

**The Magnificat:
The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth
May 31**

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

We praise you, Lord, in this Daughter of Israel, Mary, your faithful One and our Mother. We pray as She did; may your name be holy, may the hungry be filled and the rich know hunger, may the proud be scattered and the oppressed raised up, may your love be ever with your people. We make our prayer always through Mary's child. He arose from her the Son of Justice, Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked with favor on the lowliness of His servant. Surely from now on, all generations will call me Blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and Holy is His name. His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, according to the promise He made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.” *(Luke 1:47-55)*

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

The opening words of the Magnificat beautifully capture the essence of Mary's life: “My soul magnifies the Lord.” This program offers Mary's entire life as a way of being open to the presence of God and making it evident in daily activities.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

Devotion to Mary is a strong and very personal part in the faith life of many Catholics. Our understanding of Mary comes from the scriptures. These show her to be a very strong woman who followed her Son, Jesus, in a manner that equaled or even surpassed that of the disciples. Recent studies and church documents have laid a foundation that fosters an understanding of Mary as both a woman of faith and a timeless disciple.

From the moment of her Immaculate Conception to her glorious assumption, Mary sought to enlarge the grace of God and decrease the influence of her own ego. This attitude and virtue is similar to John the Baptist, who like Mary is unselfish so that Jesus can become more present. By decreasing their egos they become heralds of the true Messiah. In essence we see in Mary a longing and a searching for God that is part of all humanity. Her response shows us how we can nurture God in our lives.

“In celebrating the annual cycle of Christ's mysteries [in the liturgical year], the Church honors with special love Mary, the Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of Her Son. In Her, the Church holds up and admires the most excellent effect of the redemption and joyfully

contemplates, as in a flawless image, that which the Church itself desires and hopes wholly to be. “
(*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [Vatican II, #103]*)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What is your understanding of Mary as an image of what the Church hopes to be?
2. Mary praised God for turning the accepted social order upside down, bringing down the powerful, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, and sending the rich away. Do we expect the present social order to be similarly turned upside down? What would it cost us personally and professionally as a church, as a Serra club, as a country?
3. What are great things God has done for you and for us? How do we praise God for them?

Closing Reflection

The words of the Magnificat are a powerful reminder that the human condition and the needs of the poor are alive in God’s heart. In some way we are all poor and therefore, like Mary, must remove the illusions of self-sufficiency and let ourselves accept the richness of God’s mercy. Our interdependence in relationship with God will change us. Through us, then, everyday miracles will flow from our hearts and hands into a world that sorely needs them.

Bibliography

Beattie, Tina. *Rediscovering Mary: Insights from the Gospels*. Liguori Missouri: Triumph Books, 1995.

Buby, Bertrand, S.M. *Mary: The Faithful Disciple*. New York: Paulist Press, 1985.

Gabriel, Edward. *My Soul Magnifies The Lord: Fifteen Prayer Experiences Celebrating Mary*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996.

Miles, M.M. Editor. *Maiden & Mother: Prayers, Hymns, Songs, and Devotions to Honor the Blessed Virgin Mary*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001.

Nolan, Mary Catherine, O.P. *Mary’s Song: Living Her Timeless Prayers*. Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.