

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

## Tis the Season...



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I once had a boss who thought "Tis the season" was the most overused phrase in the English language. Well, that may be, but here we are in the season... of waiting. Of contemplating. Of preparing ourselves for the great gift of God's only begotten Son. So... tis the season! He is coming!

## "Holy Spirit, inspire me. Love of God, consume me. Along the true road, lead me." --St. Mariam Baouardy (1846-1878)



Syrian-born Mariam is known as the Lily of Palestine. Both her parents died when she was about two years old, so she was taken in by relatives. Mariam steadfastly refused an arranged marriage at thirteen despite intense family pressure. In dealing with that situation, she became acquainted with a young man who told her the answer was to convert to Islam. When she refused that as well, he slit her throat and left her for dead. Mariam credited divine intervention for her healing. Her trials did not stop there; Mariam ended up in France, where she attempted to join a community of women religious but ultimately was rejected despite her former mother superior's best efforts. The two of them then went to India and became Carmelite sisters. Mariam spent the last several years of her life in Bethlehem, where she helped to found a monastery. She was canonized in 2015.

Mariam's story reminds me that in one way or another, we are all outsiders... and we encounter outsiders every day. When we feel alone or uncertain, the Lord is always there to guide us if we surrender our will to His.

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: Heidi Hess Saxton

Heidi Hess Saxton and I first crossed virtual paths nearly twenty years ago when I was the editor of *Writer's Digest* magazine and she was a freelance writer. She was the kind of freelancer I enjoyed working with--always on time, her articles hitting the mark in content and length.

Flash forward a few years and this time I was the one pitching an article to her, an article that never quite worked. We met in person for the first time in the summer of 2015, and it as if we'd known each other forever.



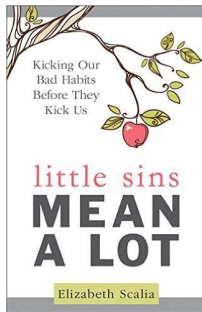
Recently, Heidi was downsized, as happens to way too many good people in publishing these days. I was struck by the grace she showed in sharing the news. As she said on her [Ask a Catholic Editor blog](#), "I'm sure God will give me another opportunity where I can (help authors), and do it well. And if he doesn't... well, I'll just wait on him until he shows me what he DOES want me to do." Heidi shows me that God's detours don't have to result in spiritual upheaval.

Which of your friends inspires you?

Congrats to Mary Ann Rozum of Vienna, VA, and another person who wished to remain anonymous. They were last month's winners of signed copies of *True Radiance* by Lisa Mladinich. Keep reading to learn about a special Advent giveaway!

## On the Nightstand: *Little Sins Mean a Lot*

Those who know me best will tell you I am good--very good, in fact--at identifying my shortcomings: bluntness. Impatience. A tendency to put myself and my needs last in favor of people pleasing. In fact, dwelling on my shortcomings becomes a shortcoming in and of itself. That's why I'm looking forward this month to reading Elizabeth Scalia's *Little Sins Mean a Lot: Kicking Our Bad Habits Before They Kick Us*. In the book, Scalia details 13 "little sins." Chapter 3 is titled "Self-Neglect." I think I'll start there!



What's on your nightstand?

## Advent Giveaway!

This year for Advent I'm offering up a Spa for the Soul Day for women... three great books and a \$10 Bath and Body Works gift certificate! To learn more about how to enter, please visit my [web site](#)... but do it quickly, as the giveaway ends Tuesday night.



Beyond that; I'm spending some time this month writing two nonfiction book proposals (not about women saints, but both involving women's spirituality)... and on novel revisions so I can send that to a literary agent I hope will be interested. But mostly, I'm excited about another year of nine 5 a.m. novena Masses (here's one of my [favorite Simbang Gabi memories](#)); a half-dozen Advent and Christmas parties in the DC area; dinner with a Chicago friend in town for work; decorating our new place with my sister; and welcoming our brother, who lives in Arkansas, for Christmas as our first overnight guest. What fun!

May your Advent be just as full of joy, wonder, and anticipation of our Lord.

May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

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