


THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY TO HER
COUSIN ELIZABETH FROM THE VISIONS OF ANNE
CATHERINE EMMERICH / FROM THE BOOK: "THE LIFE OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST"



4. MARY'S VISITATION.

Mary's Annunciation took place before Joseph's return. He had not yet settled at Nazareth when with Mary he started on the journey to Hebron. After the conception of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin experienced a great desire to visit her cousin Elizabeth. I saw her travelling with Joseph toward the south. Once

I saw her passing the night in a hut made of wicker work and which was all overrun with vines and beautiful white blossoms. From that point to Zachary's house, it was a journey of about twelve hours. Near Jerusalem they turned off to the north in order to take a more solitary route. They made the circuit of a little city two leagues from Emmaus, and took a road often traversed by Jesus in after years. Although it was a long journey, they made it very quickly. They now had to cross two hills. I saw them resting between them, eating some bread and refreshing themselves with some balsam drops which they had collected on the way, and which they mingled with their drinking water. The hill was formed of overhanging rocks and caves. The valleys were very fertile. I remarked on the road one particular flower. It had fine green leaves and a cluster of nine tiny bell-shaped blossoms, white lightly flushed with red.

Mary wore a brown, woollen under-dress over which was a grey one with a girdle, and a yellowish covering on her head. Joseph carried in a bundle a long, brownish garment with a cowl, and bands in front. It was one that Mary was accustomed to wear whenever she went either to the Temple or the synagogue.

Zachary's house stood upon a solitary hill, and other dwellings were scattered around. Not far from it, a tolerably large brook flowed down from the mountain.

Elizabeth had learned in vision that one of her race was to give birth to the Messiah; she had dwelt in thought upon Mary, had very greatly desired to see her, and had indeed beheld her journeying to Hebron. In a little room, to the right of the entrance to the house, she placed seats, and here she tarried, often looking long and anxiously down the road, in the hope of catching the first glimpse of Mary. When Zachary was returning from the Passover, I saw Elizabeth, urged by an impetuous desire, hurrying from the house and going a considerable distance on the

road to Jerusalem. When Zachary met her, he was alarmed to find her so far from home and that too in her present condition. But she told him of her anxiety and that she could not help thinking that her cousin Mary was coming from Nazareth to see her. Zachary however thought it improbable that the newly-married couple would at that time undertake so great a journey. On the following day, I saw Elizabeth taking the road again under the influence of the same impression, and now I saw the Holy Family coming to meet her.

Elizabeth was advanced in years. She was tall, her face small and delicate, and she wore something wrapped around her head. She was acquainted with Mary only by hearsay. As soon as the Blessed Virgin saw Elizabeth, she knew her and hurried on to meet her, while Joseph purposely held back. Mary had already reached the houses in the neighborhood of Zachary's home. Their occupants were enraptured at her beauty, and filled with such reverence by her demeanor that they stood back modestly. When the cousins met, they saluted each other joyfully with outstretched hands. I saw a light in Mary and issuing from her a ray which entered into Elizabeth, who thereby became wonderfully agitated. They did not pause long in sight of the beholders, but arm in arm passed up the courtyard to the door of the house, where Elizabeth once more bade Mary welcome. Joseph went around to the side of the house and into an open hall where sat Zachary. He respectfully saluted the aged priest, who responded in writing on his tablet.

Mary and Elizabeth entered the room in which was the fireplace. Here they embraced, clasping each other in their arms and pressing cheek to cheek. I saw light streaming down between them. Then it was that Elizabeth becoming interiorly inflamed, stepped back with uplifted hands, and exclaimed: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

“ And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

“ For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

“ And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. ”

At these last words, Elizabeth took Mary into the little room prepared for her that she might sit down and rest. It was only a few steps from where they then were. Mary released her hold upon Elizabeth's arm, crossed her hands on her breast, and divinely inspired uttered her canticle of thanksgiving: “ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour.

“ Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

“ Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name.

“ And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him.

“ He hath showed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

“ He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

“ He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.

“ He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy.

“ As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. ”

I saw Elizabeth, moved by similar emotion, reciting the whole canticle with Mary. Then they seated themselves on low seats. A small goblet was on the little table. And, — oh, I was so happy! I sat near by and prayed with them the whole time.

I saw Joseph and Zachary still together. They were

conversing by means of the tablet, and always about the coming of the Messiah. Zachary was a tall, handsome old man clothed like a priest. He and Joseph sat together at the side of the house that opened on the garden, in which Mary and Elizabeth were now sitting on a rug under a high, spreading tree. Behind the tree was a fountain from which gushed water when a spigot was pressed. I saw grass and flowers around, and trees bearing little, yellow plums. Mary and Elizabeth were eating rolls and small fruits out of Joseph's travelling pouch. What touching simplicity and moderation! Two maids and two men-servants were in the house. They prepared a table under the tree. Joseph and Zachary came out and ate something. Joseph wanted to return home at once, but they persuaded him to stay eight days. He knew not of Mary's conception. The women were silent on that subject. They had a secret understanding together about their interior sentiments.

