

Church Year Story 3
The Visitation

Catechism and Memory Verse
from the Congregation at Prayer for the Week

BIBLE STORY: THE VISITATION
Luke 1:39-56

Central Thoughts

- The Virgin birth and the gift of faith are a miracle of God's Word of grace for sinners.
- Mary rejoiced in God her Savior who had chosen her by grace alone to be the mother of His only Son.
- Elizabeth and the unborn John rejoiced in faith that the gift of the Savior had come to them.
- John the Baptist had faith in Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit before John was born.
- Human life is sacred from the time of conception.

Discussion Questions

What does "Visitation" mean?

Visit. It refers to the pregnant Virgin Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, who was herself pregnant with John the Baptist.

Why did the Angel Gabriel tell the Virgin Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was with Child? (Luke 1:36-37)

Elizabeth had been barren and Mary was a Virgin. Both conceptions were a miracle of God's grace. "With God nothing will be impossible." Elizabeth's pregnancy was a confirmation of the Angel's Word and the promise of a forerunner who would prepare the way for the Lord's coming.

How did Mary's visit strengthen her faith in the Lord's Word?

It confirmed to her that the Angel's Word was true and that all things were unfolding according to the Scriptures.

What happened when Mary greeted Elizabeth?

The baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy.

What does this teach us about the infant John in Mary's womb?

He had already received the gift of the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus before he was born.

With what words did Mary greet Elizabeth? (See Luke 1:46-55)

With the prophecy of the Magnificat.

What did Elizabeth confess about Mary?

"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

What does Elizabeth's confession teach?

Mary was blessed because God chose her by grace to be the mother of His Son. The fruit of Mary's womb was blessed because the Son of God was given as the gift of the Father's love. Elizabeth was blessed because, even though she was a sinner, the Lord had come to her and all sinful humanity through Mary's womb.

How did Elizabeth's prophecy conclude?

Mary was blessed because she had received the Lord's Word by faith; the Lord would fulfill His Word as He had spoken it.

What does the Magnificat emphasize?

In the Magnificat, Mary confesses Jesus to be HER Savior. Only sinners need a Savior. The Lord is to be magnified because He has come down from heaven to help us poor sinners in the poverty, lowliness, and misery of our human condition. He is rich in mercy and lovingkindness to all who trust in Him; He casts down those who reject Him in the pride of impenitence and unbelief. The conception and birth of God's Son is in fulfillment of the promise of mercy that the Lord made to Abraham and to his Seed forever.

Why did Mary stay with Elizabeth for three more months?

Mary stayed until the birth of John. She witnessed his naming on the eighth day after his birth and then returned to Nazareth. She would have been three months pregnant with Jesus and beginning to show that she was pregnant.

Meditation on the Bible Story

Mary greeted Elizabeth and her unborn son with the Words of the Magnificat. In the Magnificat, Mary confesses herself to be a sinner and declares that God's promise of grace and forgiveness for the lowliest of sinners is fulfilled in the conception of His only Son in her womb. "He who is mighty has done great things to me and holy is His name." The Magnificat was inspired by the same Holy Spirit that brought about the miracle of Jesus' conception in Mary's womb. When Elizabeth and her unborn son heard the Word, they confessed faith in Mary's Son with great joy. It meant that salvation was a free and unbridled gift of God's grace for the lowliest of sinners. The account of the Visitation underscores the sanctity of human life made in the image of God from the conception of the tiniest baby in the womb of his mother to the most aged members of the human family. The Lord keeps His Word to the unworthy. The Word is the object of our faith. The Lord comes to the unworthy by His Word, and the unworthy receive Him—the Word made flesh—with joy for the glorious gift of salvation.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Almighty God, You chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of Your Son and made known through her Your love for the lowliest of sinners. As Elizabeth and her baby rejoiced when their Lord visited them while in Mary's womb, so teach us to rejoice to receive Him as He comes to us each day in His holy Word and Sacraments; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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