



## Enthusiasm for the Faith

**Q** *What is the backdrop to the feast of Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth, which we celebrate on May 31?*

The narrative of the Visitation of Elizabeth by Mary, her cousin, is recounted only in Luke 1:39-56. The Visitation takes place after the Annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel. He also tells her that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is in her sixth month of pregnancy. Mary, astounded with her own news, rushes to be with Elizabeth, and to offer her help and service.

**A** Luke makes the meeting of the two the occasion for the famous Marian hymn, the Magnificat. In the hymn, Mary blesses and magnifies the Lord for the great and wonderful things that the Lord has accomplished in her and in her people. This memorable meeting has occasioned a tremendous amount of artistic expression both in paintings and musical settings of the Magnificat.

Beginning in the Middle Ages, the feast was celebrated on July 2. When the liturgical calendar was revised in 1969, the feast was moved to May 31. According to Luke's narrative, the Annunciation occurred, followed by the Visitation and the birth of John the Baptist. Since the Annunciation is celebrated on March 25, and John's birth is celebrated on June 24, celebration of the Visitation was moved to May 31, allowing the order of feast days to coincide with the sequence of events.

Mary's Magnificat, occasioned by the Visitation, is recited every day at the liturgical prayer time know as Vespers, or evening prayer. Tonight, why not make this prayer yours as well.

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Luke makes the meeting of the two the occasion for the famous Marian hymn, the Magnificat.



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