



Daily Devotionals

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RUTH 4:11-12 THE BLESSING OF COMMUNITY

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¹¹ Then the elders and all those at the gate said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

God has called us as a community and as individuals living in community. It is through the witness of the community that we are guided in our decisions and given the opportunity to escape the tyranny of the self. The community provides us with a history so that we might learn from the victories and defeats, the successes and the failures of the past and not be forced to make the same mistakes again. It is also through the community that reality is both proclaimed and explained. The people of God perform this role through witness and prayer.

Witnesses testify to the world of the validity of an agreement or event. By doing so a witness speaks for the community by binding herself to the truth. She also pledges her support and that of the community for the partners in any covenant. In addition, the witness provides a source of external accountability for the partners. When a representative or a number of representatives do this in the name of the community, it is the community that is acting as a witness. But even more than that, as the people of God, the community represents God's presence in the relationship or event. When such a community pledges its support it is speaking in the name of God.

It then is natural that a proclamation of God's support would be accompanied by the pronouncement of his blessing. This blessing, mediated through the community has the form of a prayer. "O Lord, we who witness these promises recognize your hand in them and petition you to guide the parties and prosper them in their relationship according to your will and mercy." The combination of witness and prayer is the manifestation of the loving-kindness of God among his people.

Thank you, Father, for placing me in a community. First, thank you for my family in which I am nurtured and nourished. Then thank you for my friends who broaden my experience and understanding of the world. Third, thank you for the workplace in which I labor and my superiors and coworkers who continually remind me of my need of others and to cooperate with others. Finally, thank you for the Church,

your Body, through which I experience your presence, be guided through being held accountable and can participate in the sharing of your loving-kindness. Amen.

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