

Meditations on the Book of Ruth

by Barbara A. Schoeneberger

The Douay-Reims Bible notes that Ruth was a Gentile, a convert to Judaism, and by marrying Boaz, became the great-grandmother of King David, and thus an ancestor of Christ and an “illustrious figure of the Gentile church”. This Bible story foreshadows, among other things, the great gift of the Holy Eucharist to God’s people, the bringing of the Gospel and salvation to the Gentiles, and the relationship of the soul to a loving God.

In the time of the Judges ruling Israel, a famine took the land. Elimelech (meaning “my God is King”) lived at Bethlehem (“House of Bread”) in the territory of the tribe of Juda. He went to the land of Moab (meaning “uncertain”) taking his wife, Naomi (“my delight”), and his two sons. The Moabites were descendants of Lot and worshipped idols. Long ago they had forgotten the God of Abraham. “My God is King” from the “House of Bread” brought faithful Jewish practice and beliefs to the “Uncertain”.

While the family stayed in Moab, Elimelech died. His sons married Moabite women, Orpha (meaning and etymology uncertain) and Ruth (“lady friend”). For ten years they lived together in peace and happiness, and then the two sons died. This was, in the eyes of the Hebrews, a catastrophe because neither son had sons and there was no one to carry on Elimelech’s name. He was cut off from posterity and the possibility of being an ancestor of the Messiah. Likewise, the women were left without male protection which was dangerous in those days.

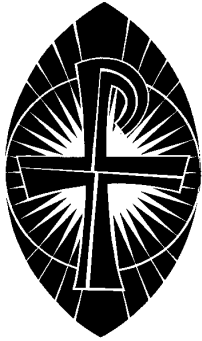
Soon after the deaths, Naomi heard that God had blessed the Jews and given them food. Having nothing to tie her to Moab, she departed with Ruth and Orpha for Juda. Along the road, Naomi showed loving concern for her daughters-in-law, urging them both to return to their families where they would be well cared for. She believed that God was punishing her and she did not want the two women to suffer also. Naomi had nothing to offer them among her people. They were poor and she had no husband nor sons to care for her or the two women. It would be better for Orpha and Ruth to find husbands among their own people. The manner in which she put it to the women indirectly said that if they were to go with her, they would have to give up the false gods they had formerly worshipped and worship the Lord God of Israel.

Orpha returned to her kinsmen but Ruth, showing a perfect example of the efficacious grace of God, said: “Be not against me, to desire that I should leave thee and depart: for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go: and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

“The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die: and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee.”

So Ruth, the Gentile, embraced the Hebrew religion by embracing Naomi and refusing to part from her. It would have been much easier for Ruth to go back. She took the hard way and went to a strange land with strange customs, accepting whatever poverty and difficulties would await the two of them. Naomi must have been a most virtuous and kind woman, a good example to Ruth, to cause Ruth to want to stay with her and share her fate. As St. Francis of Assisi once said, “Preach the Faith and, when necessary, use words.” Our Holy Father has continually urged us, throughout his pontificate, to evangelize the world. Naomi evangelized by being a good Jewess. Naomi could not have known that centuries from then Jesus would be born out of the family of Elimelech from a Gentile woman, Ruth, because she, Naomi, was a devout Jewess who was instrumental in the conversion of this Gentile woman. God’s ways are mysterious indeed.

When Naomi and Ruth reached the vicinity of Bethlehem the barley harvest was just beginning. Naomi



knew that under Jewish law the husband's brother could take a widow to wife, or a near relative if there was no surviving brother, and raise up children in his stead. Naomi was too old to have more children, but Ruth was young and beautiful. One of Elimilech's relatives, but not the nearest, was Boaz, a wealthy landowner who was in the process of harvesting barley. Ruth asked Naomi's permission to go into the field and glean the barley that escaped the hands of the reapers in order to feed them. Naomi answered, "Go, my daughter." Ruth's deference to Naomi and Naomi's response showed adherence to the fourth commandment, even in adulthood.

