

**Evangelisation – Mary, Bearer of the Word,
Close of Novena (Gospel of Visitation, Luke 1:39-45)
St. Mary of Furness – 3rd July 2015**



The Evangelist Luke has left us a lovely painting in words of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. Picture the scene: the young Mary recently and mysteriously pregnant by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, and her much older cousin Elizabeth now six months pregnant, after she and her husband felt that they would never be parents. The atmosphere is one of joy as the two mothers-to-be greeted one another, with all the hope and expectation that motherhood would bring them.

Yet Luke also in the details of this story sets before us a profound meditation. As Mary stepped across the threshold of Elizabeth's house the infant in Elizabeth's womb – the future John the Baptist – leaped for joy. Even then in his mother's womb John recognised the presence of the saviour of the world in Mary's womb. John was already pointing out Jesus, which would become his life's work! Mary's presence filled Elizabeth with delight and her cry of joy has become familiar to us from the Hail Mary: *Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!* (Luke 1:42).

I always find it remarkable that Elizabeth goes on to congratulate Mary on her faith: *Blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled* (Luke 1:45). Mary conceived the Son of God through her faith. A great deal was asked of her by the angel Gabriel, God's messenger, but Mary's faith and trust were big enough to freely embrace the invitation of God and step into what would be an unknown future for her. St. John Paul II liked to refer to Our Blessed Lady as a 'Woman of faith', and a model and inspiration for all of us who have to walk the often dark road of faith as followers of her Son.

In the Hail Mary we invite the Mother of God to pray for us **now**, and that means at every minute of every day, that we may remain firm in faith like her, not weaken, and persevere to the end, above all at the hour of our death.

Mary, as soon as she heard of her older cousin's pregnancy, hurried to be with her, to be a comfort and support in her time of need. It was a simple act of human kindness which transformed the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. In carrying her divine Son within her, Mary brought the living Word of God. Today that same Christ dwells within each one of us through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and like Mary our calling is to bring him to others through kind words and good deeds. This very beautiful scene closes with Mary's Magnificat, her great hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders he has accomplished in her. Through Our Lady's prayers, may our life be a constant hymn of praise to the Lord who does such great things for us, even if we are not always aware of it. Amen!

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