



SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

JOURNEYING WITH MARY THIS ADVENT - MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." Luke 1-39-45

During the month of December, we journey through the beautiful season of Advent. It is a time of watchful waiting, of hope and preparation for the coming of Jesus. Advent not only draws us closer to Jesus, but it also brings us closer to Mary, the first and perfect disciple. Mary, patroness of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a central Advent figure who guides us with grace, faith and trust as we wait in joyful hope for the birth of Jesus.

Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth presents a beautiful encounter for us to ponder in our Vincentian lives. Mary traveled in haste to her elderly cousin Elizabeth who needed assistance. Mary set out on the long journey from Nazareth to a village in the hill country of Judea. Mary responded immediately and leaped into action. Mary was not concerned about her own needs; she desired to help Elizabeth. She knew clearly the mission she was embarking on. Upon greeting each other, these two great women comforted each other, shared their stories, and gave each other the gift of themselves. Mary's journey was one of joy, revealing her love and concern for her dear cousin. It is the same love Blessed Rosalie Rendu encouraged: "Be kind and love. For love is the first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and love more than all else you can bring them."

As Vincentians, we are aware that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul began with Frederic Ozanam and his friends conducting home visits to their neighbours in need. We continue in the spirit of our founders with the fundamental work and hallmark of the Society, the home visit. In some situations, it may not be possible to conduct home visits. Wherever we meet those in need, whether in homes, on the streets, outreach programs or in Thrift stores, Vincentians are visiting and bringing Christ to those we serve. Mary's visit with Elizabeth's resembles the visits Vincentians have with those we serve. Visits provide Vincentians with the opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with those we serve. They can be a rewarding and informative time for all; identifying ways to help, and understanding issues relating to systemic change, and concerns requiring advocacy.

The essence of Mary and Elizabeth's visit provides a beautiful example for our Vincentians lives. Mary offered her full presence to Elizabeth, and likewise Elizabeth was fully present to Mary. In their face-to-face encounter and embrace, they mutually revealed joy and love. Their visit was filled with prayer and attentiveness to each other. Like these two outstanding women, may we respond immediately with attentiveness, joy and love to those needing our help.

Reflection Questions

- How can you let Mary guide you during this Advent season?
- In what ways can Mary be an example to you in your Vincentian life?
- What insights have you gained into Mary's visit with Elizabeth?

Let us pray... Loving God, Thank you for the example of Mary, whom you chose to be the mother of your only Son, Jesus. She lived her life with love for you and for others. Help us journey with Mary this Advent in hope and trust as we once again prepare for His coming. May we be truly ready to welcome the Christ child with complete joy on Christmas morning. Amen

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National Spirituality Committee*

About the writer: Carolyn is a retired teacher. She serves as Spiritual Advisor for St. Basil Conference, Brantford, Ontario as well as Particular Council of Brant. She is also a member of Particular Council of Brant's Housing Champions Committee. Carolyn is a member of the Ontario Spirituality Committee and recently became a member of the National Spirituality Committee. She has been actively involved in adult faith formation for many years.