

**The Visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth**  
*31 May*  
*Holy Day*

The visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth is recounted only in Luke's Gospel, where it serves as the link between two earlier episodes. The first episode had to do with the birth of a son to Zechariah the priest and his wife Elizabeth. His birth was specially heralded because, as John the Baptist, he would be the forerunner of the Messiah. The second episode is the Annunciation, when an angel brought tidings to Mary that she would conceive and give birth to Jesus, the Messiah himself. Luke tied these two episodes together through the story of Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, who was already six months pregnant.

As soon as Mary greeted her cousin, the child leaped in Elizabeth's womb, and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus, even before his own birth, John the Baptist bore witness to Christ; and his testimony was received by his own mother, a woman of true righteousness under the Law of Moses. She blessed Mary as the mother of Israel's salvation, and Mary responded to her cousin by blessing and praising God, saying, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Luke meant this story to serve a still greater purpose. It dramatizes the encounter between the covenant which God made with Abraham and Moses and the new covenant which God has made in Christ. In Luke's eyes, there is no conflict between these two covenants because, truly understood, the old covenant points to Christ; indeed, it leaps to life at the presence of Christ, just as John the Baptist did when his mother heard Mary's greeting. By the same token, Christians cannot dispense with the witness of the old covenant, because it is the very thing which Christ came to fulfill; and though Elizabeth needed the Holy Spirit to interpret what the child's moving in her womb truly signified, she still would not have understood its meaning or had joy in it except for her faithfulness to the Law and the Prophets.

*See Readings, page 554.*

**Sentence**

Blessed is she who believed that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled. *Luke 1.45*

**Collect**

Almighty God,  
who looked with favour on your servant Mary  
and called her to be the mother of your Son,  
nurture in us the humility and gentleness  
that found favour in your sight,  
that with her we may proclaim the greatness of your name  
and find the mercy you show to those who fear you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Readings**

1 Samuel 2.1-10    Psalm 113

*Refrain:* Let the name of the Lord be blessed for evermore. *Or v. 2*  
*or Alleluia!*

Romans 12.9-16b    Luke 1.39-57

**Prayer over the Gifts**

God of mercy,  
accept all we offer you this day  
as you accepted the love of Mary,  
the mother of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord now and for ever.

*Preface of the Incarnation*

**Prayer after Communion**

God of steadfast love,  
may we who have been nourished  
by your gifts in this sacrament,  
always give you praise  
for the great things you have done for us.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.