

Ruth and Naomi

Builders of Communities of Friendship and Faith

God created us to be in relationship. We are creatures of community. However, intimacy demands openness of heart and soul, and it requires sacrifices. The story of Ruth and Naomi's faithful friendship shows the power of mutual care born out of personal loss and tragedy. After their suffering, Naomi could leave Ruth free to choose her own path, but Ruth chooses to remain and journey with her mother-in-law and friend. From the ground of their friendship, Ruth—the outsider, the Gentile—is drawn to the people and God of Israel and is listed among the the ancestors of David and Jesus.

As we rise to the splendor of this new day, we celebrate with all the saints the cords of God's love that bind us together as one family of faith. Called to journey with one another on the pathways to God's Reign, we pray with Ruth and Naomi that we may be drawn to love one another and that this love will give us strength for the tasks of discipleship in Christ.

God, fountain of love,
you are the wellspring from which
our human thirst for love is quenched.
We praise and adore you for the gift of your loving
that has been given to us in Christ
and that is the cornerstone of every community.
With Ruth, Naomi, and all your friends,
we rejoice this day for the presence of the Spirit

MORNING

Call to Prayer

Praise

who binds us as one family of faith,
proclaiming your message of mercy and justice.
With all the saints, we celebrate the gift of salvation
that is the hope of all those
who long for the touch of human love.

Reading

Ruth sobbed at Naomi's feet and begged her not
to send her away. She said:

"Wherever you go, I will go.
Wherever you stay, I will stay.
Your people will be my people.
Your God will be my God."

Naomi then realized the devotion of her daughter-in-law and friend. Together they remained and walked the pathways of their faith in God and with one another. (Ruth 1:15–18)

Acclamations

On this new day of grace, God joins us together that we might strengthen one another in love for the journey of faith in Christ. In joy we pray: *Honor, love, and praise be yours!*

- We adore you, God, who is the fountain of human friendship and the wellspring of human love, as we pray . . .
- We are filled with gratitude for the gift of friends and loved ones in our life, as we pray . . .
- We worship you, God, who gives us in Ruth and Naomi the image of faith-filled companions in grace, as we pray . . .
- We are filled with joy for the blessing of friendship that sustains us in joy and lessens our pain in times of sorrow, as we pray . . .

Closing

Faithful God, even when we wander from your friendship, you remain with us in unbroken and unshakable love. In the Resurrection of Christ, you sealed your love for us for all time. In the journey of Ruth and Naomi, you give us a living example of the blessing of human love and friendship. Teach us by your Holy Spirit never to abandon the friends you give us in life until that day

when you gather all peoples into the one community of your loving. We ask this as all things through Jesus our Messiah forever and ever. Amen.

As the hours of daylight grow short, we give God thanks for the blessing of friends and loved ones who grace our home and life with joy. We pray this night in a particular way for those who are oppressed. In the power of their solidarity with one another, they keep alive the light of liberty for all those searching for the blessings of peace and concord.

God of all loving,
 through the presence of Jesus among us
 you keep alive the flames of freedom
 that call our human family to the glory of friendship
 with you and with one another.
 This night we give you praise and thanks
 as we confess the diverse ways
 our selfishness has torn asunder
 the bonds of human communion.
 The gift of friendship shared by Naomi and Ruth
 stands before us as a beacon of light,
 beckoning us to build for you in the Spirit
 a family of faith-filled friends
 whose loyalty and love are signs of hope
 for all those who struggle in oppression.
 With the saints of every time and place
 we celebrate the light of hope
 that moves us to build for you a communion of hearts
 in which the forces of bondage and fear have no power.

As one who is a prisoner for love's sake, I beg you to be united with one another. Put aside all differences. Deal with each other in love, caring and patience. May your unity be based on the unity of faith. For there is one Christ, one faith, one baptism, and one God who binds us together as the foundation of hope. (Ephesians 4:1–6)

EVENING

Call to Prayer

Thanksgiving

Reading

Intercessions

We know that the spirit of God can take away all that divides us and can place into our midst the gift of faithful friendship. We offer the needs of our hopeful heart, as we pray: *Keep us mindful of your love.*

- For the church, that our care and concern for one another may be a sign of hope for all people, let us pray . . .
- For the human heart searching for love, that the Spirit may open us to offer and receive the gift of friendship, let us pray . . .
- For all those who live in sorrow and loneliness, that God may send friends into their life with whom they can share the joy of Christ's presence, let us pray . . .
- For the sick and the suffering, that the friendships we share may make us generous for their service, let us pray . . .

Closing

Repeat morning's closing.