Boaz came out of Bethlehem to his field and said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you. And they answered him: The Lord bless thee." How many times in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass do we have the dialogue with the priest, the *alter Christus*, "The Lord be with you"? And we answer, "And with thy spirit." Here we have Eucharistic symbolism. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion the Lord is truly with us. We, the reapers, have been truly blessed. Boaz can be viewed as a figure of God the Father who has the greatest of riches – sanctifying grace – which he bestows upon us lovingly through the sacraments, and with which he keeps us alive spiritually through the Holy Eucharist, the Bread of Life. The reapers respond to him in gratitude, "The Lord bless thee," in the same manner as we, at Benediction, say the Divine Praises, "Blessed be God..."

The Law of Moses forbade the owner to go over his field a second time, and commanded that the grain left on the ground should be left for the poor. Ruth came to Boaz's notice as she followed the reapers and gathered the leftovers. Her industriousness, beauty and modesty struck him, as did what he learned of her kindness to Naomi, having brought her 3 bushels of grain the first day. Boaz told Ruth not to glean in any other field and to work along side his maids. He told her to drink from the same vessels as his workers and he ordered the young men of his employ to leave Ruth alone. Boaz told Ruth to eat with his workers. She did, and brought leftovers to Naomi. Boaz shows how God rewards virtue with plenty in the spiritual realm. Ruth fell on her face in front of Boaz in gratitude. How often do we fall on our faces in front of the goodness of God, at least in our hearts if not physically?

Ruth continued to glean with the maids of Boaz until the entire field was harvested. Then Naomi instructed her in how to make it plain to Boaz that she was willing to be his wife. Boaz could have taken advantage of Ruth under the circumstances, but he was virtuous and followed the Law of Moses telling her that there was one of nearer kin who should have first right to take her to wife. He gave her more grain, although she did not ask for it, and sent her back to Naomi. Our Lady said in the Magnificat: "...the hungry He fills with good things and the rich he sends away empty."

Naomi had instructed Ruth to wait until Boaz was asleep on the threshing floor and then lay at his feet under the blanket. Ruth's action is the action of a soul intimate with God. One thinks of the action of Mary at the feet of Jesus while Martha worked. Ruth shows willingness to submit to the will of God, the perfect trust, the self-abasement, the communication of the desire for protection from the evils of the world, the flesh, and the devil under the power of the Most High. The soul has been referred to as feminine – receptive – in relation to God, and figuratively, the Bride of Christ as the Church is the Bride of Christ. Out of the intimate relationship comes the greatest of blessings, the fruitfulness of increase in the Church and an eternity of every increasing knowledge and love of the Spouse.

Boaz married Ruth and placed her in charge of his household. He was rich with every material want fulfilled, yet he did not look down on Ruth because she was poor. He shows the love God, Who is owner and keeper of all spiritual and physical riches, has for the poor. Ruth's material poverty signifies the spiritual poverty we all face when we are without God; when we are ruled by our pride rather than by humble acknowledgement of God's power, greatness, and goodness toward us. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

When Ruth bore Obed, the grandfather of King David, Naomi nursed it. The women said to Naomi: "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not suffered thy family to want a successor, that his name should be preserved in Israel. And thou shouldst have one to comfort thy soul, and cherish thy old age. For he is born of thy daughter-in-law: who loveth thee: and is much better to thee, than if thou hadst seven sons."



The number seven is the Biblical number of perfection. To say that Ruth is better than seven sons was high praise indeed. In her modesty, purity, obedience, faithfulness, and all other virtues, Ruth is a prototype of the Virgin Mary whose perfect obedience to the Will of God brought us the Messiah.

