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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Book of Ruth

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STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1.** Who are the judges in the period before the founding of the Davidic monarchy? When in this period is the story of Ruth set? With what does the loyalty of its main characters stand in contrast? At the beginning of this story, what is ironic about the name Bethlehem? Where is Moab? Although intermarriage with Moabites was not strictly prohibited, what were Moabites forbidden to join? To what union does Scripture trace the origin of the Moabites?
2. **1:8.** What does the Hebrew word *hesed* denote? Why will the Lord manifest his loving concern for Ruth, and how? What, in part, is the lesson?
3. **Word study: Clung (1:14).** What does the Hebrew word *dabaq* mean? What sorts of actions can it describe? In a relational context, what does it describe? What does it indicate in theological contexts?
4. **1:16–17.** How does Ruth pledge lifelong loyalty to Naomi? In so doing, what legal and religious effects result? What does Ruth do by forsaking her home and native religion, and of what does she become a model? According to St. Paulinus of Nola, what is signified by Ruth and Orpah going their separate ways?

For application

1. **1:1–5.** Have you or your family ever been forced by necessity to move to an unfamiliar location? If so, what were some of the financial, emotional, social, and even spiritual consequences of the move for you personally and for the family?
2. **1:8–9.** To which side of your family—the maternal or paternal side—do you feel closer? If you are married, how would you characterize your relationship with your in-laws (as compared with your relationship with your own parents), and why? How does the commandment to honor one's father and mother apply to the parents of one's spouse?
3. **1:16–17.** Conversion can entail making a complete break with certain relationships and with former attitudes toward faith. Have you yourself experienced such a conversion? What sorts of breaks with the past have you made, and with what did you replace the former attachments?
4. **1:20–21.** Naomi calls herself Mara, meaning "bitter", a name that describes how she regards what God did to her in Moab. How do you regard yourself when your fortunes turn sour or disaster strikes? What questions do you ask of God under those circumstances?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:2.** What is someone who *gleans* doing? What did the Torah require landowners to do? Why?
2. **2:8–16.** What, according to the note, indicates that Boaz is going beyond the call of duty in showing kindness toward Ruth? According to St. John Chrysostom, Ruth is an allegorical prefigurement of what? How are the two similar?
3. **2:12.** The Lord responds favorably to what virtues, and to what does the expectation of Boaz for blessings to a foreigner give witness? If the God of Israel is the God of all nations, what can every person who responds to his goodness expect? Looking forward to the New Testament, what do the words of Boaz anticipate? To what does the mention of wings suggest that Yahweh is likened?
4. **2:20.** What does the Hebrew word *go'el* mean? For what was this close relative responsible? What are the two laws that govern his role in the story of Ruth? How will Boaz fulfill his responsibility?

For application

1. **2:4.** Read the note for this verse. Does your relationship with the Lord carry over into your workplace? How should it do so?
2. **2:11–12.** What impresses Boaz about Ruth? What characteristics most often impress you about other people? What characteristics might impress God?
3. **2:13.** In her answer to Boaz, Ruth's language shows that she is aware of and accepts her low social status. How aware are you of your status as a creature before God? How heartfelt is your acceptance of that status? How does it influence the way you address God in prayer?
4. **2:20.** Review the note for this verse. How does the Hebrew concept of a *go'el* apply to extended family situations today? What responsibility do you have for disabled or elderly members of your own family? How willing are you to take on such a responsibility if it does not now exist?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:2.** What was a threshing floor, and how was it used? Why would farmers such as Boaz spend the night at their threshing floors?

Study Questions

2. **3:3.** What are the actions of washing, anointing, and putting on her best clothes meant to signal? What is Ruth supposed to be doing? To what does the Hebrew for "best clothes" refer?
3. **3:9.** What does the spreading of Boaz's garment symbolize? What might be suggested by the fact that the word translated "garment" here is rendered "wings" in 2:12?
4. **3:13.** What does the oath formula "as the Lord lives" do? What does Boaz thereby give Ruth by using it?

For application

1. **3:3-4.** (For both men and women:) How do you make yourself attractive to those whom you want to notice you for both personal and occupational reasons? Does your way of making yourself attractive accord with the virtue of modesty?
2. **3:5-9.** What character traits does Ruth display through her behavior in these verses? What indications of romantic love for Boaz do you see in her asking him to marry her? How might the absence of romantic love (at least at this point) not be an obstacle to a happy marriage?
3. **3:10-13.** What character traits do you see in Boaz's response? What appear to be his motives in accepting her proposal? What is his attitude toward Ruth, and how does he show it (see also v. 15)?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1.** What function did the entryway into a walled settlement serve in ancient Israel? How are readers meant to view the timing of the arrival of Naomi's next of kin? Why is the expression "friend" (better translated "so-and-so") used as a substitute for a man's proper noun?
2. **4:5.** Why does Boaz refer to Ruth rather than Naomi, his surviving wife, as legally the widow of the deceased Elimelech? Of whom is Ruth the widow, strictly speaking? What is the stated purpose of levirate marriage? What does it mean that responsibility for Elimelech's land and ancestral line go together?
3. **4:7.** What does the gesture of removing the sandal indicate? What does handing the sandal to another kinsman indicate?
4. **4:16.** How do some interpret the gesture of Naomi placing the newborn child "in her bosom"? What would the gesture explain?
5. **4:18-22.** What purpose does closing the book of Ruth with a genealogy of Judah spanning ten generations from Perez to David accomplish for the story? Unknown to Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi at the time, what impact would their story have on the future of Israel? How was the ultimate purpose made clear in the opening of the Gospel of Matthew?

For application

1. **4:1.** What is "divine Providence" (see CCC 302ff.)? Have events in your own life illustrated God's Providence? Have there been some happy "coincidences" that have encouraged you to trust in God even more?
2. **4:3-6.** Why do you think Boaz discloses only gradually what is involved in buying Elimelech's property? What are the advantages and disadvantages for both buyer and seller in handling transactions this way?
3. **4:9-11.** What is the function of a *witness* in a transaction such as the one being narrated here? in a court trial? in an evangelistic presentation? In your personal circumstances, how are you being called to witness to your faith?
4. **4:18-22.** How far back can you trace your ancestry? What does your ancestry tell you about yourself? What might it indicate about your family's future? Can you see the Providence of God entering into your family's history?