

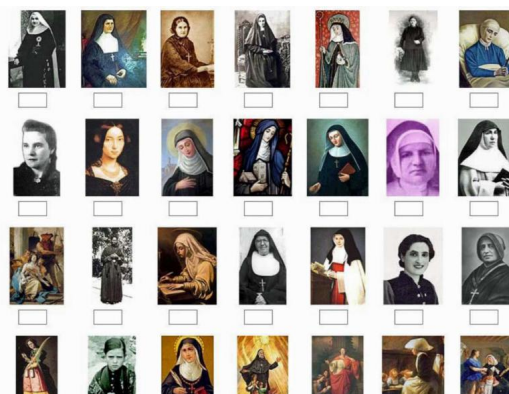
Welcome to *Sisters and Friends: Refresh Your Soul with Melanie Rigney*. Each month, I'll share something about a woman living today and a Catholic saint who will inspire you, spiritual resources, and a brief note of where I'll be in the coming month. In between newsletters, I hope you'll check out my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

"We must love everyone ... we must be compassionate!" -- St. Josephine Bakhita (and a contest!)

Josephine Bakhita, born in the Sudan, was kidnapped by slave traders before she was ten. One of those who enslaved her had Josephine tattooed everywhere but her face. Eventually, she successfully fought for her freedom and was a Canossian nun for fifty years. Was she bitter? To the contrary, Josephine said she was grateful to the slave traders, for without them, she would not have the opportunity to become a Christian.

Josephine's feast day is February 8, the day she appears in my book [*Sisterhood of Saints: Daily Guidance and Inspiration*](#).

You'll find images of her and the other 27 women featured in the book February 1-28 as part of an [All You Holy Women contest](#) this month. You'll find more details at the site, but all you have to do is match up the women and their images. Some of the information about them in the book



might help you with the right answers, as will the women's birth and death dates. I hope you'll give it a shot; remember, you don't have to be perfect, anymore than these women were!

Being Christ in Our Lives: Jamie Sample

Jamie Sample has one of those smiles that lights up the room. And it seems like she's always wearing it, no matter how busy she is. You see, in addition to raising two young sons with her beloved husband, Jamie is the director of the Youth Choir and music for the 11 a.m. Mass at [St. Charles Borromeo](#) Parish in Arlington. She volunteers for many other activities, including [Cursillo](#) and the music at our annual pre-Christmas Filipino Simbang Gabi 5 a.m. novena. I learn from Jamie as I attempt to balance my own overflowing plate. She shows me how even the busiest of us can reflect Christ with joy and confidence and serenity, rather than carping about our stress level. [Who has reflected Christ on your journey?](#)

On the Nightstand

Last fall, I heard Edward Sri speak about his new book, [Walking with Mary: A Biblical Journey from Nazareth to the Cross](#). My only regrets are that I didn't buy the book on the spot so I could have it autographed.... and that I didn't read it sooner! I finished it last month, savoring every word. Dr. Sri helps the reader see Mary as a real person, a faithful disciple of Jesus, who puzzled over the amazing things she was told and that happened to her, and trusted in God. I especially enjoyed the way Dr. Sri drew out the similarities in language within Mary's key moments, including the wrapping and laying of the infant Jesus at the Nativity and the wrapping and laying of her crucified son in the tomb. This book isn't just for Catholics; Mary's bravery and faithfulness will resonate with any Christian. [What's on your nightstand?](#)

Favorite Saints Quotes: You Vote!

I've picked some female saints' and blessed's quotes that resonated with

some friends and me. Some of the women you've heard of; some, you likely haven't. I hope you'll [vote for your favorite in this poll](#); I'll be giving away some mugs based on the results!

Where to Find Me

They say you can't go home again, but they are wrong.

On February 22, I'll be among the speakers at the 17th annual [Bay to Ocean Writers Conference](#) in Wye Mills, Md. I've been privileged to be part of the BTO family for five or six years now, and it's the best one-day writers' conference around, in my opinion. It always sells out, so if you're interested, register now!

And... I'm putting the final touches on three speaking engagements for March in Milwaukee and Chicago, great cities where I lived from 1984 to 1998. More next month on that, but I'm looking forward to reconnecting with longtime friends and making new ones.

May God bless you exceedingly!
Melanie

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