

Of saints, friends, books, and what's going on in my crazy life.

The Winter of Our...



Happy new year! When I was growing up in South Dakota, winter was difficult. It was dark, snowy, and cold. And, try as I might, I never got the hang of ice skating, an activity my mother dearly loved. As an adult, I found a winter sport I actually enjoyed: cross country skiing. We don't get enough snow here in Northern Virginia to do that often, but I recently heard there's a great place not far away in West Virginia. So, maybe I'll see you on the trails. In any event, I hope you find something that gets you outside and brings you contentment this season!

"The more someone is convinced of and steeped in his conviction, the more he will calmly tolerate different opinions..." Blessed Hildegard Burjan (1883-1933)



Hildegard, one of the first female Austrian Parliament members, was born to non-practicing Jewish parents. She and her husband both converted to Catholicism in their late twenties after Hildegard survived a major health scare. It was not long after that that Hildegard was advised to end a pregnancy due to her health history. She refused, and the couple's only daughter was born in 1910.

Hildegard's advocacy for women and children caused the Christian Socialist Party to ask her to run for the National Assembly. There, she spearheaded passage of a law setting minimum wages and working conditions for household workers. She decided not to seek re-election in 1920, due to her health and an undercurrent that was building against those of Jewish ethnicity. But her ministry did not end. She founded a group of women religious and lay associates to assist women living on society's margins.

Hildegard's story reminds me that serving the Lord and His people isn't about how we define ourselves politically. It's about seeing a need... and having the faith to meet it with His help.

I'll be writing more about her later this month. To learn more about other women saints and blessed, [see the Wednesday's Woman entries in my blog.](#)

Friends in Faith: Emily Borman

Emily Borman and I met a little over a year ago at a [Blessed Is She](#) brunch, but I'd known about her work long before that. She is among the founders of [Conversation with Women](#), a safe place for women to share the joys and challenges of their faith journeys. I admired even before I knew Emily in person the sensitivity and care with which the stories are shared.

Since that brunch, Emily and I have provided each other with prayer support (and Emily has provided me with quite possibly the world's greatest fudge, which she makes in bulk as gifts). I learn from Emily's confidence in the Lord as she navigates family health challenges and discerning how the Lord wishes her to use her gifts today.

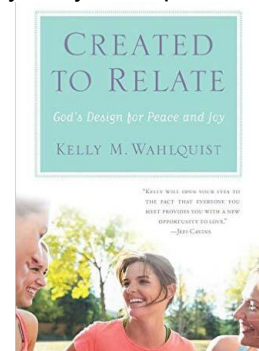
Which of your friends inspires you?



On the Nightstand: *Created to Relate*

Is it just me, or do women who are writing today about spirituality totally rock? I'm excited this month about reading *Created to Relate: God's Design for Peace and Joy* by Kelly Wahlquist, the founder of [WINE: Women In the New Evangelization](#). *Created to Relate* is about women's special gift for relationships—with others and with the Lord. I'm planning to attend the WINE Catholic women's conference in the Minneapolis area in February (that *may* be a cross country skiing opportunity!) while my sister and I are visiting family and friends, and look forward to relating with other WINE women.

What's on your nightstand?



A Very Special Event

I've spoken at writing and Catholic women's conferences from coast to coast since 1999. But I don't think I've ever been more excited or humbled by the invitation I received for January 20. I'll be talking about some younger female saints who exemplify the Girl Scout Law to the Brownies at my parish. I'm more nervous about this than about speaking to more than a thousand people. Pray for me!

And... congrats to Michelle Baker of Exeter, NH, who won my Advent book and gift card giveaway!

Stay warm, wherever you are, and get out and enjoy God's creation, whether it's at the beach, on the slopes, at the rink, or on the trail!.

May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

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