



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.

Of Light in the Darkness and St. Lucy of Syracuse

Oh, Lucy of Syracuse. I wonder if today's Catholic girls are as interested in her as I was. Maybe her story fascinated me because my eyesight was very poor, and tradition has it that she tore out her eyes or had them torn out as part of the Romans' torture of her. Or maybe it was that delicious St. Lucy's bread that seemed to be part of Advent feasts at the homes of my childhood friends from Scandinavian backgrounds. The thing is, we don't know for sure that she lost her eyes or that she was taken to a brothel. We do know that she was martyred around 304 when she was about twenty years old. Her feast day is December 13.

The next few weeks will mark the least amount of daylight of the year. It's interesting that these also are the weeks we feel the most pressure to buy gifts, cook and bake, go to parties, clean and decorate the house... just about anything other than



spend some quiet time in the waiting space that is Advent. May Lucy's example of martyrdom for what really matters remind us to stop, breathe, give thanks... and wait.

Being Christ in Our Lives: Andrea L. Wirt

I had the pleasure of spending time with Andrea Wirt while I was in the Chicagoland area in late October. Andrea grew up primarily in Colorado and came to Evanston, Illinois, for law school, where she met her husband Dave and converted to



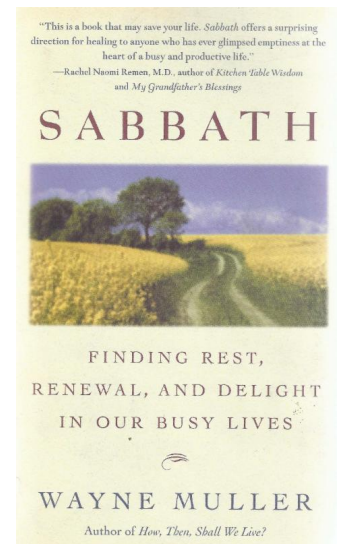
Catholicism. Life went on, and they both experienced professional success and attended Mass on a regular basis, but were not particularly active in their parish.

Then Andrea was in a bad car accident. During her recovery, she felt at loose ends, and Dave suggested she try going to daily Mass. There, she encountered Sister Laretta and Sister Anna Marie, who encouraged her to become involved in a small way, with a children's Halloween candy project. Andrea caught fire from those simple suggestions! She is a past president of the St. Anne's parish women's club in Barrington, and she and David are among the pillars of the RCIA program. Andrea is very humble about her service, but she and Dave this fall were among the laypeople honored with the Chicago Archdiocese's Christifideles Award for exemplary parish service. (They're pictured here with Cardinal George when they received the award.)

Andrea's story reminds me that the sharing of our time, talent, and treasure begins at the parish level. [Who reflects Christ to you?](#)

On the Nightstand: Sabbath

Whenever I see my birthday twin and friend-going-back-to-before-I-had-faith friend [Letitia Suk](#), I come away refreshed and challenged. When we had lunch in Chicago in late October, we got into a discussion of keeping the Sabbath, something I am woefully bad at, using the dodge that generally, I'm writing for God on that day so maybe it's OK. Tish gently told me about her own longtime Sabbath practices, which include relaxing and making a big pot of soup. A few weeks later, she sent me this book. It'll be my December reading as I attempt to tarry a while with the Lord. I can't promise to make soup every Sunday night, though! [What's on your nightstand?](#)



[A Few Seconds with the Saints: Your Advent Gift!](#)

I've got a gift to thank you for supporting this little ministry by subscribing to the newsletter! It's a free ebook, *A Few Seconds with the Saints: Spiritual Direction for Everyday Life*.

In the past few years, I've fallen in love with the saints, mostly the women, because I researched so many of them in writing *Sisterhood of Saints: Daily Guidance and Inspiration*, but also the men. So many of them left behind diaries, letters, books, and other material that shows their great insight into the human condition and how faith helps us through it. The ebook includes 500-plus quotes, broken into twenty-two categories from Afterlife to Worship. My prayer is that when you need a bit of spiritual guidance on one of these topics, you'll find a quote that comforts you... and that, with that sustenance, you'll go on to learn more about that man or woman's life and how it can feed your journey.

While you'll find most of the best-known saints and blesseds among those quoted, you'll also find some folks you might not know. I hope you'll consider exploring their lives further as well.

You can download the ebook in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle format [here](#). If you run into problems, just email me at melanie@melanierigney.com, and I'll email you a copy.

Have a friend who wants a copy? All she or he has to do is [subscribe to the newsletter](#). Sometime down the road I'll offer it for sale as an ebook and possibly in paper, but for now, it's a newsletter subscriber-only gift.

May God bless you exceedingly! Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!
Melanie

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