

Novena for the Feast of the Visitation  
St. Elizabeth and Our Lady of the Visitation

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Hail Mary: Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, prayer for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Daily Reading: On the Feast of the Visitation, we remember how Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, traveled from Nazareth to Judah to attend to her cousin Elizabeth, carrying St. John the Baptist. When Mary entered Elizabeth's home and greeted her, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt. From that moment, Elizabeth knew Mary was the mother of God. In response, Our Lady proclaimed her Magnificat, the Canticle of Mary.

[Read the Passage Corresponding to Current Day of Novena – next page]

Daily Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the gift of St. Elizabeth and the Blessed Mother. In your tender wisdom, you brought them together so they could provide familial and spiritual kinship for one another—a kinship through which they empowered each other to actualize their salvific vocations.

Like Elizabeth and Mary, many of us are also expecting: we are weighed down by hopes that leap within us but have yet to be actualized outside of ourselves—yet to be born. During this novena, as we travel through Luke's narrative of the Visitation, help us to meditate on the vital kinship between Elizabeth and Mary. Help us to consider the travails of pregnancy and the sacredness of maternity. Also, help us to consider all those who live, like pregnant mothers, in states of anticipation. Be with us in the anxiety of waiting. Bring us closer to the day in which our intentions will be answered and our hopes born into the world. Make of our lives a canticle.

[State Intention]

Glory Be: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### Passages for Days 1-9

- 1) **During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.** Dear Lord, today let us contemplate the vast and rugged terrain Mary traversed, and the precious infant she protected within her body on the journey. Our Mother is as courageous as she is nurturing. May we, too, tap into our inheritance and foster these characteristics within ourselves. Let us tirelessly and boldly serve others, as Mary served Elizabeth, while simultaneously nourishing our inner bond with Christ.
- 2) **When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb.** This verse conjures one of the most resplendent images in all of Scripture. Elizabeth's heart was open to God's will (accepting pregnancy in old age), and her ears were open to Mary's voice. In return for the openness of Elizabeth's heart and ears, John infused his mother's aged body with vitality (embodied in the idea of leaping). Let us open our hearts and ears to God's love. Let us feel it flutter within us!
- 3) **Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and most blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."** This verse is very important. It reminds us not only of the bond between Elizabeth and Mary, but of that between Elizabeth and her unborn child as well. For, when Elizabeth hears Mary's voice and feels John's kick, she instantly knows that Mary is with child and that the child is the Messiah. In other words, Elizabeth gains supernatural knowledge via her bond with her unborn child. This reminds us that where we cultivate sacred, intimate bonds, the Holy Spirit can yield life-giving, revelatory power. Let us cultivate these types of bonds and behold the numinous power they yield.
- 4) **And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior."** Christ's greatness is not just expressed via Mary's lips but emanated through her whole being—through her soul! Mary is connected to her vocation in mind, body, and spirit. Further, Mary's vocation brings her joy—she is *rejoicing* in God her savior. Let us pursue vocations that engage our entire beings—mind, body, and soul. Let us pursue vocations that are salvific for our world. Let our vocations bring us *joy*!
- 5) **"For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed."** This line recalls Mary's earlier line during the Annunciation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord." A handmaid performs lowly, mundane, domestic chores. A handmaid, as Mother Teresa might put it, does small tasks with great love. How can we be the Lord's handmaid today? How can do small tasks that will contribute to great, collective gestures of love for all ages to see?
- 6) **"The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him."** Yesterday we contemplated the smallness of a

handmaid. Today's verse reminds us that our vast, omnipotent Lord – “the Mighty One” – chooses to spend his power doing “great things” for the small handmaid. Why should a king deign to serve a lowly servant, and why should such an action be called “holy”? Today let us remember God's power and let us fear it. But let us also remember that God's generosity, thoughtfulness, and mercy endure forever.

- 7) **“He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.”** This verse intensifies ideas we encountered yesterday, supplementing them with a social justice tinge. Despite the fact that our Lord is mighty and rules over an immense dominion, he has an eye for detail. He sees the meek, the lowly, the hungry, the poor. We are called to see these beings, too. We are called to dwell with them in their misery. In fact, we are called to become them. Let us dash our pride. Let us give relentlessly to our brothers and sisters. Let us pour forth generosity from our hearts. Let us be poor and spirit so that someday we too can be enthroned with our Father.
- 8) **“He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”** In this passage, let us return to Elizabeth. Even though Elizabeth was past childbearing age, she never lost faith that God would keep his promises and that his will would be done. In keeping her faith, Elizabeth became the Lord's servant through her maternity of our savior's trailblazer, John. Today let us remember God's promises and let us abide in faith. Let us also remember that God's promises require our servitude.
- 9) **Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.** Mary and Elizabeth supported each other during gestation. We, too, in our own ways, are in gestational phases. We are laden with hopes and unanswered prayers to which we would like to give birth, but our hours have not yet come. Dear Lord, give us faith, hope, and love as we wait. Let us wait with others, and let us cherish the spiritual kin who come to wait with us.

And when our hour is come to give birth, let us meet our challenges boldly, as Mary returned home to embrace parenthood with Joseph. Let us live the words of St. Joan of Arc: “I am not afraid; I was born to do this.”