



## The Two Women of the Annunciation

By Marjorie George

Mary and Elizabeth: A teenager and an older woman with no children who, as scripture has it, was “getting on in years” (Luke 1:7). Angels appear, the holy Spirit intervenes, and each becomes pregnant. It could not be more unlikely.

Elizabeth greets her pregnancy with a sense of vindication - the Lord has looked favorably upon her and taken away the years of disgrace she has suffered because she was barren. Mary greets the news of her pregnancy with perplexity and apprehension. But she, too, accepts the will of the Lord.

The record does not tell us why the pregnant Mary “went with haste” to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Maybe she needed to get out of Dodge and water-well gossip about her “condition.” Maybe she went to help her pregnant cousin. Maybe it was just what she needed to do. But when Mary enters her cousin’s house, immediately Elizabeth’s baby recognizes the Christ in Mary and “jumps for joy” (Luke 1:41.) John the Baptist, as Elizabeth’s baby will be called, even

now is preparing the way for the revelation of Jesus as God Incarnate - first to Jesus' mother, Mary, and later to the world.

And it is this that elicits the signature hymn of Advent - the Magnificat. It is in the coming together of the two women that Mary recognizes the full import of what is about to happen to her and to the world. Mary's words echo those of Elizabeth - "This is the Lord's doing - He has looked favorably on me."

Elizabeth calls forth in Mary, solidifies for Mary, God's claim on her life. If Mary was still doubtful about what was happening to her, Elizabeth's baby confirms it.

Old Elizabeth and young Mary each carry a piece of the Kingdom of God. The promises God made to His people Israel through Abraham, calling them to be a light to the nations, are about to be seen by the radiance of God Incarnate in Jesus. The New Covenant does not replace the Old Covenant - it illumines it in a new way.

The question for us becomes, what new thing is God calling us to birth, even now in our elder years, and where is God calling us to support others who are struggling to determine their own path?