



Welcome to *Sisters and Friends: Refresh Your Soul with Melanie Rigney*. Each month, I'll share something about a woman living today and a Catholic saint who will inspire you, spiritual resources, and a brief note of where I'll be in the coming month. In between newsletters, I hope you'll check out my [Web site](#) for my blog and other updates.

The Female Saints of Advent

I'm excited (and a little nervous) to share that you'll find a [free Advent calendar](#) on my Web site! Each day features an image and brief description of a female saint or blessed on her feast day or a significant day in her life, along with a relevant Scripture reading or other writing. Just hover your mouse over the current or previous dates. Some of these women are in [Sisterhood of Saints: Daily Guidance and Inspiration](#), but many are not. Many of these women were everyday people who ended their lives in martyrdom. While we may not be asked to give up our physical lives for God, in some way we offer up a part of ourselves--vanity, doubt, fear--every day.

If you'd like a daily reminder to visit the site, you can sign up [here](#). A short daily YouTube video also will be available, and you can subscribe [here](#).

The female saint I'll be thinking of this month is my confirmation saint, Anastasia. The December 25 Mass originally was celebrated for this fourth-century martyr, whose name means "resurrection" or "she who shall rise again."

Being Christ in Our Lives: Meredith Gould

They don't come much funnier, more opinionated, or more ecumenical than my friend [Meredith Gould](#). You may know Meredith for her expertise in church communications, as witnessed by her books [The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways](#) and [The Word Made Fresh: Communicating Church and Faith Today](#). Meredith was raised Jewish, spent time in a yoga ashram, hung out with Pentecostal Christians, received confirmation in the Roman Catholic church about ten years ago, and includes St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baltimore on her list of favorite worship communities. Oh, and her husband is an Episcopal priest. Behind all this public-facing expertise is a loving, thoughtful woman who struggles just like the rest of us to grasp the enormity of Christ's love for us... and his call for us to love others in the same way.



[Who has reflected Christ on your journey?](#)

On the Nightstand

I've got daily Advent resources galore on my nightstand, including [Living Faith's](#) Advent edition and [The Little Blue Book](#). But in the leadup to the season, I've been reading [Go Forth with Hearts on Fire](#), a 64-page pastoral letter from my bishop, Paul S. Loverde. It includes questions for discussion and thought, and gems such as this: "Prayer is far more than a thing or an activity to be worked into the calendar, as if it were soccer practice or a PTA meeting. It must take primacy over everything else." How I need to remember that, and I suspect it's the same for some of you. [What's on your nightstand?](#)

Where to Find Me

It's a busy month! Hope to see you out and about!

December 6, 2013: Speaking about Advent and the female saints and blessed, 7 p.m., [St. Mary of Sorrows Church](#), 5222 Sideburn Rd., Fairfax, VA.

December 7, 2013: Among the authors on hand for the annual open house at the [Paschal Lamb](#) Catholic gift store, 1 p.m., 11214 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA.

December 13, 2013: Speaker for Walking With Purpose Connect Coffee, 7:30 p.m., [St. John the Apostle Church](#), 101 Oakcrest Manor Dr. NE, Leesburg, VA.

And, I'll be doing another giveaway at [Goodreads](#) starting December 26.

God bless! Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Melanie

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