

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

Session #4: Gift of Readiness

Opening Quote:

“Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #127.

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:

Saint Mary MacKillop wrote: “Pray to be ever ready for God’s will, even when it takes you by surprise.” When Mary learned from the angel that Elizabeth was expecting, her heart felt an urgency to visit her. And Mary was ready to answer God’s call: Are you ready to serve God’s kingdom? Are you ready to be surprised by the wondrous works of God? Reflect with Bossert (p. 59): “What next thing is God asking me to embrace? Am I willing to say yes to whatever God has planned? Am I ready to abandon complacency and apathy, and exchange them for a spirit of readiness? Who does God want me to welcome into my life right now? Is there someone with gifts that will complement my own God-given gifts? Am I ready to spiritually befriend this person, fully, without jealousy, manipulation, or self-serving agendas?”

“So often, our own faith journeys follow this pattern. God sends, but he does not reveal everything all at once. We are asked to act, to move in faith. As we make an initial act of faith, we begin to understand what the next act of faith will be. The Lord leads us along the journey step by step, always giving us the opportunity to accept his unfolding will.”

Gifts of the Visitation, Bossert, p. 52.

Video Witness:

Gift of Readiness by Karen Bonfig and Joyce Welch, both of the Good Shepherd Catholic Cluster, Ionia, New Hampton and North Washington.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

The witness of Karen and Joyce, who are such good friends over so many years, touches our hearts. God prepared and readied each of them for over 40 years, in preparation for their ministry together. Oh, what the Lord has done!!!

Karen introduces their “visitation story” many years earlier. Joyce then recounts how after forty years of teaching and feeling unhappy, she was “jobless and in tears.” Karen was working two

jobs and overwhelmed as both an art teacher and pastoral associate. Have you been overwhelmed or unhappy with your position or in your state of life? To whom did you turn?

Karen and Joyce had been friends for many years (with Karen as the Director of Religious Education), and both were unhappy with the toll their jobs were taking on them. They each were praying and searching; they each were ready for something new. “God equips each of us for the work he sets before us” (p. 57). But we also have “to be quick to do the work if he desires it, and to let it go when the call is over” (p. 57). When have you been equipped for God’s work? When have you also known that a specific “work” of God was over? Was it easy to let it go?

Joyce reflected on accepting the new position with Karen: “Just as Mary was ready to accept the Lord’s direction, I also had to be ready to accept a new direction in my life. I never imagined myself working in a church office, but I trusted in the Lord.” When has God done something in your life better than you could even imagine? Did you trust immediately?

Joyce, so thankful for Karen, commented: “To know I was the answer to someone else’s prayer was amazingly humbling and reminded me how important it is to be ready for whatever the Lord calls me to do.” Do you know of a time when you were the answer to someone’s prayer? How did it feel? Discuss the power of prayer in readiness.

It seems the Lord had been preparing both Karen and Joyce for their final years of ministry to be filled with joy—and they were ready! As Karen said, “Together, we were able to accomplish much more than we could have done alone to assist all generations to a closer relationship with Christ.” Karen continued by sharing “they were the best years of her ministry.” Karen and Joyce found the sweet spot where God was calling them to serve, and how they were readied. When and how have you experienced this in your life?

Challenge:

Pray for God to present you with the next step and the willingness to say, “yes” to Him. Are you ready to go where God calls you? What is the spirit of readiness speaking to your heart? Will you make haste, instead of hesitancy, to answer God’s call? How is God asking you to pray for someone who needs a new direction?

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, give me a spirit of readiness for whatever you desire from me and for me. May all that I do—and every good thing that it might render—pass through the loving hands of your mother and be placed before you as a perfect and holy gift. May Mary, in turn, show me how to share you with the world so that I am ready always to bear you to another. For your glory. Amen.”
Gifts of the Visitation, Bossert, p. 60.

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.