

Today is a day of remembrance. In the church, we celebrate the 2nd joyful mystery of the Rosary when Mary goes in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Both women are expecting, and they express their joy in words. Both children in the womb are aware of each other and use actions to express their joy.

Let us begin with Elizabeth. “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Mary is blessed to be the mother of Jesus, the Mother of God. Jesus is blessed that Mary has accepted the invitation of the Angel Gabriel. We echo Elizabeth’s joy each time we pray the Hail Mary. And then Elizabeth asks a profound question that draws a prayerful response from Mary. “And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Mary’s response is full of joy. “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.”

- As a devout Jew Mary had prayed for the coming of the Messiah and through the Angel Gabriel, Mary learns that she is the pivotal human to help fulfill the plan of God by her yes in welcoming Jesus into her womb.
- Since “the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity . . . the Church confesses that Mary is truly ‘Mother of God’ (Theotokos)” (CCC 495 [citing the Council of Ephesus]).
- The world does not know this, but Mary understands. How could she not be filled with joy knowing that she carries within her womb the savior of mankind, the one who will conquer sin and death.

We echo Mary’s joy each time we pray the Magnificat.

From the concealment of the womb, Jesus radiates light and joy. Mary feels it in her bones. Her soul is lifted, and she is now able to share that light and joy as Jesus speaks to John through his actions. John expresses his reception of the Good News from Jesus by leaping for joy in the womb of Elizabeth. This exchange of actions between two cousins foreshadows the resurrection, when the concealed, the buried body of Jesus descends into the total darkness of death to radiate light and joy to the dead so that they may rise from the netherworld to a new and eternal life leaping for joy.

Today is also a day of remembrance. Throughout the nation, we celebrate Memorial Day and the sacrifices of the military who have laid down their lives to defend our freedom. Countless veterans died on the battlefield. Others came home with the scars and the invisible injuries of war and their deaths came later from the traumas of youth that unfolded over the course of their lives. “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:12-13).

The song of Mary and the freedom that comes through Christ echoes the highest ideals for which the military fought and died for.

The young of our nation have offered their lives in every generation.

They have shown the strength of their arms scattering tyranny and the proud in their conceit.

With God’s help they have cast down the mighty from their thrones and liberated the oppressed.

They hungered for freedom and willingly sacrificed their lives that unjust aggressors might be defeated and sent away empty.

We pray for an end to every war and every conflict. We pray that the joy of Mary and Elizabeth, the joy of Jesus and John may shine light on the darkness of this world for true and lasting peace.