

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF MARY

July 2



Why is this festival called the Visitation of Mary?

BECAUSE on this day Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, whom, as the angel had told her, God had blessed with a son in her old age.

[The Introit of the Mass is the same as on the festival of the Immaculate Conception.]

EPISTLE (*Cant.* ii. 8—14.) behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills: my beloved is. like a roe or a young hart. Behold, he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices. Behold, my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land: the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: the fig-tree hath put forth her green figs: the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one: and come: my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.

EXPLANATION The Church here applies this lesson to Christ's love for His Mother, from whom He received His flesh. From the beautiful words of this day's lesson, thou mayest, therefore, comprehend the love which Jesus and Mary had for each other, and consider that Jesus so loves thy soul, that He calls on thee to rise up, that is, to leave earthly thoughts, and come to

Him, to live for Him only, and entertain thyself in prayer with Him only, like Mary who because of this was so beautiful in His sight.

COLLECT O Jesus, sweet Bridegroom of my soul, come, hasten with Thy grace to visit my soul, that she may be purified and sanctified by Thy love, come prepare her for Thy worthy dwelling, visit me as thou once didst visit with Mary the child John and sanctify him. Do not permit my ears ever to close to Thy warning voice, but grant that I may always obey Thy holy admonitions, and thus become ever more and more pleasing to Thee.

GOSPEL (*Luke* i. 39—47). At that time, Mary rising up, went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda: and she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb: and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice, and said: 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. And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

LESSON I. Mary rising up went into the hill-country, and as St. Luke says, with haste: "And tell us now, O Mary," exclaims St. Alphonsus Liguori, "why dost thou hasten so?" "I have a duty to fulfill she replies, "which the love of my neighbor requires. I go to assist a pious family." — In like manner you also should hasten to carry help and consolation to your neighbor. II. Mary visited her cousin out of true love, not from inconsiderate curiosity or according to the custom of the world. From such motives we should make all our visits. They should aim always only at the honor of God and the spiritual advantage of our fellow-men, they should not come from false politeness or through bad intentions, which alas! are too often the motives of worldly visits. III. Mary in this visit gives a special example of humility, when she, although the Mother of God, visits the mother of His servant, John, saluting her first, and rendering her for three months the services of a maid. — Learn from Mary, and sincerely ask her to obtain for you the virtue of humility. IV. When Mary was praised by her cousin and called blessed, she turned the praises at once to God and gives Him all the honor. — When we do any good, we should always give the honor to God, not to ourselves, as the prophet says: Not to us, not to us, but to thy name give glory! V. When Mary entered into Zachary's house, wonderful grace entered with her. The infant John leaped for joy, because sanctifying grace was then given to him, before he was born; Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and Zachary, St. John's father, was soon to be consoled by regaining the use of speech.

"It is then but true," exclaims St. Alphonsus Ligouri, "that through thy mediation, my Queen and Mother, God's graces are dispensed and souls sanctified! Forget me not, Oh! my beloved Mother Mary, forget not me, thy servant, who loves thee and places in thee all his hopes!"

EXPLANATION OF THE MAGNIFICAT

What does this canticle contain?

THE praise of God, Mary's gratitude and humility. In it she praises God, and rejoices that He saw the humility of His hand-maid, and made her the Mother of His only-begotten Son, and, therefore, all generations shall call her blessed. She says that God's mercy is great from generation to generation to those that fear Him: He humbles the proud and casts them down from their seat, which they had erected in their conceit, but gives His grace to the humble and exalts them: He richly fills those who hunger and thirst after virtue and heavenly treasures, but lets those who think themselves rich, go away empty; He receives all true Israelites for His worshipers and leads them to salvation, which He promised to their fathers. "God is mighty;" says St. Augustine, "if thou exaltest thyself, He turns from thee; if thou humblest thyself, He descends to thee."

SUPPLICATION O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living- God! who didst descend from the heights of heaven into the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, didst remain for nine months in it, deigning to visit and sanctify St. John through her, grant, that we may participate, through the practice of good works and especially of humility, in the fruits of Thy holy Incarnation.