

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

## The Joy of July



Hello friends! A special howdy to those of you reading this little monthly newsletter for the first time, courtesy of Franciscan Media, publisher of two books I wrote on women saints.

The above is what I saw the first morning of a silent retreat last month at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Virginia. It was a sign of the peace and serenity that would fill my soul for the next three days. It was a time of prayer, of reading, and a little editing and contemplating about what's next for me as a writer. I didn't get a lot of answers, but a week later, I still have the peace. Thanks, God.

Here's hoping you find a place this month that gives you the same joy and closeness to the Lord, whether it's for three days, three hours, or even three minutes.

## All You Holy People, Pray for Us

Thanks for the lovely emails about my latest blog take: women saints who knew each other personally--mothers and daughters, grandmothers and granddaughters, sisters, and friends. Wouldn't it have been amazing to have had a meal or some prayer time with Anna Maria Taigi and Elizabeth Canori Mora; Celine and Hedwig Borzecka; Clare and Agnes of Assisi; or Teresa of Avila and Anne of St. Bartholomew? I'll continue this series into July for a while. Do keep in mind, we are all called to holiness. Who knows? Maybe generations from now, someone will be writing about you and your bestie, mother, or daughter and the special gifts you both presented to those who knew you?



To learn more about women saints and blesseds, [see the Wednesday's Woman entries in my blog.](#)

## Friends in Faith: Joan Sheppard

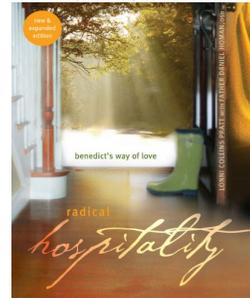
Mary's fiat, her yes to God's request that she serve as the earthly mother of his Son, inspires and challenges us all. But God's requests for us to be open to His plan continue today, and one of the most spiritually obedient, confident people I know is Joan Sheppard. For more than a decade, Joan's been working for parishes in my diocese. She's now director of faith formation at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Alexandria, and not long ago received a master in science in church management from Villanova. When God invited Joan into parish service, she had a successful, long-term career going in contracts and finance with a federal government contractor. Her surrender to the Lord inspires me as I contemplate some nudges at my own soul.



Which of your friends inspires you?

## On the Nightstand: *Radical Hospitality*

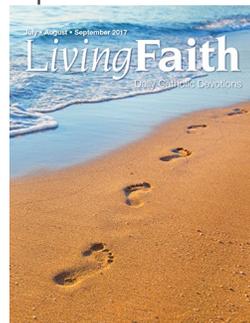
I saw this book while I was on retreat last month, and was intrigued by the cover, title, and concept, so it'll be my reading material for July. It's one of those things that sounds so simple--being hospitable to all, including strangers and those who don't think or act or believe as we do--but can be so hard to do. *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love* opens with some passages of The Rule of St. Benedict, including: "Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with attentive ears the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us, 'Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'" May we all attempt to live that call from Psalm 95 today and always in our interactions with the Lord and His people.



What's on your nightstand?

## This and That

My beloved *Walking with Purpose* women's Bible study at my parish wraps up this month and goes on hiatus until September. We spent the summer looking at the ways Jesus' coming is foretold in the Old Testament and learned a great deal about the fearlessness and trust folks like Moses, Noah, Joseph and Joshua showed (and of course, some of their all-too-humanness too). Meetings for the not-for-profit conference for *Catholic women over forty* I'm helping to organize are on my calendar too. Writing for the first 2018 issue of *Living Faith* (time really *does* fly!). And, downtime. I'm grateful for that.



May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

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