

Reimagining spaces for the charism



**SSJ Chapter Last Phase
Cájar, April 4, 2023**

Moment of Prayer 1

A REINVENTED ALLIANCE (Rt 1,16-3,5)

a.- Rediscovering ourselves

When the first alliance is wounded, each person reacts differently. Orpah decides to return to the old and stay with his people and his gods. Naomi decides to return to the old, perhaps with the only hope of dying in the town of her ancestors. Ruth is the only one who takes a truly different step: she does not want to go back anywhere; Ruth decides to go to a new place, to enter a new town and discover a new God.

Naomi finds it hard to accept the newness that Ruth brings and tries to dissuade her. She, who feels the weight of old age in her gut, is not ready to welcome the youth and the newness that insist on coming to her. In the life of institutions there are also stages in which novelty seems to be a threat, a source of imbalance.

Naomi and Ruth will have to rediscover each other and redefine their roles. How to build healthy and life-generating relationships when circumstances lead us to live in very reduced contexts? What risks appear and how do we face them?

Ruth and Naomi set out on the road to Bethlehem. The road helps them to go through the necessary process of rediscovering themselves, and to do it from their own reality, without fear of showing themselves as they are and as they are. On the roads we travel as a Congregation, where do I find nourishment, companionship and tenderness?

b.- Arriving as we are

"This is how Naomi returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth" (1:22), in this way and in no other way. Naomi arrives feeling empty and unhappy because of Yahweh. Ruth arrives to suddenly become "the Moabitess", a foreigner. And they arrive at a precise moment: "at the beginning of the barley harvest" (1:22). The God whom Naomi blames for all her ills has already become providence for them before they arrive in Bethlehem. It is time to be grateful for those glimmers of hope that open unexpectedly in our own life and in the life of the Congregation.

c.- Imagining new beginnings

Arriving in Bethlehem, Naomi is still too despondent to act, but Ruth once again takes the initiative: "Let me go to the field to glean" (2:2). She, the foreigner, the one who knows no one, the one who does not know how the fields of that country are worked, rolls up her sleeves and sets to work to ensure her survival and that of her mother-in-law.

Ruth begins to glean behind the reapers. A foreign woman behind the male villagers. I can wonder which sisters have acted like Ruth in these years, which sisters have helped us out of certain collective despondencies thanks to their determination, their audacity and their endurance.

On that day, and on the following days, Ruth and Naomi will have something to eat. "Blessed be Yahweh who never ceases to show his kindness to the living and the dead" (2:20). Con-vocation makes us responsible for the life and vocation of our sisters. Our fidelity sustains each other.

Time is also doing its work. Ruth "stayed with the servants of Boaz to glean until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were over, and she continued to live with her mother-in-law" (2:23). Sometimes we would like to be ahead of time, to jump over time. It is time to open ourselves to the difficult dance of being in step with one another, some needs with others, some projects with others...

d.- Accompanying each other

And it is only now, after the harvest, that Naomi begins to react, she recovers the sense of her own responsibility and takes the initiative: "My daughter, should I not provide you with a secure position that suits you" (3:1). It is time to recognize the role played in the Congregation by the younger women, those who arrived less time ago and brought another culture and other ways of understanding life, the mission... And, at the same time, it is also time to let the ancient wisdom, the sources of the charism, the whisper of Bonifacia and Butinyà be awakened and reactivated....

Naomi's creativity, which had been anesthetized by pain, is awakened, and she is enabled to imagine new ways for the future. The beginnings of certain projects are uncertain, it is difficult to formulate them, they include shadows that will have to be purified with time. We will correct the course if we make mistakes, we will purify the inconsistencies or the gaps with respect to the Gospel. But we will get there together... if we continue to keep in step along the way.