



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.

"Suffer silently. Smile always." -- Blessed Laura Vicuna

For me, it's the eyes. I went to grade school and junior high with kids who had eyes like that. Even then, we knew eyes like that usually meant trouble at home.

Blessed Laura Vicuna (April 5, 1891-January 22, 1904) had trouble at home in spades. Her dad died when she was young, and she and her mother and sister moved from their native Chile to Argentina. The mother met up with an unsavory fellow who promised to trade sex for tuition money for the girls. With few options, the mother accepted. The guy grew worse as time went on. He liked to beat animals and people, including Laura's mother. Laura and her sister initially were safe at a boarding school run by the Salesian Sisters. When they came home for Christmas, the boyfriend came after Laura. When she said no, he cut off her tuition. The Sisters gave her a scholarship so she could stay at school.



Then Laura came home with what eventually was determined to be pulmonary tuberculosis. Her mother had managed to move into town, but the boyfriend came to insist they come back with him. When Laura refused, he beat her. She regained consciousness and died about a week later, but not before she told her mother she was offering up her life for her and to please get right with the Lord. And the mother did. She got away despite the man's pursuit.

Laura may have said "Suffer silently," and doubtless she did much of the time, just as my classmates did. But she spoke up when it mattered--by refusing the man's advances, by refusing to go back to live with him, and by encouraging her mother to get back on a right path. May we all have the courage to do the same--and to listen when people with eyes like hers summon the courage to share their pain.

Being Christ in Our Lives: Colleen "Duffy" Kiko

Colleen "Duffy" Kiko has a pretty important job here in Washington, DC, but you'd never know it from talking with her. She's a humble woman, very humble. Duffy is passionate about her wonderful family (four children, four grandchildren, and her husband); her love of preserving memories through scrapbooks, virtual or on paper, and helping others to do the same; and God.



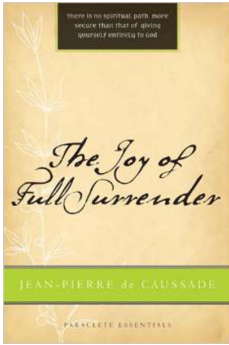
I admire how transparent she is in her struggles with the Lord, and I admire even more the strength of her faith during those times. I'm fired up because she will be in charge of an upcoming Cursillo

Women's Weekend in our diocese, and I will be serving on team with her! You can learn more about Arlington Cursillo [here](#).

[Who reflects Christ to you?](#)

On the Nightstand: The Joy of Full Surrender

Last month for [Living Faith](#), I wrote about the joyous curveball God tossed to Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, and heard at the site and via email from a few folks. One mentioned a book called *The Joy of Full Surrender* by Jean-Pierre de



Caussade, a Jesuit priest. It seemed like the perfect resource with which to start the year, at least for someone like me who so has trouble living in the "sacrament of the present moment" instead of obsessing about what's over the next hill. Looking forward to tarrying with some of these reflections! [What's on your nightstand?](#)

Book News, and On the Road Again!

Hope you all had marvelous Advents, Christmases, and New Year's Days! I spent much of the time finishing up my next book, which was due to Franciscan Media today. (I made it!) The official title is *Blessed Are You: Finding Inspiration from Our Sisters in Faith*. It's about how sixty-four women saints, blessed, and servants of God (including Laura Vicuna) lived the Beatitudes. It was a joy to research, and I appreciate all the prayers offered up while I was working on it. I'll keep you posted on when it will be available.

Next week (January 9-11), I'll be giving a retreat on the same topic at the [Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat](#) in Fort Mitchell, Alabama. Looking forward to meeting some new friends and seeing some familiar faces as well. It is a beautiful facility.

And, just a reminder: For the next few weeks, the ebook, *A Few Seconds with the Saints: Spiritual Direction for Everyday Life*, will be available free and exclusively to newsletter subscribers. It includes 500-plus quotes, broken into twenty-two categories from Afterlife to Worship.

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 New Year!
Melanie

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