

# Reflections on the Story of Ruth

*written for White Ribbon Day 2007*

In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly declared 25<sup>th</sup> November to be **The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** (IDEVAW) and the White Ribbon has become the symbol for the day. The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women, and wearing a white ribbon is seen as a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

## **A Prayer for Today**

God our strength and refuge,  
to choose to follow you is to risk  
our whole lives.

Ruth and Naomi clung to one  
another in sadness, but trusting  
your goodness, they journeyed  
together along unfamiliar paths.

We pray for courage to go where  
you will lead us; and on our journey  
may we also discover your love and  
blessing.

We ask this in the name of Jesus  
Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Book of Ruth is found in the  
Old Testament. The story is set in  
the time of the Judges of Israel  
more than a thousand years  
before the birth of Jesus.*

## **Widowhood and Loss**

Long ago, in the days when Judges  
ruled Israel, there was a famine in  
the land.

So a man named Elimelech, who  
lived in Bethlehem in Judah, went  
with his wife Naomi and their two  
sons Mahlon and Chilion to live for  
a while in the country of Moab.

While they were living there,  
Elimelech died, and Naomi was  
left alone with her two sons, who  
married Moabite women, Orpah  
and Ruth.

Later Mahlon and Chilion also died,  
and Naomi was left all alone,  
without husband or sons.

The opening words tell us that this story  
of loyalty, faithfulness, generosity and

justice takes place against a background of instability, fear and violence. It begins with a drought and famine, death and bereavement, widow-hood and loss. It is a story of affliction and hardship shared by millions in our own country and countless millions around the world. In a sense it is the story of every woman, but also it is the story of men as well.

We are victims of violence. Outrageous unplanned events of illness, natural disaster, stupidity or aggression change our lives and place us in predicaments we would not have looked for.

Drought and famine led to Elimelech, Naomi and their boys becoming displaced persons, in an alien and sometimes hostile land: the land of Moab. They made the best of a difficult situation; the boys grew up and married Moabite girls. Then tragedy struck again and the death of Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion left Naomi, Orpah and Ruth bereaved, grieving, widowed and victims.

The story of Ruth describes how in a world where the marginalised and victims are often ignored or forgotten; widows and the disadvantaged have a special place in God's economy.<sup>i</sup>

The Gospel too tells us this. It is as Jesus is walking that he comes upon a small and sad procession: a widow leading the funeral cortege of her only son to the cemetery outside the village of Nain. Jesus stops and his presence brings new life.<sup>ii</sup>

The teachers of the Law become the object of rebuke by Jesus for "devouring widows' houses."<sup>iii</sup> Yet a widow is noticed by Jesus because she

brings in to the Treasury "all that she has to live on".<sup>iv</sup> Is that all she has after the Scribes have taken away her house? Still she feels obliged to bring the rest to the Temple treasury. The Scribes don't notice it, wouldn't even be aware of the contribution, yet it is significant to Jesus.

There are other women, victims of loss, who radiate the pathway of Jesus with light and hope: the grieving sisters Martha and Mary are given the promise, "I am the resurrection and the life";<sup>v</sup>

Anna 84 years old and a widow for much of that time encounters Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus in the Temple and promises God's blessing;<sup>vi</sup>

Mary herself, the mother of Jesus lives in the shadow of widowhood and anticipates the violent outrages carried out against her Son.

The apostle James writes, "True religion is to visit orphans and widows in their distress."<sup>vii</sup> The early church made special provision for caring for widows.<sup>viii</sup>

We live in a world where widowhood and loss bring pain to the lives of women. Into this world comes hope, for "God is love, and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them."<sup>ix</sup>

## **Choice and Faithfulness**

Now Naomi heard that the Lord had blessed the people back in Bethlehem by giving them a good

harvest; so she got ready to leave Moab.

She started out together with her daughters-in-law to go back to Judah, but Naomi said to them, "Go back home and stay with your mothers. May the Lord be as good to you as you have been to me. And may the Lord make it possible for each of you to marry again and have a home."

So Naomi kissed them goodbye. But they started crying and said to her, "No! We will go with you to your people."

"You must go back," Naomi insisted. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and went back home.

But Ruth answered, "Don't ask me to leave you! Let me go with you. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I will die - there I will be buried."

