

**Billy McDermott - A State of Grace**  
**December 7, 2011**

**Theme:** Visitation

**Passage:** Luke 1:39 – 45

(RSV) (39) In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, (40) and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. (41) And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (42) and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (43) And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. (45) And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

**Objective:** How do we respond?

**Opening Prayer:** (Magnificat) (Luke 1:46 – 55)

(RSV) (46) And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, (47) and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, (48) for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; (49) for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. (50) And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. (51) He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, (52) he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; (53) he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. (54) He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, (55) as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

**Questions for Discussion:**

- a) *Knowledge* – What did Mary's traveling "with haste" achieve? Do we travel "with haste?" Name one recent time when we showed it?
- b) *Understanding* – How can we compare the "Ark of the Covenant" to this passage?
- c) *Evaluation* – How did Elizabeth know that Mary was carrying God in her womb and what role is John the Baptist playing? Can we play a similar role?
- d) *Application* – Mary's words to Elizabeth – were they the first she spoke? What role does silence play?

### Accompanying Scripture Passages

#### **(Exodus 40:34 – 35) Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

(34) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

#### **(Numbers 10:33 – 35) (RSV)**

(33) So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey; and the Ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them. (34) And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. (35) And whenever the Ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let thy enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee."

#### **(2 Samuel 6:1 – 16) (RSV)**

(1) David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. (2) And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Ba'ale-judah, to bring up from there the Ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. (3) And they carried the Ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abin'adab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahi'o, the sons of Abin'adab, were driving the new cart (4) with the Ark of God; and Ahi'o went before the Ark. (5) And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. (6) And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. (7) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the Ark; and he died there beside the Ark of God. (8) And David was angry because the LORD had broken forth upon Uzzah; and that place is called Pe'rez-uz'zah, to this day. (9) And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the Ark of the LORD come to me?" (10) So David was not willing to take the Ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite. (11) And the Ark of the LORD remained in the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed O'bed-e'dom and all his household. (12) And it was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of O'bed-e'dom and all that belongs to him, because of the Ark of God." So David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of O'bed-e'dom to the city of David with rejoicing; (13) and when those who bore the Ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. (14) And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. (15) So David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the horn. (16) As the Ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

## Four Discussion Questions

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1. Love of neighbor. Charity. Cooperation. Mary is bringing “light” to the home of Elizabeth. It shows her love for us. She was going to the home of the handicapped. Elizabeth’s husband, Zechariah was rendered deaf and dumb by his lack of belief (faith). Elizabeth is old and pregnant. Someone needs to care for her. Mary later displays it again at the Cross when she moves “with haste” to John and becomes our “Spiritual Mother.”
2. God is now being carried in Mary’s womb (tabernacle) (compare Exodus 40:34 – 35). It took Mary three days to travel (see Numbers 10:33 – 35). David brought the Ark to a house on the hill. Mary visits Elizabeth in the hill country (compare 2 Samuel 6:1 – 16). David was making merry, rejoicing, dancing and leaping. John the Baptist leaps for joy in Elizabeth’s womb. (William McNamara, author of *“Christian Mysticism”* says this about joy, “Joy, the fruit of festivity, is pure gift and cannot be organized, arranged, or induced. It is the echo of God’s presence.”) David asks, “How can the “Ark of the Lord” come to me? Elizabeth asks, “Why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” David and the Ark of the LORD remained in the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite three months. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months.
3. Faith. A lack of faith you do not see. She was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth’s son was a prophet. He leaped. Leaping was prophecy. Just as David was rejoicing, dancing and leaping – so is John the Baptist. He is not seeing, but sensing. John the Baptist is already clearing the way for Christ. Mary is being introduced to John the Baptist who will clear the way. Unborn baby points to the Word of God. His Father didn’t believe the Word, so the Word was brought to him. John the Baptist (in womb) hears the voice and needs to clear the way. When we gaze at the tabernacle, do we leap for joy? Do we clear the way? Do we believe?
4. Listening. Quiet brings peace from the bombardment of daily messages. Mary was carrying the “Prince of Peace.” Mary always heard the “Word of God” through her silence. Do we? It is not her task to speak. She is the humble “Handmaid of the Lord.” The “House of God” imposes silence. Mary is that house. Mary weighs her words. Do we measure our words? Adrienne von Speyer, a great mystic of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, wrote in the *“Handmaid of the Lord”*: “There is a silence around her; people know nothing of her real life, of the mysteries of her virginity. But the silence is dependent upon her own silence. She does not become a topic of conversation among the people because she is silent about herself, and she is so in order to protect the mystery of her Son.” Further, she adds: “She remains silent later when the Son appears publicly, because it is not her task to speak. In the silence, she takes part in the dialogue between the Son and His Heavenly Father which is the substance of prayer itself; and she is silent, too, out of reverence, in order not to drown out the “Divine Word” with her speech.”