Visitation

In Christianity, the Visitation refers to the meeting between the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth while both were still carrying children in their wombs. The much older Elizabeth was the mother of John the Baptist, while Mary was of course the one who would bear the Messiah. While faceted glass windows may show several people standing alongside the devout cousins, many stained glass artists just include the two women. They may be depicted holding hands, embracing, or simply standing close to one another. Admirers of Visitation church stained glass can well imagine just how wondrous and profound this reunion was for both expectant women.

The Story of the Visitation

Those who are familiar with the story of the Annunciation know that the angel Gabriel didn’t just tell Mary of the child she would bear through the Holy Spirit. The messenger of God also gave her news of her cousin Elizabeth. In her old age, the woman who was thought to be barren had conceived a son. At the time of the Annunciation, Elizabeth was already in the sixth month of her pregnancy.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary went to see her cousin almost immediately after hearing the joyous news from the angel. Both Elizabeth and the child growing within her were profoundly affected by the encounter. The Bible says that Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and that her unborn son “leaped in her womb.” Both, it seemed, recognized
The Story of the Visitation continued

that Mary was blessed and carried a divine baby within her. Elizabeth proclaimed the words still spoken by those who recite the Rosary: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!” She questioned why the mother of the Lord would choose to come see her, and Mary spoke the words now known as the Magnificat.

The Virgin Mary remained with her cousin for about three months before returning home. Approximately 30 years later Elizabeth’s son John baptized Christ in the Jordan River, an event that marked the beginning of His public ministry.

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