Often in a time of pain and loss comes the need to make hard choices. At that very time when we feel the most isolated and vulnerable, when we feel like pulling the bedcovers up and escaping, comes the unrelenting demand to make choices: financial challenges, housing decisions, what to

throw away or leave behind. Death is a violent outrage. Jesus is deeply moved and weeps tears of deep grief at the graveside of his friend Lazarus.<sup>x</sup>

Women bear the brunt of grief in our society. They did not ask for the violent separation that causes widowhood, singleness and isolation. They did not ask to have to make choices when still fragile and vulnerable.

Naomi and her daughters-in-law are left to journey alone or together.

Naomi decides to go home to Bethlehem. Orpah makes the choice to stay, but with great courage Ruth takes a risk and travels with her lonely, isolated, grieving mother-in-law; "Don't ask me to leave you! Let me go with you. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."

This is the hinge which opens the door to the rest of the story. Ruth chooses loyalty over comfort, faithfulness over security. She chose to be a refugee and an alien in a foreign land.

It is our choices, far more than our gifts or abilities that shape our character.<sup>xi</sup> Ruth is beginning to develop as a person of dignity and dedication in her own right.

Jesus chose to listen to and accept women who were marginalised by life's events or by their reputation.<sup>xii</sup> He chose to have women as his disciples,<sup>xiii</sup> and women became guardians in the emerging church,<sup>xiv</sup> offering hospitality, teaching and leadership.

The choices made by victims can be self-serving or courageous; they can be in retreat or they can be visionary. They

can be faithful to the God who has brought them thus far; and in faith, hope and love they can go forward to conquer new worlds and open up new ways.

What moved Ruth to make the courageous choice she made?

The Scripture tells us. She had come to trust the God of the Bible. She says to Naomi, "Your people will be my people and your God will be my God."

It was not simply the ties of marriage and family that caused her to make this difficult and apparently foolish decision, it is the power of faith – not just any faith – but faith in God who had been with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on their journeys. The knowledge of the God who walks with us along life's pathway inspires Ruth to make this physical journey and a journey of faith.

Her confidence is a test for our confidence and her trust an invitation for us to trust in God also.

Anne Pratt is the manager of St Benedict's Day Centre. She is a widow, the victim of the violent death of her husband. Bernie took his own life in a time when he was struggling with mental illness and depression. Anne's choice has been to become an advocate and support person for those who suffer from mental illness. Her faith is this: in the darkness of despair our God is a God of hope who will walk the journey with us. Her life is like a beacon shining the light of God's hope so that others can walk along the pathway with Jesus who is the light of life.<sup>xv</sup>

## Ageing and Risk

When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more. When they arrived in Bethlehem the whole town got excited, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

They had arrived in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

*In those days, women could not own property, and often widows were left very poor. So it was a custom that when the corn was being harvested, widows were allowed to pick up those strands of corn which the reapers left behind.*

Naomi had a relative named Boaz, a rich and influential man who belonged to the family of her husband Elimelech. One day Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields to gather the barley that the harvest workers leave."

Naomi reached a crisis in her life – a gaping chasm that yawns wide open in

the middle of the pathway of every traveller along the journey of life. It is the deep crevasse of despair and bitterness.

For Naomi the adventure and struggle of youth has turned sour. Her dreams have been crushed. Violence has entered her life and she has been left bereaved, vulnerable and on the edge of despair.

“Don’t call me Naomi any longer,” she says. Naomi means “pleasant or sweet.” “Call me Mara – which means bitter – for despair, pain and bitterness are consuming me.” I went away with hope but now God has been violent against me and misfortune has come upon me from the hand of the Almighty.

Naomi’s cry is the cry of all women who suffer violence. Why is life like this?

The dreams of a loving husband and the beauty of a secure family are shattered by an insecure man who turns to alcohol to boost his macho image.

“Why did God put me in this situation?” asks the widow, the childless wife, the mother looking after demanding children while her husband escapes to his work – or plays with other women. She is lonely and isolated; she feels herself a victim of violence even when no hand has ever been lifted against her.

Where indeed is God when it hurts? When the dreams of youth have been shattered despair sets in.

Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay has researched the spiritual tasks of ageing. She tells us there are many challenges as we grow older – we cannot give up the quest for wholeness and healing even for one

minute. We are challenged to transcend loss with grace and dignity; to shun blame and bitterness; to dig deep for the treasure in all we have received. The task of ageing is to look for ultimate meaning in life, to overcome cynicism and despair through hope and intimacy with God and others.<sup>xvi</sup>

Mary, the mother of our Lord, in her youth proclaims the goodness of God who “puts down the mighty from their thrones, and exalts the humble and meek”.<sup>xvii</sup> Life is far from kind to her. And there are pictures in art that we call “Pieta”s – those paintings or sculptures where Mary cradles Jesus when he has been taken down from the cross. In those pictures often her heart is pierced by seven swords; seven sorrows. “Lord do not let me become bitter.”

How does Naomi change? How does she stop becoming bitter? How does Ruth help her? The first step is that of honesty. She tells it how it is, without malice or anger but as the truth. I am angry, I feel that God has cheated on me, I am becoming bitter. I am now a widow, my dreams are shattered, life has treated me violently. I know myself to be weak and vulnerable.

This is the risk. Honesty and truthfulness can often be risky. There is a sense that until it is “out there” until I say it as I feel it, I will not know how I will respond. “Humankind cannot bear very much reality.”<sup>xviii</sup>

But she had a wealthy relative. He was not a fairy god-mother. But he was a good man.

St Ignatius of Loyola would say, “I am a sinner”. That is the truth about me, I am ashamed of who I am; the

relationships I have damaged and the wrong I have done.” But I have a God – a God who knows me and who loves me. This is the truth. Hold the tension, hold on to God’s love and it will keep me from despair.

Ageing can lead to bitterness and to depression. But it need not do so, for we, though sinners, are loved and cared for by God.

## **Community and Respect**

So Ruth went out to the fields and walked behind the workers, picking up the barley which they left. Boaz himself arrived and greeted the workers. Boaz asked the man in charge, “Who does that young woman belong to?”

The man answered, “She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She said, ‘Please let me glean behind the harvesters.’ She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now.”

Then Boaz went up to Ruth and said, “Let me give you some advice. Don’t pick up corn anywhere except in this field. Stay here with the women who work for me. I have ordered my men not to molest you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and

drink from the water jars that they have filled.”

At this Ruth bowed down to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?” Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband.... May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully.”

So Ruth went on gathering corn in the field until evening, and when she had beaten it out, she found she had nearly 10 kilograms.

She took the corn back into town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gathered. “May the Lord bless Boaz!” Naomi exclaimed. “The Lord always keeps his promises.” So Ruth gathered corn until all the barley and wheat had been harvested.

We need each other. “No man is an island”<sup>xix</sup> Yet from our earliest days we are told to “stand on our own two feet”. We are applauded when we take our first faltering but unaided steps.

“And God saw that it was not good for man to be alone.”<sup>xx</sup> Rampant individualism is the curse of our age: we need both independence and community.

Ruth is a Moabite woman in Israel: a refugee and an alien with only a Temporary Protection Visa. She has not much to hope for in a foreign land, and much to fear: racial slurs, rejection, ostracism – and always men in the field – the possibility of abuse, rape and violence.

It is of this young woman that Boaz asks, “To whom does that young woman belong?”

The answer is clear. Ruth belongs to no one. She does not come to the field seeking favours, she does not scratch for crumbs. She comes as a member of that community who has a right to glean in the fields. Early in the morning she checks with the overseer that she can gather the fallen stalks of barley and then she works hard all day. Ruth belongs to no one.

Then comes the surprise. Boaz treats her with respect. There is no condescension from Boaz; no pity, but rather respect for a woman who is a member of the community but has no rights of position, or kinship. Ruth has only the inalienable right of someone who is a human being. She does not seek charity but shoulders her responsibilities for her mother-in-law and works for the good of others.

A woman is respected when she is taken seriously, listened to and given attention in her own right.

