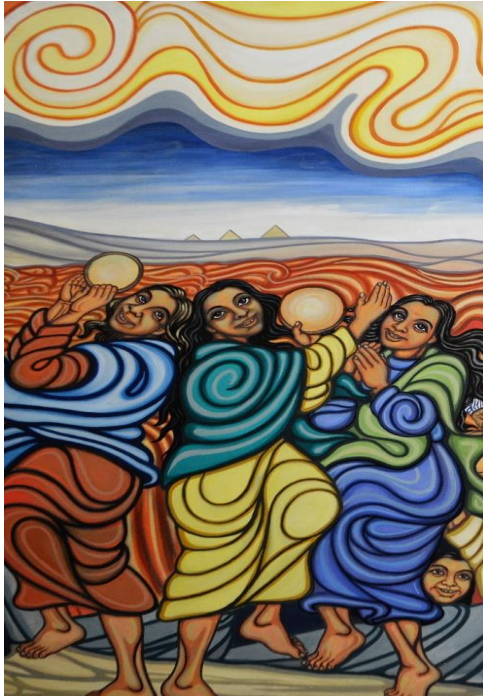


Reimagining spaces for the charism



SSJ Chapter Last Phase
Cájar, April 4, 2023

Moment of Prayer 2

1.- AN OPEN ALLIANCE (Rt 3,6-4,10)

This common project is not given to us for ourselves, but for the life of the world. Therefore, the covenant that is re-invented is a covenant that opens up.

The text shows that Naomi's strategy makes a third character come to open and widen the alliance between the two women: Boaz, a man who passes almost unnoticed in the midst of two great women in the history of Israel (husband of Ruth and son of Rahab, the woman who helped the Israelites to take Jericho).

At a time when the covenant seems to be running out of steam, the presence of the "other" offers a new continuity. The fruitfulness of our covenant also passes through unsuspected mediations. The world, certain persons or mission realities, act as "other" "Boaz" who take us out of certain sterile self-centeredness.

Boaz's gaze is clear and knows how to see beyond appearances. In his old age, Boaz understands that joining the alliance will be a source of life for him as well. The alliance, by definition, harbors reciprocity. We too are a source of life for others, with our shadows and frailties. To be grateful, because we are not "superwomen" sent to rescue the poor, but poor women who in our relationship with others are being saved and becoming a channel of salvation. Our alliance opens up more and more, as we allow ourselves to be questioned and embraced by the world....

At a given moment, Ruth becomes a negotiable commodity: her person is linked to the plot of land, she is sold as part of the property. Therein lies the fundamental difference between Boaz and that relative who has the right of ransom in the first place. The latter sees in the ransom "a bad bargain," and therefore rejects it, while Boaz sees "the person he ransoms" and the bond he wishes to establish with her: "I also acquire Ruth to be my wife" (4:10). In a utilitarian world like ours, it is the function of consecrated life to point constantly to the value of what is essential, of what cannot be measured or quantified, of what is gratuitous, of what is useless.

2. A SECOND ALLIANCE (Ruth 4:11-22)

Boaz does not see in Ruth the barrenness that she had lived for ten years with her first husband. He bets on her generative capacity and takes her "in order to perpetuate the name of the deceased" (4:10). We are not here to make a body survive, but to live and to make it live... without worrying too much about the results. Sometimes, it is precisely when we let go of our anxiety for the future that the miracle of contagion occurs, of other people knocking at the door. Not only women who feel called to religious life, but many others who are touched by the charism.

The call to fruitfulness is ratified by the blessing of the entire community, which recognizes in the person of Ruth the possibility of becoming a pillar of Israel. Her character as a foreigner ceases to be an obstacle and she is incorporated into the people as a subject with full rights, on the same level as the matriarchs: "May

Yahweh make the woman who enters your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel" (4:11).

The fruitfulness of the people who welcome and integrate Ruth is expressed in the birth of Obed, the son of Ruth and Boaz. This child comes to fill the void left in the lineage by the death of Ruth's first husband. But he also becomes Naomi's comfort and support in her old age. She, whose womb was dry and empty, "took the child and laid him in her bosom and nursed him" (4:16). Ruth shares her motherhood with her mother-in-law, being once again for her "better than seven sons" (4:15). The mission is not ours: we are simply sent, very necessary but never indispensable. For this reason, the fruits of the mission do not belong to us either. Those "children" that are born as we go through the communities and tasks are not ours, even if from time to time we have a certain tendency to appropriate them.

This unexpected fruitfulness has made its way through many difficulties, but it becomes a sure link in the history of salvation: "Salmon begat Boaz from Rachab, Boaz begat Obed from Ruth, Obed begat Jesse, Jesse begat King David (...) and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, called Christ" (Mt 1:5-6.16). In this genealogy are inscribed each of our names and the name of the Congregation.

From Chapter to Chapter, our covenant bears fruit and dreams of new sowings: it is time to continue disposing ourselves to the creativity of the Ruah, to allow her, with her criteria, to reinvent with us once again our covenant and help us to reimagine, in synodality, spaces for the charism.