

Homily: May 31, 2022

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today we celebrate the wonderful scene of two simple but holy women, greeting one another—the Visit of young Mary with her elderly cousin, Elizabeth. How often we have thought of visiting or even just greeting someone who is lonely, troubled, and/or ill, but we chose another busyness instead. So we come to our compassionate God calling out, “Lord, have mercy.”

As we just heard this Gospel, we may have noticed a keyword mentioned four times: BLESSED.

Elizabeth responds jubilantly to Mary’s greeting and said, “Most BLESSED are you among women, and BLESSED is the fruit of your womb. . . . BLESSED are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” Finally, in Mary’s Magnificat-response to her elderly cousin, she said, “From this day all generations will call me BLESSED.

Blessed can mean HAPPY. Blessed also has other meanings. When we bless a rosary or statue, we are saying that this object is considered special for the sake of bringing us closer to God.

Last Thursday or Sunday, we celebrated the Ascension. The Gospel said that Jesus “raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them. . . .” When we call a blessing upon a person, we are saying to them: “You are special—you are meant for God—you are being strengthened, graced, and loved by God. You are BELOVED.

Back to Mary and Elizabeth as they revel in simple and wonderful holy greeting---Blessed. We don’t know exactly what Mary first said to Elizabeth, but based on Elizabeth’s response, I think Mary was the first one to call Elizabeth BLESSED. It so touched Elizabeth that it prompted little John the Baptist to leap in her womb. So she shouted her greetings of “BLESSED” back to Mary. Both affirming one another as GOD’S BELOVED – both graced with a special mission in God’s great plan of salvation.

Therein lies our call on this Feast of the Visitation. We have these great opportunities to “bless” one another by affirming goodness and Godliness in one another. It is so important because most of us human beings are trapped in looking at the faulty, weak, and mistaken sides of ourselves. Worse yet, with mass shootings and the shootings of disrespectful language, we get the impression that human life is cheap—simply to be shot up by another human being who may be upset and angry. 200 mass shooting up to this date in 2022.

So let us take example from Mary, Elizabeth, and Jesus by seeing and acknowledging one another as BLESSED and BELOVED OF GOD while also being limited and flawed human beings. The message of Mary’s Magnificat praise of God is that the poor and oppressed will be the first ones to be dealt with as BLESSED AND BELOVED.

A BLESSED VISITATION FEAST TO YOU!