

A season of faith, a season of fun - that's Christmas! The Christmas day is a very significant day and one of those joyous events that we celebrate the world over.

### Mary Meets the Angel Gabriel

Joseph was not the only one who had a wonderful visitor.

One morning, very early, Mary got up and went out to the garden. It was still dark. Flowers were wet with dew.

Mary bowed her head and made a prayer of thanks for the lovely morning. She was happy to be alive on such a beautiful day.

Suddenly she heard a strange voice.

"Hail, Mary!" said the voice.

The voice was deep and beautiful, like the sound of music. It was different from the voices Mary usually heard.

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The girl looked up. There before her stood a glorious angel. He seemed to be made of the morning light. He held a shining sword in his hand. Yet his face was very kind.

'You are Gabriel, the angel of the Lord,' said the young girl. She bowed to the visitor from Heaven.

The angel nodded his head.



At Christmas, it is traditional to exchange kisses beneath the mistletoe tree. In ancient Scandinavia, mistletoe was associated with peace and friendship. That may account for the custom of "kissing beneath the mistletoe".

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"Mary," he said, "you are a very fortunate woman. The Lord has chosen you for a great honor."

She trembled and kept silent. The angel spoke gently.

"Do not be afraid, Mary. Before long you shall have a baby boy. He will grow into the greatest man who ever lived. You will name him Jesus. He will be the Savior of the world, and will be called 'The Son of God.' "

Mary answered the angel in a low voice. "I am the servant of the Lord. I will praise Him for giving me this Holy Child."

The angel disappeared.

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"Have I dreamed this?" the girl wondered. "Can this wonderful thing be true?"

Mary wished she could talk about the angel's visit.

"I shall go over to the hill country and visit Cousin Elizabeth. I will tell her about the angel's visit and his promise."

Mary asked Joseph if he would take her over to visit her cousin Elizabeth. It was not safe for the young girl to travel alone.

Wild animals ran in the hills. Robbers hid in the shadows.

Kind Joseph went with Mary to the town of Juda where Elizabeth lived.

"I must hurry home now, for I have work to do," he said. "I will be after you when your visit is over."

Cousin Elizabeth had been married for many years. She was rather old now. All this time she had wished and prayed that she and her husband might have a baby. Now her wish was going to come true.

Elizabeth saw her young cousin and came running to meet her. She was very happy, and she seemed young again. Her face and her voice were glad.

"Hail, Mary!" she called. "You are blessed among all women. Your baby will be the blessed one."

Mary was surprised that she knew. "That is what the angel told me," she said. "I came to tell you about it. How did you know about this wonderful secret?"

"I cannot tell you how I knew," answered Elizabeth. "The words came to me when I saw you. It was as if an angel whispered them."

The two cousins had a happy visit. "Stay here with me until my baby IS born," Elizabeth begged her young cousin. , 'You and I have wonderful things to talk about."

Mary visited Elizabeth for several weeks.

Then Elizabeth's baby was born. The baby was a little boy, and they named him John.

John was a strong, beautiful little baby.

Mary helped take care of him.

"Now I must go back to my home and Joseph," she said one day. "He will be coming for me."

Mary was happy as she went back home with Joseph.

"Some day I shall have a baby boy of my own!" she thought. "I shall love him very much!"

She remembered the angel's promise.

"He said my baby would be the most blessed child ever born," she remembered. Her heart sang with happiness.

Joseph smiled at her. "The birds sing sweetly today," he said. "The flowers seem sweeter and brighter than usual, too! I think they are glad to see you coming home!"

"I think they are glad about my baby, too," thought Mary, happily.