

Fidelity Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Tuesday, May 31, 2016 8:15 AM
Zep 3:14-18a; **Lk 1:39-56** (Can we afford to be less faithful in spite of trauma?)

“He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.”

So the very origin of Jesus in our world, his coming to be through Mary, is seen as **God’s fulfillment of a promise made centuries before**. We don’t know exactly when Abraham lived, but it was probably after the year 2000 BC, around there somewhere, so a long time before; and a lot had happened in between, a lot of actual trauma. **Israel has experienced a great deal of trauma in its life**. And in a way trauma has almost become its stamp, its identity. **Most nations don’t survive trauma; they just disintegrate**. They are overcome by something stronger, so they more or less fade away, and then something stronger comes, and then eventually that disintegrates and fades away, and then something else comes. Look at how empires come and go: Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome, then the caliphates. That’s the history of this area, and every place in the world is similar: one dynasty dies out, another one comes up. So it is in the ways of the world.

But **God is faithful to his promises**; that’s what this is about, God’s fidelity to his promises. And the strange thing about the people of God in the Old Testament, the Israelites, **the Jewish people** is that they **stuck together and they remained together** even when that meant they were sharing solidarity in horror, in exile, in imprisonment. Was that their primary mission just to hold together, to wait for the promises to be fulfilled? I don’t think they would want that interpretation. It’s speculation. **But we do see Israel is faithful to its identity, not always to what God wants, but to its identity in spite of the fact that all of the forces of this world try to destroy it.**

Now among the Israelites that were truly faithful comes **Mary and Elizabeth**, two women who probably because they were women not looked up to in their own day. And Mary says here that the whole world through **“all generations will call me blessed.”** This we could call a **prophecy**—it is a prophecy. And it’s one that is completely unexpected, as are all true prophecies. If they were expected, they wouldn’t really be prophecies.

Here are two women God has chosen to fulfill his promise made thousands of years before. This is about fidelity, both **God’s fidelity and Mary’s fidelity and Elizabeth’s fidelity and in a way the fidelity of the Jewish people to their identity**, the chosen people, even though they didn’t know chosen for what. But they knew they were chosen for something, and they held together, **and from that has come our Savior Jesus Christ.**

Now as disciples of Jesus, **can we afford to be less faithful in spite of trauma**, in spite of the fact that all the forces of the world want to break us up, dissuade us, disrupt us, divide us? That’s the question this gospel is asking.