



Ambassadors of a **WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD**

MEDITATION 2 : Be connected: Sister- and Brotherhood

After vocation, connection is the next stop on our way. Which meaning do we give to brotherhood and sisterhood in our lives? What does it mean to a brother / sister?

- **Lectio: Ruth and Noomi (Ruth 1,1-19) [CEV]**

Before Israel was ruled by kings, Elimelech from the tribe of Ephrath lived in the town of Bethlehem. His wife was named Naomi, and their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. But when their crops failed, they moved to the country of Moab. And while they were there, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with only her two sons.

Later, Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. About ten years later, Mahlon and Chilion also died. Now Naomi had no husband or sons.

When Naomi heard that the Lord had given his people a good harvest, she and her two daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and go to Judah. As they were on their way there, Naomi said to them, "Don't you want to go back home to your own mothers? You were kind to my husband and sons, and you have always been kind to me. I pray that the Lord will be just as kind to you. May he give each of you another husband and a home of your own."

Naomi kissed them. They cried and said, "We want to go with you and live among your people." But she replied, "My daughters, why don't you return home? What good will it do you to go with me? Do you think I could have more sons for you to marry? You must go back home, because I am too old to marry again. Even if I got married tonight and later had more sons, would you wait for them to become old enough to marry? No, my daughters! Life is harder for me than it is for you, because the Lord has turned against me." They cried again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth held on to her. Naomi then said to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods! Why don't you go with her?" Ruth answered,

"Please don't tell me
to leave you
and return home!
I will go where you go,
I will live where you live;
your people will be my people,
your God will be my God.
17 I will die where you die
and be buried beside you.
May the Lord punish me
if we are ever separated,
even by death!"

When Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her to go back. They reached Bethlehem, and the whole town was excited to see them.

- **Meditatio**

This little book can be found after the book of Judges and prior to the books 1 and 2 Samuel. It has been given this own place, for it builds a bridge between these two books.

It's a wonderful story. The book is a universal book. It only includes four chapters, but the course is magnificent. In this book, women play a key role. The Book of Ruth can be seen next to the stories of Deborah, Judith, Esther and Susanna. These are strong women who are of great importance for the future of the people of Israel. The book that we read today is a very special book because it was named after a foreign woman. A couple leaves the region because of famine, they go to the country of Moab. Their sons marry local women. The father dies, the sons die. The three women remain behind. The mother (Naomi) decides to return to Bethlehem. One of two daughters, Ruth, decides to go along. We follow her on her way.

In this book, the names are important. The name of the husband Elimelech means 'God is king'. Bethlehem means 'House of Bread'. Noomi means 'Lovely'. Ruth is 'companion'. We will light a few themes from this passage. The whole book includes more. Hunger is an important driver in the mobility of people. When a country is ravaged by famine, people go on the road. This is the start of this book.

Naomi returns to her homeland after her husband and her sons died. The foreign land has nothing left to offer her. Moreover, God sees to his people. There is food again. Anyone who reads the whole book will find that food is only the outside of the story. The real content is about a God who looks after his people. He shows us how people can take care for each other.

Another topic is sisterhood. Naomi returns to her homeland. Her daughters go along. Naomi sends them back. Orpah goes back, but Ruth refuses. She will not break the bond with Naomi. To confirm this, she speaks a covenant text.

We now read the text again

- **Contemplatio**

After each part of the following text, we will be silent for a moment. At the end there is a silence of 10 minutes, ending with instrumental music.

1. After vocation, connection is the next stop on our way. Which meaning do we give to brotherhood and sisterhood in our lives? What does it mean to a brother / sister? What has it brought you? Why does God call you? What talent did he give to your heart?
2. Famine is an incentive to move. Job search is another motive. We see people wandering around the world. People looking for food. People looking for work. What hunger is driving you in your life now? What desire do you have?
3. Sharing your bread is one thing, but to establish justice is another necessity. 'The world's problems are too big for me', is a slogan often heard. It is a resistance to taking action. God invites us to find our own, personal answer to the question: Why does the Lord need me? What can I do for others in the name of Christ?
4. Bethlehem is a House of Bread, but above all, it is the place where justice is achieved. Your talents are not asking for big acts. Your goal may not be far away. Ruth did not have to look far away to see where she was needed. The person who was close to her, needed her. Think about your own environment, and ask yourself who needs you: who is waiting for my company?
5. Naomi returns to her homeland. All people are attached to their homeland, their fatherland and mother tongue. Any foreign person may be perceived as a threat. But Ruth shows she is a real sister to Naomi by her acts of solidarity. What fear do we feel towards strangers? How do we overcome this fear?
6. Every meeting is an opportunity for enrichment and expansion of the worldwide sister-and brotherhood. Sisterhood and brotherhood grow through concrete actions. How do you see sister and brotherhood growing? How do you feel about being an ambassador of a Worldwide Brotherhood?
7. To find God in everything and in others. This is what the last theme is about. God reveals himself in the good deeds of others. 'Where love and friendship is, there is God', is the title of a song. By making Brotherhood and Sisterhood a reality, God is visible through us. It is possible to discover God-in-us. Which traces of God do you see in yourself and in the people around you?

- **Collatio (sharing)**

Questions:

1. What do you want to share about what you have been doing lately with the intentions you made last meeting?
2. What answers were born in you during the meditation?
3. Which desire (which hunger) is driving you?
4. Where, or in whom, do you meet God?
5. How are you building a worldwide brother- and sisterhood?

- **Oratio (praying)**

What do you need from God, for making your dream come true?
Can you write down what makes you grateful, in meeting other people?

- **Creatio (creative process)**

When a brother or sister comes to visit us, what do we do? You share your meal! After these national meetings we are having now, brothers and sisters from 7 countries meet each other. As a prelude thereto, we exchange recipes: A recipe for a typical meal from your country / region. Divide the following tasks in your group: Describe the ingredients (ambassadors from other countries might not be familiar with some ingredients!), give the recipe, and find (or make) some pictures of this dish. Can you also tell something more about? Is it a daily meal or a special meal for a specific occasion? Does it have a special meaning? Or does it just taste good?

Place your description, recipe and pictures on the ambassadors' Facebook page to 'share your meal' with ambassadors from other countries!

- **Operatio (making concrete plans)**

Where is your brother? God asks Cain. Building brotherhood and sisterhood is an important theme in Scripture. But there are many reasons and arguments to find for not contributing to it. What's your counter argument? Read again Genesis 4.1 to 9 and Psalm 133. See also Ezra 9 (especially verse 12) and Nehemiah 13.1-3 and 13.23 to 31, which expressly prohibits the marriage with a foreign woman.

What can you do in your daily life, with what you've discovered in meditation and in your conversations with others today? Your plan will have a role in the next meeting.