you think these parallels tell us about Mary? See also [CCC 2676](#), under the subheading,

"Full of grace, the Lord is with thee."

D. Application

After considering the question for reflection, commit to respond to God in a practical way and then close with prayer.

Reflect

In her prayer known as the Magnificat, Mary exemplifies how all Christians should praise and give thanks to God. Re-read Luke 1:46-49. Prayerfully consider the ways in which God has been your Savior. In what ways has he looked upon your own lowliness? How has he done great things for you?

Commit

How might you be able to use Mary's words to praise God for what he has done in your own life? Write your answer, along with the times this week you will set aside to offer your own praise to God.

Pray

Use the words of Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) to inspire you to praise and thank the Lord like she does.

The Magnificat

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden, For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree, he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever." - Luke 1:46-55

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen