

**Gifts of the Visitation Project by ACCW, 2021**  
**Based on the book, *Gifts of the Visitation* by Denise Bossert**

**Session #2: Gift of Courage**

**Opening Quote:**

“Today is a time of mission and a time of courage! Courage to strengthen faltering steps, to recapture the enthusiasm of devoting oneself to the Gospel, of recovering confidence in the strength that the mission brings to bear. It is a time of courage, even if having courage does not mean having a guarantee of success. Courage is required of us in order to fight, not necessarily to win; in order to proclaim, not necessarily to convert. Courage is required of us in order to open ourselves to everyone, never diminishing the absoluteness and uniqueness of Christ, the one Savior of all. ...Today is a time for courage! Today courage is needed! May the Virgin Mary, model of the Church ‘that goes forth’ and of docility to the Holy Spirit, help us all to be, in the strength of our Baptism, missionary disciples in order to bring the message of salvation to the entire human family.” Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 10-23, 2016

**Scripture:**

*“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. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and 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 at 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.”*  
*Lk 1:39-45*

**Written Reflection:**

Mary, our Blessed Mother, was the most courageous woman who ever lived. She had the courage to say, “yes” to a seemingly impossible situation! But she placed her trust in the Holy Spirit. As Bossert writes: “No one in biblical history can match the *fiat*—the yes—of Mary, for she was a girl, barely a woman” (p. 25). Though most paintings of Mary depict her as quiet and demure, we wisely remember Mary as the strongest, most courageous woman who has ever lived! She believed and said YES to God’s will. We are thankful for Elizabeth, her cousin, for the two of them en-couraged one another to continue saying “yes” to the Holy Spirit! As Bossert reflects (p. 35): “How can I begin to follow Christ more courageously? Am I ready to respond to my calling even if others will not understand? What is my greatest fear? Am I ready to lay down that fear once and for all? What can I do today to activate the gift of courage that I received when I was confirmed?”

*“She is the handmaid of the Lord, and her courage is unparalleled. No one in biblical history can match the fiat—the yes—of Mary, for she was a girl, barely a woman.”*  
*Gifts of the Visitation, Bossert, p. 25.*

**Video Witness:**

*Gift of Courage* by Jennifer Clancy of Epiphany Parish, Mason City and Ann Kunst of St. Patrick, Clear Lake.

### **Video Reflection/Discussion Questions:**

Ann speaks to “rolling her eyes” when challenged to be courageous. Bossert writes, “How many of us roll our eyes when God asks something of us? How many of us say, ‘Not there, not me, not now’” (p. 28). When offered a job in ministry, though Ann initially rolled her eyes, she finally gave her assent, trusted in the Spirit, and courageously said, “yes.” Discuss: When have you rolled your eyes when asked to speak up or show up on behalf of our Lord? How have you sought courage in a difficult situation? When have you, like Mary, said, “yes” to the Holy Spirit? What keeps you from saying “yes” to God? Fear? Insecurity? Pride?

Jenny speaks to the power of friendship to give one another courage: For her, it was powerful knowing every time she and Ann came together in wonderful conversation, the Holy Spirit “was there with us, leading us to be there for each other, and giving us the words to say to each other to encourage each other to get through those challenging times.” Whether in ministry or in their personal lives, Jenny and Ann testify to the importance of having someone who en-courages us to grow deeper in our faith, to discern God’s call, and to live out God’s call—no matter how difficult. Discuss: When has someone en-couraged you? When have you or how will you en-courage another to share the good news of Jesus Christ? How will you en-courage a friend to say “yes” to the Holy Spirit?

Bossert writes: “Every faith journey requires moments of courage. If you haven’t been courageous for Christ, you probably aren’t fully stepping into the gifts of the visitation” (p. 29). Am I fully stepping into the gifts? Am I living out my call to missionary discipleship?

### **Challenge:**

Bossert writes, “Courage doesn't just happen. We have to will it, want it, and be open to it” (p. 34). We’ve been given the gift at Confirmation, but we must “activate” the gift of courage. Ann and Jenny challenge us, “Open your eyes and your heart to the gift of courage!”

### **Closing Prayer:**

“Lord, manifest a spirit of courage within me. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the anointing received at Confirmation, fill me with the spirit of courage. Give me the resolve to act when I must act, to speak when I must speak, and to set aside my own fears. I promise to follow the path marked out for me. I give everything to you—including my fears. May this offering pass through the loving hands of your mother. And may she, in turn, show us how to share you with the world. For your glory. Amen.”

*Gifts of the Visitation*, Bossert, p. 35.

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,

pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

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.