Naomi's bitterness was turned to joy through her virtue, Ruth's virtue, and the virtue of Boaz. The Book of Ruth is a great love story, not just in human terms, but in God's terms. Much more could be considered than what is written here, but the link between honoring God in word and deed and the loving care and reward God gives us because of faithfulness to him is a major lesson. We also see in this book that every person created has a part in God's plan. God created each of us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world so that we may be happy with Him in the next. We will never know in this life how faithfulness to God will bear fruit many years hence just as Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz did not know that their faithfulness would bear the fruit of the Redeemer many centuries later. **XXX**



From the President...

Our September 17th meeting will bring us a welcome lesson in how to read Sacred Scripture, whether we are reading alone or with others, such as in the family. I urge each of you to do all that you can to make this meeting. Our love of God and understanding of His ways grows ever richer when we can better plumb the depths of His Holy Word. Praying the rosary and reading Sacred Scripture in the family is a better thing to do for our souls and the salvation of others than watching television. An aside: September 17th is the feast of St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church and founder of formal seminary training after the Council of Trent. Let us ask his intercession this day to obtain the grace of having the Traditional Mass throughout our diocese.

Our September meeting is also election time. Please be thinking about the people you want to continue to lead our Una Voce chapter.

Personal Apostolic Administrations

A personal apostolic administration is a diocese without borders headed by a bishop for a particular purpose. Bishop Rifan of Campos, Brazil is the bishop of the Society of St. John Marie Vianney, a group of priests who celebrate all the sacraments and the Mass according to the 1962 liturgical books. Anyone in the world may belong to Bishop Rifan's P.A.A., but he is currently limiting his apostolates to South America. Father Ashley, founder of *Opus Mariae Mediatrix* and Bishop Rifan are continuing their work to obtain other P.A.A.s for those who desire the Traditional Mass and sacraments according to the 1962 books. Earlier this year, Father Ashley was optimistic that not too many more years will go by without one either for North America or one each for Canada and the United States. We must offer continual prayers and sacrifices so that this remedy will come to pass for those of us who are denied what the Holy Father has so often requested of the bishops of the world – access to the TLM and sacraments of the 1962 books. In the meantime, let us support those societies and priests who are devoted to serving according to those books under the leadership of the Holy Father.

Catholicism is a way of life, not just a religion. Worshipping, praying, and living according to our ancient customs brings many graces to the Church and the world. We must be fully dedicated to this. If we are faithful to God as Mother Teresa was, He will bring about the miracles our poor humanity needs.

Annual St. Michaelmas Pilgrimage

Here is the invitation regarding the Annual St. Michaelmas Pilgrimage:

Join us for the annual Michaelmas Pilgrimage: www.sanctemichael.com. The pilgrimage route goes from the St Philomena's Shrine at Star of the Sea Catholic Village to St Michael's Church, Cherokee Village, a distance of about five miles.

Sponsored by UNA VOCE ARKANSAS OZARKS, St. John the Baptist Chapter.: <http://www.cox-internet.com/unavocearkansas/>. The annual Michaelmas Pilgrimage will take place this year on Saturday, October 4th. (The feast day is September 29th, but it is transferred to October 4th with the permission of His Excellency Bishop Sartain). The pilgrimage will start at 8 a.m. at St Philomena's Shrine in Star of the Sea Village, and proceed some five miles to St Michael's for Mass at 11 am. The Mass will be celebrated by His

Excellency Bishop (Emeritus) Joseph L. Howze, first Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi.

N.B.: Bishop Howze told all of the priests in the Diocese of Biloxi that they were welcome to offer Mass in the old rite on Sundays if they preferred. None of them took him up on it, so he took it upon himself to offer Mass according to the 1962 Missal once a month in the Cathedral of Biloxi. He did this until just recently when he retired. Latin Mass magazine had an article about him in 1991.

