

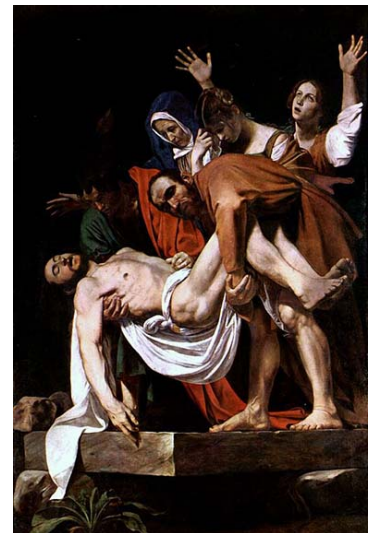


Welcome to *Sisters and Friends: Refresh Your Soul with Melanie Rigney*. Each month, I'll share something about a woman living today and a Catholic saint who will inspire you, spiritual resources, and a brief note of where I'll be in the coming month. In between newsletters, I hope you'll check out my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

The Women Standing Near the Cross

"Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25), we're told.

This Holy Week, it is the strength, pain and faith of those women that I am contemplating along with Jesus's Passion... and the power of the Resurrection. Consider in particular Mary of Clopas (whose feast day is April 24). Such love and grief she must have felt not only for Jesus, but also for her kinswoman, the Blessed Virgin. She couldn't stop the violence. She could only attempt to provide comfort, something many of us understand all too well, having had friends or relatives go through unspeakable tragedy. Being there is all we can do. And it mean everything to those we love as their worlds come crashing down.



Being Christ in Our Lives: Mary Ann Rozum

St. Frances Cabrini once said, "Give me a heart as big as the universe." I don't know if my friend Mary Ann Rozum here in northern Virginia ever prays that prayer, but she lives it every day. Mary Ann's heart is almost as huge as her faith.



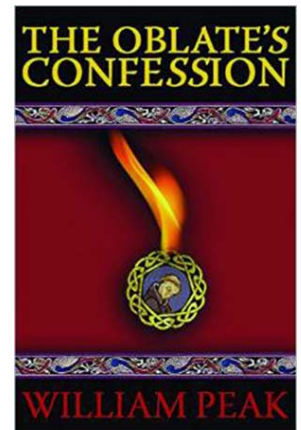
Now retired, her federal career took her to every state and many countries. She always dove in and reflected Christ in the communities she found during those assignments. Mary Ann also is devoted to her family, her friends, and those in need, as evidenced by her years of volunteer service in Washington with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity.

I've had occasion in the past few months to watch Mary Ann do service quietly, humbly, and with a joyful heart and soul. She teaches me it's not about the noise... but the love.

[Who reflects Christ to you?](#)

On the Nightstand: The Oblate's Confession

I don't read as much fiction as I once did, which makes me sad sometimes. But it seems to get crowded out by the daily readings, devotions, and writings by or about the saints. Not this month! I met Bill Peak, the author of *The Oblate's Confession*, at a writers' conference in February, and he was kind enough to give me a copy of his new novel. It's the story of a 7th century boy in England who is in essence given to a monastery. I'm about twenty pages in, and Bill's storytelling and writing are just superb. It's no wonder *The Oblate's Confession* is garnering positive reviews and some notice in top-drawer competitions. Give it a read!



[What's on your nightstand?](#)

Catch Me if You Can!

As you read this, I'll be speaking about women saints 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 speaking at [St. Bridget's Chapel in the Field](#) in Berryville, Virginia.

Interested in having me speak on the women saints to your conference, women's club, parish, or Bible study group? Just ask. If your group is 50 people or fewer, please [email me](#)... for larger gatherings, please contact [CMG Booking](#). I'm sure we can work something out.

I'm also working on reading proof pages for [*Blessed Are You: Finding Inspiration from Our Sisters in Faith*](#), which will be available late this summer. Franciscan Media did such a great job on the cover and design. And--I'm hoping next month to be able to unveil the exciting database my friends the Web experts have come up with; I just need to set aside some time for testing before we take it public.

May God bless you exceedingly! Melanie

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