



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.

"I forgive you as heartily as I wish God to forgive me." -- Sister of Jesus Crucified, a Martyr of Compiègne

If I get my act together in the next week or so, I'll be going to the Kennedy Center to see the [Washington National Opera](#)'s performance of *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. In the waning days of the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, eleven Carmelite nuns, three lay sisters, and their two servants were given a choice: swear their support of the new government's constitution, or be guillotined. They chose the latter. Before their execution, the women, ranging in age from nearly thirty to almost eighty, reprofessed their baptismal and religious vows. It was Sister of Jesus Crucified, the choirmaster, who forgave the executors as she came to the scaffold on July 31, 1794.



I admire and contemplate these women's faith, especially as

we learn of grisly executions at the hands of terrorists--and I pray the Lord would give me the same strength.

Being Christ in Our Lives: Jolene and Stephanie LeRoy

I don't have a daughter of my own, but if I did, I hope she'd be like Stephanie LeRoy... and I hope I'd be a mother as loving as Jolene LeRoy. Jolene is the Faith Community Nurse at Our Lady of Mercy in Aurora, Illinois. What a gift she is to the parish, providing holistic support-physical, emotional, and spiritual-and connecting people who need more than the ministries OLM offers to additional resources.

Jolene was kind enough to arrange for me to speak at the parish last fall, and when we went to dinner, Stephanie joined us. She is a beautiful young woman who has learned from her mother's example. Stephanie, who will be getting married this spring, positively glows when she talks about the power of Christ in the world. She was heavily involved in campus ministries when she was in college, and you can just feel the Holy Spirit has great things in store for her.



Who reflects Christ to you?

On the Nightstand: Speaking with God from the Depths of Our Heart

A few weeks ago, Pope Francis named St. Gregory of Narek a Doctor (teacher) of the Church. Doctors are recognized not only for their sanctity but also for what we can learn from them, generally through their writings. You may not have heard of Gregory of Narek--I hadn't but then, it's women saints who generally stir my soul--but he was an Armenian priest and monk who died near the beginning of the eleventh century. I'm looking forward to learning more about him and deepening my spirituality this month by reading his *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart*. The Amazon listing describes the book, a compilation of ninety-five prayers, as "one of the most sublime works of Christian spirituality."

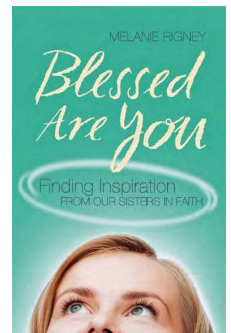


[What's on your nightstand?](#) And thanks to those who provided such great links last month to spiritual resources!

Catch Me if You Can--And, the New Cover!

As you read this, I'll be in Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley, visiting a friend, doing some work for an upcoming retreat, thinking about the redo of my Web site (but more on that next month! I hope you like it) and also just catching my breath.

Just before I left, the publisher sent me the cover for my next book: *Blessed Are You: Finding Inspiration from Our Sisters in Faith*! I like it a lot, and hope you do too. The book, about how women saints' stories can help us live the Beatitudes, is now available for preorder at [Amazon](#) and elsewhere.



And, I'm superexcited about April! The morning of the 1st, I'll be speaking about women saints and the Beatitudes to the Wednesday Morning Bible Study and friends at [St. Luke's Church](#) in nearby McLean, courtesy of my dear friend (and former "Christ in Our Lives" featured woman) Ann Pulliam. And, on April 11, I'll be back in the Shenandoah Valley speaking at [St. Bridget's Chapel in the Field](#) in Berryville.

May God bless you exceedingly! Melanie

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