

Parish Visitation



Lent/Easter 2010

What is a Visitation?

We often associate the word Visitation with the visit of Mary to Elizabeth in Luke's gospel. In fact, the theme of visitation runs throughout Luke's gospel because his message is that God 'has visited and redeemed his people'. The birth of Jesus was the great moment of visitation and so it is little wonder that visitations (formal and informal) have always been a part of the life of the Church.



In the early Church, Christians frequently visited one another to share hospitality, to read the scriptures, to break bread (eucharist), to pray and to minister to one another. By the sixth century, there were formal pastoral visitations when bishops visited their congregations. As the Church grew, bishops often commissioned others to assist with the visitation process.

In some places, it is still the custom for the priest (or deacons and laity) to visit the homes of the congregation either during the forty days of Lent or the fifty days of Eastertide to read the scriptures, to pray and minister, and to bless the homes. It is a reminder that God has visited his people and that when we visit one another in the name of Jesus, we are also meeting in the presence of the Lord who visited and redeemed his people.

In the Church in Wales, the bishops and archdeacons carry out regular formal and informal visitations of their dioceses, parishes, cathedrals, and religious communities, and I am now inviting the parish clergy to carry out a visitation of their congregations. Where they have large congregations they may be assisted by lay visitors.

I pray that it will be a time of great blessing upon you and your homes.

+ *Norma*

What happens at a Visitation?

The parish visit to each home lasts 30-40 minutes.



The purpose of the visit is pastoral. It is a time to share God's word and to pray for God's blessing upon your life as a disciple of Jesus and for your home.

The priest or lay visitor will read a passage of scripture and share its message with you. You can also share your own thoughts about it. You may wish to have your own bible with you.

Your visitor will ask you if there is anything for which you would particularly like prayer - perhaps for yourself or for relatives and friends or for things that particularly concern you. Your visitor will pray with you.

If the visitor is a priest and you feel in need of particular healing, you can ask to be anointed with holy oil.

The visit ends with a prayer for the blessing of your home and you will be given a card as a reminder of the visit. There will then be a short time to chat informally.

Please feel free to welcome relatives, friends and neighbours to be present at the visit.

Please try to avoid any interruptions during the visit and please switch the TV off.



Be relaxed about it – it is your home!

You may wish to offer the visitor a cup of tea, coffee or a soft drink and a biscuit at the end of the visit – but please, nothing else!

Order of Service for the Visit

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Peace be to this home and to all who live here.
And also with you.

Bible reading and sharing.

A time of prayer, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

A prayer for God's blessing on the home:

Visit, Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live here with the gift of your love and grant that they may manifest your love [to each other and] to all whose lives they touch. Guide, comfort and strengthen them; and preserve them in peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

May God the Father grant you wisdom and grace;
May God the Son who sanctified a home at Nazareth,
fill you with love;
May God the Holy Spirit, who has made the Church one family,
keep you in peace.
And [may] the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon this home now and always.
Amen.