When all, Mary and Elizabeth, Joseph and Zachary, were together, they prayed making use of a kind of litany. I saw a cross appear in their midst, and still there was no cross at that time. Yes, it was as if two crosses visited each other.

In the evening they all sat together again in the garden near a lamp under the tree. A cover like a tent was stretched under the tree, and low stools with backs stood around. After that I saw Joseph and Zachary going to an oratory, while Mary and Elizabeth retired to their little chamber. They were inflamed with divine ardor, and together they recited the Magnificat. The Blessed Virgin wore a transparent, white veil which she lowered when speaking to men.

Zachary took Joseph on the following day to another garden at some distance from the house. He was in all things most exact and methodical. This second garden was set out with beautiful bushes and trees full of fruit. In the centre was an avenue of trees,

and at the end of it a small house whose entrance was on the side. Above were openings with slides like windows. A woven couch filled with moss or some other fine plant, stood in one room in which there were, also two white figures as large as children. I have no clear knowledge of how they came there nor what they signified, but they appeared to me to be very like Zachary and Elizabeth, only much younger.

I saw Mary and Elizabeth much together. Mary helped with every thing around the house and prepared all kinds of necessaries for the child. Both she and Elizabeth knit on a large coverlet for the latter, and they worked also for the poor.

During Mary's absence, Anne frequently sent her maid to see after Mary's house at Nazareth, and once I saw her there herself.

I saw Zachary and Joseph spending the night of the next day in the garden at some distance from the house. They slept part of the time in the little summer-house, and prayed during the other part in the open air. They returned quite early in the morning to the house where Mary and Elizabeth had passed the night. Mary and Elizabeth recited together morning and evening the hymn of thanksgiving, the *Magnificat*, which Mary had received from the Holy Ghost at the salutation of Elizabeth. During its recital they stood opposite each other against the wall, as if in choir, their hands crossed upon their breast, the black veil of each covering her face. At the second part, which refers to God's promise, I saw the previous history of the Most Holy Incarnation and the mystery of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, from Abraham down to Mary. I saw Abraham sacrificing Isaac, also the Mystery of the Ark of the Covenant, which Moses received on the night before the departure from Egypt, and by which he was enabled to escape and conquer. I recognized its connection with the holy Incarnation, and it seemed to

me as if this Mystery were now fulfilled or living in Mary. I saw also the Prophet Isaiah and his prophecy of the Virgin, and from him to Mary visions of the approach of the Most Blessed Sacrament. I still remember that I heard the words: "From father to father down to Mary, there are more than fourteen generations." I saw also Mary's blood taking its rise in her ancestors and flowing nearer and nearer to the Incarnation. I have no words to describe this clearly. I can say only that I saw, sometimes here, sometimes there, the people of different races. There seemed to issue from them a beam of light which always terminated in Mary as she appeared at that moment with Elizabeth. I saw this beam issuing first from the Mystery of the Ark of the Covenant and ending in Mary. Then I saw Abraham and from him a ray, which again ended in Mary, etc. Abraham must have dwelt quite near to Mary's abode at that time; for during the Magnificat I saw that the beam which proceeded from him came from no great distance, while those from persons nearer to the Mother of God in point of time, seemed to come from afar. Their rays were as fine, as clear as those of the sun when they shine through a narrow opening. In such a beam, I beheld Mary's blood glancing red and bright, and it was said to me: "Behold, as pure as this red light must the blood of that Virgin be from whom the Son of God will become incarnate."

Once I saw Mary and Elizabeth going in the evening to Zachary's country-place. They took with them rolls and fruit in little baskets, for they intended to stay over night. Joseph and Zachary followed them later. I saw Mary going to meet them as they entered. Zachary had brought his little tablet, but it was too dark for writing. I saw Mary speaking to him. She was telling him that he should speak on that night. He laid aside his tablet and conversed orally with Joseph. I saw all this to my own great astonishment. Then my guide said to me: "Why, what is that?"

and he showed me a vision of St. Goar, who hung his mantle on the sunbeams as on a hook. I received then the instruction that lively, childlike confidence makes all things real and substantial. These two expressions gave me great interior light upon all kinds of miracles, but I can not explain it.

They, Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, and Zachary, all spent the night in the garden. They sat or walked two by two, prayed now and then, or retired into the little summer-house to rest. I heard them say that Joseph would return home on the evening of the Sabbath, and that Zachary would go with him as far as Jerusalem. The moon shone bright in a starry sky. It was indescribably calm and lovely near those holy souls.