Liturgical Time Bombs in Vatican II

This latest book by Michael Davies names names and quotes from the major players in the liturgical revolution after Vatican II. He shows in carefully documented research the destruction of the Catholic Faith through the changes in Catholic worship. Appendix III is of particular note: he cites Protocol No. 500/90 of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, signed by its first president, Augustin Cardinal Mayer, which makes totally clear that any priest of the Roman Rite has the right to have recourse to the 1962 Roman Missal when he celebrates Mass in Latin. **No celebret is needed and no diocesan bishop can forbid the priest to say this Mass in private**, although he can, under canon law, cause priests to say only the *Novus Ordo* in public. I strongly urge every Catholic who is concerned about the state of the Church today and whose special devotion is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to read Davies' book. Available from TAN books: 1-800-437-5876.

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Quotables

“The sixth symptom of decadence is what we call liberal opinion. This is an attitude of mind rather than anything we associate with a political party. It is common to a multitude of well-meaning people whose ideas are broadly benevolent and progressive. They have three recognisable characteristics. The first is that their views are based upon a sense of highly moral but unstated and unproved assumptions. The second is that they are savagely intolerant of any views which differ from theirs. The third is that they are always remote from the arena to which their high-minded principles are meant to apply.” (C. Northcote Parkinson, “Decadence”, *The Law of Longer Life*, p. 69).

“All those are damned who see the Sacrament of the Body of Christ on the altar in the form of bread and wine by the words of our Lord in the hands of the priest, yet do not see or believe in spirit and in God that this is really the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” *St. Francis of Assisi*

“I may love by halves, I may obey by halves; I cannot believe by halves: either I have faith, or I have it not.” *John Henry Cardinal Newman*

“I urge you, therefore -- not I, but the love of Jesus Christ -- eat only Christian food. Keep away from strange fare, by which I mean heresy. For those people mix Jesus Christ with their teachings, speaking things unworthy of belief. It is as if they were giving a deadly poison mixed with sweetened wine, so that the unsuspecting victim readily accepts it and drinks his own death with fatal pleasure.” *Ignatius of Antioch*



Exerpts from *Liturgical Time Bombs*

“The real destruction of the traditional Mass, of the traditional Roman rite with a history of more than one thousand years, is the wholesale destruction of the Faith on which it was based, a Faith that had been the source of our piety and of our courage to bear witness to Christ and His Church, the inspiration of countless Catholics over many centuries. Will someone, some day, be able to say the same thing about the new Mass?” *Msgr. Klaus Gamber, The Reform of the Roman Liturgy, p. 102.*

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“The most evident instance of the fact that the radical alteration of ritual leads to the radical alteration of belief is, of course, the reform of the apostate Thomas Cranmer. In his classic history of the Reformation in England, Monsignor Philip Hughes explains:

All but insensibly, as the years went by, the beliefs enshrined in the old, and now disused, rites, and kept alive by these rites in men’s minds and affections, would disappear -- without the need of any systematic missionary effort to preach them down.

Thus, in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the majority of English Catholics, and almost all their children, lost their faith in the Real Presence, not by a preaching campaign against it, but by participating for decades in a liturgy from which the ritual signs of reverence, which kept this belief alive in their minds and affections, had been removed...” p. 71.

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“It is clear that Cardinal Heenan was not speaking entirely in jest when he remarked:

There is a certain poetic justice in the humiliation of the Catholic Church at the hands of liturgical anarchists. Catholics used to laugh at Anglicans for being ‘high’ or ‘low’...The old boast that the Mass is everywhere the same and that Catholics are happy whichever priest celebrates is no longer true. When on December 7, 1962 the bishops voted overwhelmingly (1922 against 11) in favour of the first chapter of the Constitution on the Liturgy, they did not realize that they were initiating a process which after the Council would cause confusion and bitterness throughout the Church.

Father Joseph Gelineau was described by Archbishop Bugnini as one of the ‘great masters of the international liturgical world. In his book, *Demain la liturgie*, Father Gelineau informs us that:

It would be false to identify this liturgical renewal with the reform of rites decided on by Vatican II. This reform goes back much further and goes forward far beyond the conciliar prescriptions (elle va bien au-delà). The liturgy is a permanent workshop (la liturgie est un chantier permanent).” p. 46

