



DAY 18: Meditation

THE VISITATION OF MARY TO ELIZABETH

Having meditated yesterday the Incarnation, we will focus today on Mary's actions that follow immediately after, in which she goes to visit and serve her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with St. John the Baptist.

TODAY'S MEDITATION- THE VISITATION

This is a continuation of the exercises proper to the second week, but it comes from a page toward the back of the book, where Ignatius included extra subjects for spiritual exercises in a part titled "The Mysteries of the Life of Our Lord." It is found in #263 of the Spiritual Exercises, and the scripture passage proper to this meditation is Luke chapter 1, verses 39-56.

1. Act of the Presence of God

2. Preparatory Prayer, as in #46

Lord, I ask that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of Your Divine Majesty. Amen.

3. Prelude 1: Composition of Place

For the composition of place, imagine Mary preparing for travel just after the Annunciation, still very young, likely about 15–17 years old. Picture the long journey she undertook, about 80 miles from Nazareth to Ein Karem, where Elizabeth and Zechariah lived, a trip requiring several days of walking. Perhaps Joseph accompanied her for safety, or she traveled with a caravan. Then picture the house of Zechariah, the meeting of the two women, and the months they spent together as Mary helped care for Elizabeth and her household.

4. Prelude 2: Petition

our petition will be the one proper to the second week, in which we ask "for an **intimate knowledge of Christ**, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely."

5. Main Points for Meditation

First Point: "When our Lady visited Elizabeth, St. John the Baptist in his mother's womb knew the visit of our Lady. "And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe in her womb leapt and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy



Spirit, and she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said, 'Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'"

Second Point: "Our Lady chants the Magnificat, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Third Point: "Mary stayed with her about three months, and returned to her own home."

6. Developing the Main Points

Think first about Mary's great dignity. Immediately after her fiat, her yes to Gabriel, she becomes the most honored person in the world, the new Ark of the Covenant in whom God dwells. In his Gospel, Luke the Evangelist deliberately echoes the Ark narrative to show that the ancient Ark foreshadowed what would now take place in Mary.

Consider the immensity of this grace. The most natural response might have been to remain in silent recollection during her pregnancy, absorbed in prayer with the God physically present within her. Saints sometimes experienced such rapture, as in the case of Catherine of Siena, who after Communion could become so absorbed in God that she was unaware of the world. Imagine, then, what Mary, Queen of all saints and uniquely united with the Holy Spirit, experienced while Christ grew within her.

Yet Mary does not withdraw from the world to focus only on Jesus within her. Instead, the divine life within her overflows in charity toward her neighbor. She leaves her home and travels to assist her cousin Elizabeth.

This reveals the true test of prayer and spiritual growth. The goal of the spiritual life is union with God, but progress is not measured by consoling thoughts, visions, or feelings. The real sign is increased charity toward our neighbor; only this shows that we are truly praying well.

Another lesson here is Mary's docility. As a soul grows in humility and holiness, it becomes more ready to receive the guidance of those God places over it. Mary's obedience is perfect; filled with grace and the Holy Spirit, she receives God's instruction simply and goes without hesitation.

This shows that Mary accepts not only the essence of God's plan but also its concrete circumstances. After revealing the Incarnation to her, God immediately calls her to travel and serve in Elizabeth's house. She could have delayed with reasonable concerns



about preparing for Christ's birth or explaining matters to Joseph, using prudence as an excuse. Instead, she trusted God to arrange everything.

Her trust was rewarded. She arrived safely, returned safely, and was given the companionship of someone who understood her mystery. God even sent an angel to explain everything to Joseph.

We often act differently. In the Song of Solomon the bridegroom knocks at night; the bride delays while preparing herself, and when she finally opens the door he has gone. She searches for him in anguish but cannot find him.

When God reveals a new direction in our lives, we cannot accept the essentials while retaining control of the details. We must respond as He asks.

This does not eliminate prudence or discernment; these are necessary. But once we clearly understand God's will, we must not delay or alter it through subtle excuses.

All our actions must be judged according to the principle and foundation of the Spiritual Exercises: we are created to praise, reverence, and serve God. If this is true, then delay in fulfilling His will has no justification. As John Vianney said, there are not many good ways to serve God, only one, to serve Him as He desires. Promptness is therefore essential.

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort explains why Mary fulfilled this so perfectly. In *True Devotion to Mary* he writes that Mary was never led by her own spirit but entirely by the Spirit of God, who became her very spirit. Echoing Ambrose of Milan, he prays that Mary's spirit may be in us so that we may glorify the Lord.

This is the spirit we must cultivate if we want these Spiritual Exercises to bear fruit. Docility to the Holy Spirit is not easy and develops gradually. To possess it fully we must repeatedly ask for the gifts of wisdom and counsel.

In the Visitation we also see Mary's profound humility. She was the new Ark, the dwelling place of God.

We often inflate our egos over small things. Even when we accomplish good through God's grace, we claim the credit. Mary does the opposite; in her Magnificat she attributes everything to God, saying that He has done great things for His lowly handmaid.



Again, Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort emphasizes Mary's hiddenness. Because she desired to remain unknown, the Holy Spirit calls her Alma Mater, the hidden Mother. God granted this desire by concealing her from much of the world throughout her life and mysteries.

Throughout her earthly life Mary hid herself so that Jesus might shine. For this reason God has glorified her in the Church; she chose humility and hiddenness so that God alone might be exalted, and her docility allowed His will to be accomplished perfectly.

7. Colloquy

Converse with Mary, with the Lord who is in her womb. Ask her for the grace to imitate her, for the grace to possess her virtues—her humility, her docility. Ask to live charity as she lived it. Close with a **Glory Be**.