

Reimagining spaces for the charism



SSJ Chapter Last Phase
Cájar, April 3, 2023

Moment of Prayer 2

1.- A WOUNDED ALLIANCE

The story of Ruth and Naomi starts from the realization of a first alliance that has been deeply wounded. This wounded alliance is played out by three women, and each of them has a very different rereading of the emptiness that inundates her.

Naomi:

- She closes herself completely to life and looks only at what she lacks: "Do I still have children in my womb? (...) I am too old". (1,11.12)
- For her the time has come for her to return to Judah, to Bethlehem, and to die in the land of her ancestors.
- Besides, it is time to return alone: Naomi insistently tries to get rid of her daughters-in-law, who symbolize a terribly painful past, not only because of what she has lost, but also because she understands that the blame for her loss lies with Yahweh: "I have departed full, Yahweh returns me empty; why do you still call me Naomi, when Yahweh bears witness against me and Saddyay has made me wretched" (1:21).
- However, in the depths of her affliction Naomi retains the capacity for good and wishes that her daughters-in-law could rebuild their lives: she does not accuse them of barrenness, she does not blame them for not having children, nor does she tell them that they have cared for their husbands badly. "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD have mercy on you as you have had mercy on me" (1:8).

Orpa:

- Noemi's words, her freedom towards her daughters-in-law, allows each one to make her process and her choice.
- Orpá recognizes that Naomi is right, that it is time to go back to the old ways, to the known.
- Orpá makes a choice for life and for the future by choosing what she already knows. She prefers to keep the positive memory of the link with Naomi but to start again alone, with her strength, with her gods.

Ruth:

- Before the same emptiness experienced by Naomi and Orpah, Ruth is the only one who undertakes a different route: for her it is not "time to return" to the past but "time to go" towards an absolutely unknown future.
- Ruth connects with her emptiness and chooses to let it be filled in a mysterious way: not where she knows, not how she knows, but by definitively linking her existence to Naomi's with a determination that admits no reply: "Where you go, I will go; where you dwell, I will dwell. Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God" (1:16). Ruth does not remain in death, but opens herself resolutely to life: "I will go, I will dwell..." (1:16).
- At the same time, Ruth is profoundly realistic: "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried" (1:17); death has taught her the weight of finitude and the

value of life. She knows she will die, but she knows she will not die alone.

- With her determination and her trust, Ruth makes possible a new alliance with Naomi and will become a link in the history of salvation.

2. WOUNDS IN A WOUNDED WORLD

When we honestly contemplate our life and the life of the Congregation, it is likely that we feel that our covenant, like that of Naomi with her daughters-in-law, is wounded in some places. These cracks, far from incapacitating us from continuing on our journey, reveal to us our true measure as creatures, allowing us to open ourselves in a humble and realistic way to our wounded world, especially to those who suffer most. Wounds connect us to the emerging reality, often terribly difficult, and engage us with it in the awareness of our own smallness.

Wounds help us to understand, sometimes painfully, that we are not "superwomen sent to the poor," but poor women ourselves, who receive the grace to walk with others on paths of liberation and covenant, facing our world:

- The wound of justice
- The wound of caring
- The wound of hospitality
- The wound of fraternity

It is time to feel and taste the invitation to deepen our covenant. That personal alliance with the Congregation, and also the alliance of the Congregation with the world and with history. Time to detect the fruits and to be grateful for them. Time to feel and name the wounds, and to present them simply to the Lord so that his Spirit may prepare us to discern and re-imagine spaces for the charism.