

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

A journey of joy

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

Mary was excited. She was going to have a baby. She could hardly believe she was a mother.

Her relative, Elizabeth, was pregnant also. Elizabeth was much older than Mary.

"Elizabeth may need someone to be with her and help her," Mary thought to herself. "I'll go visit her. If I can help, I'll stay with her for a while."

Joseph, Mary's husband, was not excited with Mary's plan. "I'll miss you very much," he told Mary. "But I'm sure you will be a big help to Elizabeth. I wish you wouldn't go, but I want you to do what you feel is right."

"I'll miss you too, but I won't be gone that long, Joseph. Elizabeth really needs me to be with her now," Mary said.

The next morning Mary left Nazareth. She walked along the road to Elizabeth's town. It was a long, steep walk up into the hills of Judea.

Finally Mary saw Elizabeth's house. She ran to the door. It was open. So she ran inside. She found Elizabeth resting. Her husband, Zechariah, was in another room.

Elizabeth could hardly believe her eyes. "Mary!" she cried out. "Mary, it's so good to see you!" Elizabeth hugged Mary and kissed her. "You are a great woman, Mary," she said. "You are great because you trust God's promise to you." Elizabeth knew that God promised Mary would have a baby. Her baby was to be called God's son.

Mary was so happy she began to dance and sing. Elizabeth called her husband to come greet Mary. Zechariah came in. He hugged Mary.

The two watched and listened. Mary sang and danced. "My heart praises God. I am full of joy because of God, my savior."

Mary's eyes sparkled with happiness. Zechariah and Elizabeth smiled. They began to feel Mary's happiness.

"God who is great, has done great things for me," Mary sang as she danced around the room. "God's love never stops. The Lord is strong and caring."

Elizabeth and Zechariah looked at one another. "Mary sounds like one of the great women of our people," Elizabeth said.

"She seems like Hannah, the mother of Samuel," Zechariah answered.

Mary sang on. "God cares about the weak and the poor. God feeds the hungry. But he sends the rich and powerful away empty."

Mary stopped dancing and ended her song. "God never stops loving us, just as he promised Abraham and our ancestors."

Elizabeth and Zechariah were so happy Mary came to visit them. They had a special meal for Mary. They talked and talked until long after dark.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah until Elizabeth's baby was born. Then she went back home to Joseph to wait for the birth of her baby.

Story Hour biblical quotes — this week from Luke 1:39-56 — are paraphrased.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of numerous catechetical books and articles for children.)



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HOW ABOUT YOU?

- What made Mary dance for joy?
- Think of a time when a relative or friend brought a new baby to visit your family. Can you recall how you felt when you saw the infant? How did your family react?
- Why did Mary go to visit her cousin, Elizabeth? Did Joseph object to her journey?

Reading Corner:

There is hardly anything that brings more delight than to know that we give joy to others. But children wonder sometimes if they make their parents, brothers and sisters, or classmates and teachers happy. In the story "May I Visit," by Charlotte Zolotow, readers meet a little girl who wonders if her mother will want her to come and visit when she grows up. The child thinks she does many annoying things.

After reading the story, talk about how you give each other happiness. (Harper and Row. Available in many libraries.)



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