May 31st: Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:39-56): 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 for ever."

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

"The infant in my womb leaped for joy"

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Today, we contemplate the Virgin Mary's Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. As soon as she was told she had been chosen by God the Father to be the Mother of the Son of God, and that her cousin Elizabeth had

also received the gift of motherhood, she decidedly set out for the hills to congratulate her cousin, to share with her the joy of having being blessed with the gift of maternity and to serve her.

The salutation of the Mother of God prompted the infant Elizabeth carried in her womb to leap with joy. God's Mother, who also carried Jesus in her womb, is a cause for joy. Families are happy when the arrival of a new life is announced. Christ's birth is certainly “good news of great joy” (Lk 2:10).

And yet, these days, motherhood is not duly prized. Quite often other interests, which are an expression of convenience and selfishness, are opposed to it. Parental love implies an eventual renunciation. This scares many married couples who, perhaps, should be more generous with the goods they have received from God by saying “yes” to new life in a more responsible way. Thus, many families stop being “shrines of life”. Saint John Paul II confirmed that birth control and abortion “are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment.”

During five months Elizabeth did not leave her home, and thought: “So has the Lord done for me” (Lk 1:25). And Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord … for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant” (Lk 1:46-48). The Virgin Mary and Elizabeth value and are grateful for what God has given them: maternity! It is necessary that we, Catholics, find again the significance of life as a sacred gift from God to human beings.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Sweetest Heart of Mary, give strength and security to our path on earth: be our path yourself, because you know the path and the true shortcut that lead, for your love, to the love of Jesus Christ.” (Saint Josemaria)

- “On this Solemnity, let us look to Mary: She opens us to hope, to a future full of joy and teaches us the way to achieve it: welcoming in faith: by welcoming her Son with faith; by never losing the friendship with him but letting ourselves be illuminated and guided by his word” (Benedict XVI)

- “Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power. The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that ‘nothing will be impossible with God’ (L 1:37), and was able to magnify the Lord: ‘For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.’ (Lk 1:49)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 273)