

# ASCENSION *Families*

## *The Visitation*

May 31<sup>st</sup> is the Feast of the Visitation. This beautiful feast invites us to encounter Mary personally and welcome her and her Son into our hearts and homes. A guided meditation with reflection questions is presented below. You may wish to pray through this reflection alone, or share it with a friend or family member. Some pieces of this reflection may resonate with you, and other pieces may not. Prayerfully ponder the questions that speak to you; disregard all that does not.

## *Pray*

Prayerfully read the Gospel account of the Visitation (Luke 1: 39-56). Seek to be present with Jesus and quietly center your heart toward receptivity. From this posture of quiet reception, pray one decade of the Rosary, continuing to meditate on the Visitation. Move slowly through the prayers, imagining each aspect of the Gospel account.

## *Enter into the Scene*

Try entering the mystery from different perspectives. What does it feel like to be Mary, perhaps nauseous in the early stages of pregnancy, traveling a far distance by foot? What is happening in the heart and mind of Elizabeth as she enters the late stages of pregnancy at an advanced age? Imagine the perspectives of John the Baptist or even Jesus, experiencing this mystery in utero. What might it feel like or what happens when John is filled with the Holy Spirit? Or perhaps imagine yourself as Zechariah, witnessing such beautiful displays of faith in silence.

## *Reflect*

1. Ponder the words that Elizabeth speaks to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Try to quantify how many times you have prayed these words in your lifetime. Next consider every Christian who has ever prayed, said, or read these words over the past 2000 years. Why are these words so significant? What do they mean to you personally?
2. Imagine what Elizabeth must have experienced living her entire life as a “barren” (Luke 1:36) woman. Now, imagine how she feels being pregnant. Consider that her experiences and feelings may be more nuanced or multidimensional than assumed at first glance. Perhaps Elizabeth is still a subject for gossip among casual acquaintances – being visibly pregnant despite her “old age” (Luke 1:36). In what ways do you think Elizabeth’s infertility prepared her to be the mother of John the Baptist and a spiritual friend to Mary? In what ways does your vocation call you to be both “barren” and “with child”?

## *Question*

1. Take a moment to imagine Jesus growing within Mary’s womb, and notice Mary growing (literally!) with His presence. How is Mary’s pregnancy a metaphor for the spiritual life to which we are all called? What are some ways that you experience Jesus growing within you?
2. When Elizabeth sees Mary she calls out, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” Do you think that this is an odd way for Elizabeth to greet Mary? Do you think that Elizabeth over-emphasizes or draws too much attention to Mary? Why or why not?
3. Mary points the way to Jesus with the words of her Magnificat, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” In what ways does or could Mary continue to bring you closer to Jesus?
4. In Mary’s Magnificat, she speaks of her own lowliness and then goes on to say that “all generations will call [her] blessed.” How does Mary remain humble while ascending to such a magnanimous call?