

## A Cloud of Witnesses: Week 5

### Love and friendship – the story of Naomi and Ruth

#### Expressing the faithfulness of God

Do not press me to leave you, or to turn back from following you!  
Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.  
'Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried.  
May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well,  
if even death parts me from you!' [*Ruth's words to Naomi*]

Who has stood by you – whether in a single moment when you most needed that support, or over a difficult season of your life, or over years of friendship?

- As someone comes to mind, give thanks for them.
- What did you receive through them?
- How has the faithfulness of God shone through them?
- Be open to any way you are invited to stand by someone in the course of this week.



#### Little details of love

Holiness is not some self-made perfection of practice, nor does it reside in access to hidden knowledge of God only acquired by the few. Instead it is:

'a journey in community, side by side with others...

A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another...is a place where the risen Lord is present.

[Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 144-145]

- This week, notice and savour any little details of love that you receive.
- Look for any opportunity to practice this care and attention in your relationships with others.

### Resting in the goodness of God

He wants us to know that he takes heed not only of things which are noble and great, but also of those which are little and small, of humble people and simple, of this one and that one. [Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, Long Text 32]

Use Julian of Norwich's encouragement above as a starting point for your prayer  
Begin by resting in the goodness of God.

Breathe in this presence – let everything go into the simple act of your breathing.  
You are in God, and God is in you.

Take the time you need to begin this slowing down...letting go...allowing God to simply be there, loving you.

If you feel disturbed by your restless thoughts, rather than fight them, let them go into God. Let your lack of stillness go to God. There is nothing here about achievement. However you are, you are in God and God is in you.

Trust whatever comes up in this time of stillness into the goodness of God.

- an experience from the day
- your awareness of the need of someone in your life
- your own need

You don't need many words – God doesn't need convincing.

Let each person or need rest in the goodness of God.

You also need this rest – be generous in allowing yourself time to be here.



### **A Cloud of Witnesses**

Alongside Ruth and Naomi there are many other Old Testament 'witnesses.'  
Here are some who are perhaps less well known:

- Abigail [1 Samuel 25: 1-42]
- Balaam and his donkey [Numbers 22-23.11]
- Hannah [1 Samuel 1 & 2.1-11]
- Hagar [Genesis 21.1-21]
- Micaiah [1 Kings 22.1-28]
- Nehemiah: [Nehemiah 1, 2 and following]
- Naaman and his servants [2 Kings 5.1-14]

Choose one of these stories and see how it speaks to you.