May 31

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Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Today the Catholic and Anglican churches commemorate the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
According to the Gospel of Luke, after Mary received the angel's announcement she set out for the hill country of Judah to pay a visit to her cousin Elisabeth, who was also expecting a child. Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist, became the forerunner of the Messiah.
God's presence dwells in Mary and she carries this presence into the world "with the exultation of desire and in the rush of her joy," as Ambrose comments. When John the Baptist leaps for joy in his mother's womb, Mary receives the recognition of Israel's prophets.
In the Latin Church, a commemoration of the Visitation began to be celebrated in the sixth century, on the third Sunday of Advent. The Franciscans introduced an official Feast of the Visitation in 1263. In 1389, Pope Boniface IX decreed its observance by the entire Western church and changed its date to July 2, the eighth day after the birth of John the Baptist, in an attempt to halt the Great Western Schism.
The date of May 31, which falls halfway between the Annunciation and the birth of John the Baptist, was chosen by the new Catholic calendar. This date marks the close of the month traditionally dedicated to Mary, and because it is biblically motivated, it has also been adopted by the Church of England.

PRAYER

Lord God,
before his birth, John the Prophet in his mother's womb
received the grace to recognize your Son in the womb of Mary:
grant that those who seek you without knowing you
may welcome your word and exult with joy
as they await the promised light,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Soph 3:14-18 (vigil); 2 Sam 6:1-15; Rom 12:9-16; Lk 1:39-45

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (23 basans/genbot):
Junia (1st cent.), companion of Andronicus (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Joachim Neander (d. 1680), poet at Breme
Johann Friedrich Flattich (d. 1797), theologian in Württemberg

MARONITES:
Hermias of Comana (2nd cent.), martyr
Petronilla (2nd-4th cent.), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Hermias of Comana, martyr