



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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BLESSED ENCOUNTER

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's Gospel

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

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who

fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever."

Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

LUKE 1:39-56

Reflection

The two sections above from the Gospel of Luke (Mary's journey and her Song of Praise) are so rich with beauty and meaning, one could contemplate this passage for a long time and still be in awe of the Good News embedded in these words. The story begins with "Mary set out in haste..." What happened that Mary, a young Jewish virgin, set out in haste on a journey to see her elderly cousin? Days before she left, Mary had been visited by an angel from God, telling her that God had chosen her to become the mother of the Messiah. When she asked how this would happen, the angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of God would overshadow her. Mary also learned that her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, who was known to be barren, was now six months pregnant in her old age, since nothing is impossible with God. Mary gave her consent and she believed God's words to her.

Soon Mary set out on the four-day journey, with companions, to the hill country of Judea, eager to see her cousin, also a mother-to-be, even in her elder years. The words of the prophet Isaiah are fitting here: *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness"* (Is. 52:7). Imagine the encounter when they met each other at Elizabeth's home! The sound of Mary's voice filled Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit, resounding in the little baby in her womb. An awesome moment when these mothers embraced, celebrating the Good News that was being enfolded in their presence.







Stained Glass Window in Sacred Heart Chapel, Orange, CA
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

Contemplative Prayer

This might be a moment for contemplative prayer as you slowly read the Gospel again, allowing the words to flow over you, listening as if for the first time, to the story of the Good News. What part of the story speaks to your soul? Perhaps you would like to join Elizabeth as she greeted Mary on her doorstep, “*Most blessed are you among women...*” You may be drawn to listen to (or sing) Mary’s Song of Praise, also known by the Latin name, the *Magnificat*. Or you may be inclined to remain in silence, struck by the presence of these holy women who believed God’s word to them.

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