

Basic Idea of Covenant Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, August 25, 2017
8:15 AM **Ru 1:1, 3-6, 14b-16, 22; Mt 22:34-40** (St. Louis; St. Joseph Calasanz)
(God's desire is to supplant the role of a tribal deity, and to show them the way to a richer life acknowledging the reality of a spiritual ground of all being that eventually intends to unite everyone in communion.)

“For wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

This statement from the Book of Ruth, in fact the whole Book of Ruth, is extraordinary because it indicates long, long, long ago that there was a certain sort of interchange between peoples, that **the boundaries of the covenant community were not rigid**, so that Ruth was free to align herself with Naomi and Naomi's community and therefore God, the God of Israel. So **this openness** is something that we need to celebrate and to recognize **was possible and has been possible for centuries**, for millennia. **It's not simply a modern idea.**

Now against this of course was a tendency to a tribalism, a sort of identification with one particular group. Now we have to be very clear about this too. **The God of Israel is not a tribal God**; in fact that's the constant complaint of the prophets that the Israelites do not follow God. Well then he must not have been a tribal God because then they would have identified with him, but in fact they seem to be very comfortable worshipping the god of the land, the god of Canaan called "Baal" or the plural "the Baals" since there were many of them. So when God revealed himself to Israel, when he chose Israel, he is inaugurating something quite unusual, associating himself with a people that is very small and insignificant for purposes that they cannot understand. **His desire is to supplant the role of a tribal deity, and to show them the way to a richer life acknowledging the reality of a spiritual ground of all being that eventually intends to unite everyone in communion. That's the very basic idea of covenant.**

Now Ruth takes it upon herself apparently, perhaps moved by grace, to associate herself with this movement. This is counter to the tendency of many of the people in the movement to ignore it or to go outside of it or to seek help from alien images. So **the history of Israel really is a history of all kinds of movement, all kinds of motion within people toward God and away from God.** And **Ruth** indicates that not only was she welcomed as a member of the people of God, but she **actually became an ancestor of Christ, so that Christ incorporates all peoples into himself even in his humanity.** Enough said.