

“Blessed are you who believed, what the Lord said” Lk 1:45

In today’s Gospel, Luke tells us how **two seemingly insignificant women met** to celebrate the kindness and fidelity of God. There is a saying, *“He (she) who is on fire cannot sit on a chair.”* Mary, filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit and carrying the newly-conceived Jesus, hurried to the mountain country where Elizabeth lived, thereby conveying the Holy Spirit to her cousin and Elizabeth’s unborn child. Like all good Jews, whatever Mary did was prompted by her commitment to God’s word in her life. “How exactly did Our Lady make the tiring journey from Nazareth to the place traditionally associated with the birth of John the Baptist, Ain Karim, nearly 100 miles away? The trip, in those days would take a week to ten days.

The two cousins greeted one another, one running to assist the other, both pregnant *with life and Faith*. Mary’s formal greeting served as a prophetic gesture, a prophetic oracle. Elizabeth’s unborn child, touched by the Holy Spirit, leaped with joy in recognition that salvation was near. John’s “leap” revealed the sheer joy of being filled with God’s Spirit. Elizabeth was the first to *hear the words*, but John was the first to *experience the grace*. Elizabeth perceived Mary’s coming, while John perceived the coming of the Lord.

This story teaches us the importance of *mutual ministry*. Each of us has a unique call, leaving us no reason for envy. Mary brought the Savior; John recognized and identified Him; and Elizabeth gave prophecy, mediating God’s word by interpreting this event. These two women rejoice, and we are called to rejoice with them, for one reason and one reason only: because God loves us enough to act. God wants each of us, like Mary, to bear within us, and to carry to those around us, no one other than the Lord of life.

It shows us *how sensitive Mary was* to the needs of Elizabeth, her older cousin who had miraculously become pregnant in her old age. For Luke, *discipleship* consists in listening to God's word and then carrying it out, and Mary does both, to become the most perfect disciple.

What does the great meeting between Mary and Elizabeth tells us?

1) We need to carry Jesus to others as Mary did. Christmas is the ideal time for us to be filled with the spirit of Christ, allowing his rebirth within us. Once Christ is reborn in us, He enables us to share his love with all whom we encounter by offering them humble and committed service, unconditional forgiveness and compassionate, caring love. Let us take the time to visit others this during Christmas season, especially the sick and shut-ins, to bring some inspiration into their lives, and hopefully to bring some joy and get them closer to God.

2) We need to bless and encourage the younger generation. Elizabeth demonstrates the responsibility of the older generation to inspire the younger generation. Grandparents, parents, teachers, and leaders have the responsibility of encouraging those around them. By complimenting and encouraging one's spouse, children and friends, let us make them know how valuable they are to us and to God.

3) We need to recognize the Real Presence of the *Emmanuel* (God is with us) in the *Holy Eucharist*, and in this praying community. The hill country of Judea is right here in our surroundings. Let us convey Jesus to people around us by our acts of love, kindness and forgiveness.

Friends, Jesus is reborn every day in ordinary people's lives, who are open to do God's will and have the willingness to respond to His call. Therefore, Christmas should inspire us to carry out God's word as Mary did, in perfect obedience to His will, in cheerful kindness and unselfish generosity. This would be our best immediate preparation to welcome the birth of the Savior, by saying, "*Here I am, Lord! I am coming to do your will.*" Fr. James Chitteth cfic