Once also I had a peep into Mary's little chamber. It was night, and she was at rest. She was lying on her side with one hand under her head. Over her brown underdress she wound from head to foot a strip of white, woollen stuff about an ell in width. When preparing for rest, she took one end of this strip under her arm and wound it tightly around her head and the upper part of her person, then down to the feet and up again; so that she was entirely enveloped, and could not take a long step. She did this near her couch, at the head of which was a little roll of something for a pillow. The arms from the elbow down were left free, and the veiling of the head opened on the breast.

I often saw under Mary's heart a glory in whose centre burned an indescribably clear little flame, and over Elizabeth's womb a similar glory, but the light in it was not so clear.

When the Sabbath began, I saw in Zachary's house, in a room that I had not before seen, lamps lighted and the Sabbath celebrated. Zachary, Joseph, and about six other men from the neighborhood were standing and praying under a lamp and around a little chest upon which lay rolls of writing. They had on

their head something like a small veil. They did not make so many distorted movements of the body as do the latter-day Jews, although like them they frequently bowed the head and raised the arms.

Mary, Elizabeth, and two other women stood apart in a grated partition from which they could see into the oratory. They were entirely enveloped, their prayer-mantles over their head.

Zachary wore his festive robes the whole of the Sabbath. They consisted of a long, white garment with rather narrow sleeves. He was girdled with a broad cincture, wound many times around him. On it were letters, and from it hung straps. This garment was provided with a cowl, which hung in plaits from the head down the back like a folded veil. When he moved or performed any action, he threw this garment rolled together with the ends of the girdle up over one shoulder, and stuck it into the girdle under his arm. His lower limbs were loosely bound, and the strip enveloping them fastened by the straps that kept the soles in place upon his naked feet. He showed his priestly mantle to Joseph. It was sleeveless, wide and heavy and very beautiful, flashing with white and purple intermixed. It was closed on the breast with three jeweled clasps.

When the Sabbath was over, I saw them eating again for the first time. They took their repast together under the trees in the garden near the house. They ate green leaves previously dipped into something, and sucked little bunches of herbs which too had been soaked. There were little bowls of small fruits on the table and other dishes, from which they partook of something with brown, transparent spatulas. It may have been honey that they were eating with horn spatulas. There were also little rolls, and I saw them eating them.

After the meal, Joseph accompanied by Zachary started on his journey home. The night was calm, the moon shining, and the sky studded with stars.

Before parting, all prayed separately. Joseph took with him his little bundle in which were a few rolls and a small jug of something. Both the travellers had staves; but Joseph's was hooked on top, while Zachary's was long and ended in a knob. Both had travelling mantles which they wore over their head. Before starting, they embraced Mary and Elizabeth, alternately pressing them to their heart. But I saw no kissing at that time. The parting was calm and cheerful. The two women accompanied them a short distance, and then the travellers proceeded alone. The night was unspeakably lovely.

Mary and Elizabeth now returned to the house and went into Mary's chamber. A lamp was burning upon a bracket on the wall, as was usual while Mary slept or prayed. The two women stood facing each other, and recited the *Magnificat*. They spent the whole night in prayer, for what reason I can not now say. Through the day I saw Mary busy with all kinds of work, weaving covers, for instance.

I saw Joseph and Zachary still on the road. They spent the night under a shed. They took very circuitous roads and, I think, visited many people, for they were three days on their journey.

Again I saw Joseph at Nazareth. Anne's maid took charge of the house for him, going to and fro between the two houses. With this exception, Joseph was entirely alone.

I also saw Zachary returning home, and I saw Mary and Elizabeth reciting as usual the *Magnificat*, and doing all kinds of work. Toward evening, they used to walk in the garden. There was a well in it, a rare occurrence in this part of the country; therefore travellers always took with them in a little jug some kind of juice to drink. Sometimes also and generally toward evening when it grew cool, Mary and Elizabeth walked some distance from the house, for it stood alone in the midst of fields. They usually

retired about nine o'clock and always rose again before the sun.

The Blessed Virgin remained with Elizabeth three months, until after the birth of John, but she returned to Nazareth before his circumcision. Joseph went to meet her half-way on the journey, and for the first time noticed that she was pregnant. But he gave no sign of his knowledge, and struggled with his doubts. Mary, who had feared this, was silent and preoccupied thus increasing his uneasiness. When arrived in Nazareth, Mary went to the parents of the deacon Parmenas and remained some days with them. Joseph's anxiety had meanwhile increased to such a degree that, when Mary returned home, he determined to flee from the house. Then the angel appeared to him and consoled him.