



Café (boldcafe.org) is a monthly on-line magazine for and with young adult women made possible from support from women’s groups active in Women of the ELCA (welca.org), the women’s organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

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Long live Galentine’s Day

by Mary Button


Leslie Knope, the eternal optimist at the heart of the television show Parks and Recreation, creates “Galentine’s Day,” a holiday to celebrate her women friends. In season two, we learn that Leslie dedicates every February 13 to love for the women in her life.

In the decade since the episode Galentine’s Day first aired, women across the country set aside February 13 to celebrate their friends. There have been news articles about the phenomenon in The New York Times, Good Housekeeping, Cosmo, and The Atlantic. The sheer breadth of commentary on the invented holiday speaks to its growing resonance and relevance. Like many young women, my life is sustained by my female friendships.

I love these long winter nights during the first months of the year. I find it a great time for inventory-taking to set goals and intentions for the coming year. As we edge toward the first anniversary of pandemic lockdowns, I’m looking toward Galentine’s Day as I plan for my new year. I made many resolutions and plans at this time last year. And it was almost entirely for naught only a few weeks later. So, I’m not making resolutions. Instead, I’m entering this year filled with hope for the future and faith in my friends.

We will all sort through the trauma of 2020 for many more years to come. For a long time, I will reflect on last year as a year of grief upon grief. But even with the losses, I am still overcome with gratitude for my friends on this journey. Despite the headaches, I am thankful for Zoom, for Facetime, for virtual happy hours and movie nights.





In wrestling with all of what remains unknown for 2021, I keep returning to what I know to be absolute: the love and support of my friends. In this time of stress and anxiety, I'm more conscious and more thankful than ever to have such incredible friends in my life.

I'm thankful for the two-person bubble I formed with my friend Kelsey as I finished my Master of Divinity coursework. We had decadent pancake nights and couldn't stop watching "Tiger King" on Netflix. We encouraged each other through those scary days in March and April 2020 when the world seemed to be crumbling all around us.

I'm thankful for my friends Rane and Emilie and the movie nights we've enjoyed. I'm grateful for evenings spent chatting about old episodes of "The X-Files" and re-watching our favorites. Pre-COVID, it would never have occurred to me to try and watch a movie over Zoom. Now it's an essential part of my self-care. Long-distance friendships don't seem as distant when everyone is confined to their homes.

I'm thankful for groups of friends on endless text chains. We share outrageous memes, theories about unsolved true crimes, stories about our children and pets. We lament the news. We check on each other's parents. We laugh even on days filled with tears.

I can't reflect on the importance of friendships in my life without mentioning my favorite proclamation of love in all of Holy Scripture: Ruth's promise to her mother-in-law, Naomi, in Ruth 1:16.

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." (Common English Bible)

It is a proclamation of love between two people whose relationship can't be easily defined. Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law, but her fidelity to her can't be categorized. Her love is more intimate than platonic, more relational than romantic.

I'm not making resolutions, but I have chosen a "star word" for Epiphany this year. I found mine in this passage from Ruth: wherever.

Wherever: to remind me that God's love follows me wherever I go. Wherever: to remind me that my friends have loved me through worse than this. Wherever: to remind me that the type of love we have for our friends is the same type of love God has for us. God roots for us the way that our friends do!

Who knows what this coming year will bring. But I do know that wherever I go, my friends are with me.

Mary Button is a liturgical artist and educator. You can learn more about her and check out her art at marybutton.com.

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Faith Reflections: Ruth 1:14-22

by Mary Button

Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"

She said to them, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full but the Lord has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

We often hear the story of Ruth and Naomi read at weddings because of the beauty of Ruth's pledge to her mother-in-law. But the story is also fundamentally about love outside the confines of marriage, Ruth's care for Naomi extends well beyond the social dictates of in-law relationships.

Dr. Renita Weems, a womanist scholar of the Hebrew Bible, examines Ruth and Naomi's relationship in her book "Just a Sister Away: Understanding the timeless connection between women of today and women in the Bible." The book's title is an encapsulation of her thesis—that every woman is "a sister away" from healing.

Womanist theology is a way of thinking which considers ritual practices, spirituality, Biblical interpretation, and all aspects of religious life through the lens of Black women's liberation. Examining Ruth through a womanist framework means reading the relationships depicted in the story and looking toward liberation.



Discussion questions:

1. What are some of the relationships described (in the passage)?
2. Do you see any of yourself or your relationships reflected in the story?
3. Do you have a “star word” or other example of a text that encourages you?

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