

Gospel (Luke 1:39-56)

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 the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Scripture Reflection

This Scripture passage portrays one of the great affirmations of Mary's role in God's plan. This passage comes directly after the Annunciation, when Mary said 'Yes' to God's will for her life, trusting in God even if she didn't understand God's

words to her or what they would mean for her life. In today's passage, Mary connects with her cousin Elizabeth, who is also experiencing God's miraculous power in her life. Elizabeth greets Mary with words of praise that flow out of her own experience of God.

As Catholics, we believe that Mary's role is to point us towards Jesus, and we see this occurring in this passage. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she declares that her child leapt in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice. Through Mary's faithful 'Yes' to God, Elizabeth was led into her own experience of God.

Mary's amazement is that God would want to work in her life. God knew Mary's heart so intimately and knew she was the right person to respond to this particular call upon her life. Because Mary was ready to say 'Yes' to God's call, even though she didn't understand what it meant, she became a witness to the world for all time.

Mary's words of proclamation are not about herself, but about God's overwhelming goodness to the people. Such is the impact of Mary's experience of God in her life that she cannot help but proclaim God's greatness, providence, mercy and saving action. She recognises that God always cares for those who are in need – God lifts up the humble, feeds the hungry and has mercy on those who seek mercy and forgiveness.

The Holy Spirit is at work in each of our lives through our Baptism, and if we are open to God, we will each experience God's love for us. But how do we respond to God's love, mercy and faithfulness in our lives? Do we, like Mary, proclaim to others God's goodness?

Elizabeth affirms Mary for saying 'Yes' to God, for believing that what God said would happen. Do we believe that God speaks to us through Scripture, in our prayer and through what others say to us? Do we believe that God still works in our lives today? How can we be more open to hear God's word, and to see God's work in the world and in the people around us?

Pilgrimage: a journey of relationships

Pilgrimage is a time of relationships. The pilgrim encounters a rainbow of people along the way. Openness in hope and faith has the potential for developing new ways of mutual understanding that spreads peace and joy. Pilgrimage is a time to be aware of the connection and presence of God in all those around us, and enkindles a vitality for new ways of living with each other.

The physical journey seems to be one taken alone, but the pilgrim encounters many others on the journey from different faiths, points of view, and cultures, all who contribute to the sacredness of the journey.

A relationship with God does not exist in isolation. It is a communion with God, a community of faith, a stretch of the human spirit to embrace the whole world.

Pope Quote

“Then we will no longer be content to scrape a living just for ourselves, but we will see where and how we are needed. Living and acting thus, we will soon realize that it is much better to be useful and at the disposal of others than to be concerned only with the comforts that are offered to us. I know that you as young people have great aspirations, that you want to pledge yourselves to build a better world. Let others see this, let the world see it, since this is exactly the witness that the world expects from the disciples of Jesus Christ; in this way, and through your love above all, the world will be able to discover the star that we follow as believers.”

Pope Benedict XVI, “Let Us Go Forward With Christ!”
Homily at closing Mass
of World Youth Day, Cologne, Aug. 21, 2005

WYD Action

During the lead up to WYD 2008, take the time to celebrate your life within your family. Share with them the journey you are on toward WYD 2008 and the spiritual pilgrimage that will take you there. Give thanks for siblings and parents and the contributions they make in your life and in who you are. Make time to pray together as a family. Once a week, extend the regular grace to include time for intercessions from

family members, or take 5 minutes after mass on the weekend to offer up prayers together as a family.

WYD Cross and Icon

Pope Benedict XVI, continuing the WYD legacy of his predecessor, spoke at the hand-over of the WYD Cross and Icon from young Germans to young Australians on Palm Sunday 2006. He made clear why the Icon of Mary belongs on the pilgrimage of the WYD Cross.

Our Lady was present in the cenacle with the Apostles as they waited for Pentecost. May she be your mother and guide. May she teach you to receive the word of God, to treasure it and to ponder on it in your heart (cf. Luke 2:19) as she did throughout her life. May she encourage you to declare your “yes” to the Lord as you live “the obedience of faith.” May she help you to remain strong in the faith, constant in hope, persevering in charity, always attentive to the word of God.

As we behold Mary in the Icon carrying her Son she teaches us how to carry him to the world. These symbols are presented most powerfully to the world by young people who carry them not only for a few moments or hours, but in the example of their daily Christian lives.

You are invited to do the same!

Taken from the WYD 2008 website: www.wyd2008.org





Ritual and Prayer

Preparation

Establish a prayer focus incorporating:
 blue material
 an open bible
 4 light blue candles
 picture or statue of Mary

Ritual

Invite the group to gather around the prayer focus.

Share with group members that 'Today is the feast of the Assumption'. Let us take a moment to reflect on Mary's life and what she sacrificed for the good of humankind. Mary is associated with the colour blue. This was the most expensive colour, and it was thought that Mary deserved the best, as she brought her son Jesus, to be our saviour.

Read the scripture to the group gathered
 Invite the group to spend time in reflection
 Once completed, the group prays the final prayer together.

Prayer

Blessed are all those who bring new life to the world.

Blessed are those who were born into eternal life.

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

Blessed are those in our community who are responding to God's call.

Amen

Sacred Places

Take time out from your busy life to make a sacred space where you can reflect on your life each week. This place is your sacred place where you can come and not be disturbed while you reflect on your life in the presence of God.

- What has been revealed during this time of reflection?
- When have I said yes to God?
- How am I a witness to God's work in my life?
- How am I prepared for an encounter with God through the WYD Cross and Icon?
- How will I respond to God's call this week?