Desmond Tutu was born in 1931 in the Transvaal, South Africa. There was a white Anglican priest in the black township where he grew up and every day as the priest walked through the township he would doff his hat – as a mark of respect – towards the black

women he met. This totally unusual action of respect from a white priest called Fr Trevor Huddleston so influenced the young Desmond that he trained for the priesthood – and later became Archbishop of Capetown and one of the most influential peace-makers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

To respect women honours them. We engage as equals. A woman who is respected never needs to beg, or cry or nag to get her way. Legal equality is no substitute for respect. “Equal but different” we hear from some parts of the church – but that is not respect. Tokenism dismisses women: idolisation humiliates them. “God is Ruth’s claim to equality, and Ruth is God’s sign of respect for women.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Returning home Ruth is greeted with joy by Naomi and with the exclamation, “The Lord always keeps his promises.” Coming right in the middle of the story this truth is the fulcrum, upon which the whole story turns. God is faithful; the Lord can be trusted. Every reader is invited to say “Amen” and then to trust the promises of God for themselves.

## **Sexuality and Empowerment**

Some time later Naomi said to Ruth, "I must find a husband for you. Remember that this man Boaz, whose women you have been working with, is our relative. Now listen. Put on some perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes."

So Ruth did just what her mother-in-law had told her.

When harvesting was over and Boaz had finished celebrating, he was in a good mood. He went to the pile of barley and lay down to sleep. Ruth slipped over quietly, lifted the covers and lay down at his feet. During the night he woke up suddenly, turned over, and was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked. "It's Ruth, sir," she answered. "Because you are a close relative, you are responsible for taking care of me. So please marry me."

"The Lord bless you," he said. "You are showing even greater family loyalty in what you are doing now than in what you did for your mother-in-law. You might have gone looking for a young man, either rich or poor, but you didn't. Now don't worry, Ruth. I will do everything you ask; as everyone in town knows, you are a fine woman. It is true that I am a close relative and am responsible for you, but there is a man who is a closer relative than I am."

Then she returned home. Naomi asked her, "How did you get on, my daughter?" Ruth told her everything that Boaz had done for her.

Naomi said to her, "Now be patient, Ruth, until you see how this all turns out. Boaz will not rest today until he settles the matter."

This scene is about two marginalized women who are desperate.

Like Naomi and Ruth millions of women in the world today only have value through sex, through marriage and through bearing a male child. Not only does that give them a pseudo value in the eyes of men, it is also their passport to security.

We may not like to hear that in church, but it is the truth, it is also why thousands of women stay in violent relationships where they are mistreated and brutalized. The reality is that the pain they suffer is less bad than what they fear they might suffer on their own outside of that violent relationship.

If this is a fear for women in the past and women overseas today, it is also a fear of many thousands of women in brutal relationships in the western world.

It is also why this *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* is led by men: men who say that enough is enough and women should be given a dignity, value and safety that does not depend on their sexual availability, nor on their ability to bear children, but solely on the respect that is due to them as valued human beings who bear the image of God and are themselves children of the one heavenly Father.

The chapter of the story we have just heard should confront us for it is about using sex to get around the sexist society that creates an idol and a victim of the sexual woman.

Naomi and Ruth have no security. Gleaning among the cast offs of the barley harvest is not an idyllic pastoral scene [though it might seem so]; its modern equivalent is more akin to eking out a living on a rubbish tip from the discarded waste of the wealthy.

In Australia today 1337 genuine refugees are on Temporary Protection Visas. They have no security; limited access to employment and minimal welfare benefits; instead they depend upon the good will of family or friends and the charity of churches.<sup>xxii</sup>

Naomi was beyond marriageable age and the chances of marriage for Ruth – a widow from Moab – were negligible, unless she did something dramatic.

Her only secure hope is the Israelite law of kinship, where the welfare of the widow is the obligation of the whole extended family:<sup>xxiii</sup> in this case Elimelech's family. Boaz had been good, but only charitable. He had not given them security.

If Naomi knows that Boaz is a close male relative with power to support the women, then Boaz knows that too – but he has done nothing about it.

Naomi and Ruth plot their only means of security – it is risky – but to do nothing would leave them without dignity or value; in an endless cycle of being in receipt of charity.

Putting on perfume and “her best clothes” Ruth brings about change. In a

society that sees women only in terms of their sexual value, Ruth uses her sexuality to change that society!

Ruth was not after sex but security for herself and Naomi. For herself as an attractive young woman she could have gone off to the local singles bar and attached herself to an oversexed young man with plenty of cash! She might have got what she needed but there was no care for her mother-in-law. When leaving Moab Ruth had promised to care for her mother-in-law and she was not going back on that commitment, “Wherever you go, I will go...”

Her advances towards Boaz risked her total humiliation, but thankfully they prompted him to attend to her plight rather than exploit the situation. If Boaz as Naomi's kinsman assumed his legal responsibilities then the future for both Ruth and Naomi would be secured. In fact Boaz sees what she is doing [“You are showing family loyalty”]; notes what she could have done [“You could have looked for a young man”]; and respects her action in seeking his protection [“You are a fine woman”].

Do you see what Ruth was doing? Boaz had prayed for God's blessing to be upon Ruth and Naomi; now Ruth is saying to him “You have prayed! And now you are to be the means of this blessing! Isn't it your responsibility under God's covenant to redeem me from this helpless situation as a widow and protect me and my mother-in-law [your kinswoman] within the wider family?”<sup>xxiv</sup>

To pray does not mean that we remain passive and wait for God in God's providence to act. Sometimes we have

to take responsibility for our destiny. We are required to be courageous – as Ruth was, we are required to attend to our responsibility at Boaz does.

So where is our prayer leading us? And towards what action or responsibility are we being propelled as we pray?

## **Invisibility and Fulfilment**

The next morning Boaz went to the meeting place at the town gate and sat down there. Then Elimelech's nearest relative, the man whom Boaz had mentioned, came by, and Boaz called to him, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down."

So he went over and sat down. Then Boaz got ten of the leaders of the town and asked them to sit down there too.

When they were seated, Boaz said to his relative, "Naomi wants to sell the field that belonged to our relative Elimelech, and I think you ought to know about it. Now, if you want it, then buy it in the presence of these men sitting here. But if you don't want it, say so, because the right to buy it belongs first to you and then to me."

The man said, "I will buy it."

Boaz said, "Very well, but if you buy the field from Naomi, then you are also buying Ruth, the Moabite widow, so that the field will stay in the dead man's family."

The man answered, "In that case I will give up my right to buy the field, because it would mean that my own children would not inherit it. You buy it; I would rather not."

Now in those days, to settle a sale or an exchange of property, it was the custom for the seller to take off his sandal and give it to the buyer. So the man took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz. Then Boaz said to the leaders and all the others there, "You are all witnesses today that I have bought everything that belonged to Elimelech and to his sons. In addition, Ruth becomes my wife."

So Boaz married Ruth and took her home as his wife. The Lord blessed her and she gave birth to a son. The women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord! He has given you a grandson today! May he be famous in Israel."

And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of King David. And Jesus who is called Christ is a descendent of David.

If Naomi and Ruth had waited helplessly for their society to deliver them justice, there would have been no story of Ruth.

This story takes dramatic twists and turns. On the surface it looks as if everything is working out as planned. But read this story carefully from a woman's point of view and we discover that again we are in a man's world where power and decision-making belong to the men. The women are invisible. Ruth's fate gets decided by two men at the gate of the city out of her hearing and without her input!

Ruth's desires and dreams of being married to Boaz are set aside while another unnamed man with a higher claim is allowed to haggle over land and a woman – as if they are part of a package.

“Do you want to buy a new home theatre?” “Yes!” “Well if you buy it, you must take the free gift that goes with it.” “What's the free gift?” “It's a little puppy.” “I don't want a little puppy.” “Well, if you won't take the free give you can't buy the home theatre.”

Put like that the whole dialogue seems degrading of the invisible Ruth. It might be an oversimplification – but not too much! It happens over women today – it is part of the violence against them.

To his credit with great skill Boaz manipulates a female-blind system and a bad law to favour Ruth and Naomi. But he does not question the system.

Boaz is portrayed as a good and generous man who wins Ruth, but he does not – perhaps cannot – change a

system that made Ruth merely a pawn in the matter of her own future.

Earlier this year we marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. Some good and honest men had treated their slaves well, but it took the courage of William Wilberforce to change the system of slavery.

White Ribbon Day is an effort by men to change the marginalisation of women; to make visible the abuse of women and to try to advance the cause to protect women. And this needs to take place in the church as well as in society.

Jesus prevented the abuse of a woman accused of adultery.<sup>xxv</sup> In the gospel we read how in the presence of Jesus her accusers drop their stones – symbols of a system that perpetrated violence against women – until only Jesus and the woman are left alone. Jesus makes women visible and gives them respect and dignity.

Respect and dignity lead, of themselves, to fulfilment; and that is where this story ends: or rather begins again.

Women who were barren and bitter, aliens and marginalised, disrespected and invisible have become the ones who act with courage. They do not belong to anyone, but carry dignity and respect within themselves. They are the ones who pray and then answer their prayer. They trust the promises of God. They are the life-givers and the last verse of the Book of Ruth links with St Matthew's genealogy of Jesus to specifically tell us that Jesus who is called Christ is from the family-tree of Ruth.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Boaz is known as the kinsman-redeemer but it is Ruth who is the greater redeemer for through her is born the Saviour of the world.

The Scriptures record a little of the story of humanity where women as well as men are cruelly mistreated, abused and oppressed. Men are shown to be the chief violators of women then, just as they are today.

But behind the story of events is another story of the dreams of women and the actions of God. In this story women have a dignity and respect of their own, accorded them by God, and shown supremely in the attitude and action of Jesus.

More often than we might expect, among the covenant people of God, in the Old and New Testaments and today we glimpse the will of God: that women are valued for who they are as daughters of their Father in Heaven. They are treated with dignity and respect; beautiful but not idolised, vulnerable but not taken advantage of. They live in companionship with men who are brave but not violent, passionate but not domineering, caring but not smothering, leaders but servants all the time. And then in the mystery of God this tapestry of qualities becomes transformed upon the loom of life because no gender claims these gifts alone but rather the Holy Spirit of God grants with outstanding generosity to women and men the gifts needed to accomplish God's work on earth.

The Book of Ruth tells the story of what God can do through faithful people in tragic circumstances and despite their flaws. It challenges us to see women in

a fresh way, to take our responsibilities seriously and to love one another as we ourselves are loved by God.<sup>xxvii</sup>

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## End Notes

*This text of the Book of Ruth is abridged and slightly changed from the New International Version of the text found in the Old Testament.*

*Some insights and section headings are taken from "The Story of Ruth: Twelve Moments in every Woman's Life" by Joan Chittister published by Eerdmans 2000..*

*Also of help was "People who made history Gideon, Samson, Ruth" by Roy Clements 1998.*

*Various commentaries and website notes on the Book of Ruth have also been used.*

*The opening prayer © Ian Palmer 2007*

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<sup>i</sup> See also: Isaiah 10.1; Malachi 3.5;

<sup>ii</sup> Luke 7.11

<sup>iii</sup> Luke 20.47

<sup>iv</sup> Luke 21.1-4

<sup>v</sup> John 11.25

<sup>vi</sup> Luke 2.36

<sup>vii</sup> James 1.26

<sup>viii</sup> Acts 6.1; 1 Timothy 5.3

<sup>ix</sup> 1 John 4.16

<sup>x</sup> John 11.33,35,38

<sup>xi</sup> Not quite a quote from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J K Rowling p245

<sup>xii</sup> Luke 7.36-50

<sup>xiii</sup> Luke 8.1-3

<sup>xiv</sup> E.g. Romans 16.1,12,15

<sup>xv</sup> Used with Anne's permission

<sup>xvi</sup> Rev Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay *The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing* 2001 p223f.

<sup>xvii</sup> Luke 1.52

<sup>xviii</sup> T S Eliot *Four Quartets 'Burnt Norton'* part 1

<sup>xix</sup> John Donne *Meditation XVII*

<sup>xx</sup> Genesis 2.18

<sup>xxi</sup> Joan Chittister p50

<sup>xxii</sup> Refugee Council of Australia see their website. The numbers are for those on TPVs and Temporary Humanitarian Visas in March 2007.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Deuteronomy 25.5-10

<sup>xxiv</sup> See Clements p157

<sup>xxv</sup> John 8.1-12

<sup>xxvi</sup> Matthew 1.5

<sup>xxvii</sup> 1 John 4.7