



May 31 is the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lord. **St. Luke's Gospel 1:39-45** presents the account when John The Baptist meets his Savior, Jesus The Christ, the long-promised Messiah of whom John would be the forerunner. Both are still in the wombs of their mothers. Miracle? Yes, by God's design with Divine purpose! John leaps for joy in his mother's womb testifying of the faith of the unborn. The recognition of Christ the Savior testifies of the Grace of God who gives the gift of

faith as **Ephesians 2:8-9** makes known.

The argument against abortion can be made from this portion of Scripture. That God determines the times and places of our lifespan is also clear from the Scripture. That God gives the gift of faith through the Word; **"faith comes from hearing the Word and hearing through the Word of Christ" Romans 10:17** is clear also. Yet why do we commemorate "The Visitation of Our Lord" (Mary's visit to Elizabeth, pregnant with John, after Mary is told she will give birth to the Savior) within the Church year?

The common practice is that when one of the Feasts and Festivals falls on a Sunday, it is good to observe it because in teaching about the faith of the saints gone before, we learn what Christian witness looks like today. Elizabeth cries out **"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy" (St. Luke 1:42-43)** Elizabeth's faith is clear; the unborn John's faith is clear; God's grace is evident by their expression and confession of faith and belief in God's promise of a Savior.

God's Word gives the knowledge of salvation that God delivers in Christ. The nature of the faith of Mary, Elizabeth and John is clear because the Word works, bringing to fruition the promise of God to deliver the long-promised Messiah who would bring salvation, the forgiveness of sins to redeem people trapped in the condemnation of sin. These teachings are brought to our attention through the church year as the readings for the Feast and Festival Days are before us. While we cannot observe them all, they are given on their respective dates and when they fall on a Sunday, we are given the marvelous opportunity to hear of God's grace in the lives of the saints gone before and to see the result of God's grace given in His Word through Christ and of the response of all who are blessed by God with the gift of faith. In addition, the 3-year lectionary system is supplemented with the Feast and Festival Days providing the benefit of hearing some of the same portions of Scripture more than just a few times for our edification. The more we are in the Word and the more we hear the Word and the more we study the Word, the better we know of God's great love for us in Christ; our faith is strengthened and we are overjoyed desiring to share the precious life-saving Gospel with the world around us.

The "Feast of The Visitation of Our Lord" (Mary's visit to Elizabeth) teaches that God's promises are made and delivered. We learn that God intervenes in human history according to His Divine will to bring the promise of the Savior, made in The Garden of Eden, after the fall into sin (**Genesis 3:15**), to His fallen creation so that salvation can be accomplished through that long-promised Savior, Jesus Christ. Just as Mary sings in her hymn of praise, so also, we are blessed with the grace of God through Christ our Savior that He has overcome our greatest enemy, that of sin, death, and the devil. Through the Savior Jesus Christ, God has done and continues to do great things for us, for His mercies are new every morning and His faithfulness endures forever (**Lamentations 3: 22-23**). As Mary expresses in this great hymn of praise (**St. Luke 1:46-55**), God lifted her up out of her lowly estate by His grace to accomplish the entrance of the Savior into His creation. We also are lifted out of the poverty and spiritual deprivation of our sin to be counted as heirs of the promises of God given in Christ, the Savior. **The Collect of The Day for The Visitation (May 31)** draws attention to God's gracious regard for the poor, despised and lowly as He gives His grace through Christ our Lord.

Almighty God, You chose the virgin Mary to be the mother of Your Son and made known through her Your gracious regard for the poor and lowly and despised. Grant that we may receive Your Word in humility and faith, and so be made one with Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt