

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

## Queen of the May



As a child, I was a book series fanatic: Little House, Beany Malone, Marcy Rhodes, Donna Parker, Trixie Belden and perhaps my favorite, the Betsy-Tacy series by Maud Hart Lovelace. Betsy-Tacy took the protagonist, Betsy Warrington Ray, from her fifth birthday, when she met her lifelong bestie Tacy Kelly, through her marriage.

Betsy and the reader learned many life lessons along the way, including the sting of rejection and exclusion. The books also included a lot of cultural references to late 19th and early 20th century life. When I think of May, I think of *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*, when our intrepid heroines battle with their older sisters over having a Queen of the May contest... and ultimately give the honor to a young Syrian immigrant. The book includes part

of Tennyson's "[The May Queen](#)": "You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear ... for I'm to be Queen o'the May..." It's a beautiful though sad poem; consider checking it out.

Here's hoping your May brings much joy... and time with good friends, lifelong or new.

## A Cinderella Story: St. Isidora the Simple

St. Isidora lived in Egypt in the fourth century, and when I read her story, she reminded me of Cinderella. People like Isidora are sometimes called "fools for Christ," in that they focus on Him almost exclusively and don't much care what other people think of them. In Isidora's case, that meant the other women religious at her monastery. She did her share of the work—perhaps more than her share of the distasteful work—but beyond that, chose to spend her time in prayer and contemplation rather than in interacting with her community. For this she was shunned, disparaged, even beaten.

Then an interim Prince Charming arrived in the form of a famous hermit, who said an angel had sent him to the monastery, where he would find a woman of extraordinary grace. He talked with each of the 400-plus women to no avail. Finally, he was directed to the kitchen, where Isidora was working. He saw a light around her head and immediately paid homage to her. The other women religious quickly followed suit, confessing their sins and begging for forgiveness. (We will assume sincerely, but don't know for sure, of course.)

After a few days, Isidora grew so tired of all the fawning that she disappeared. It's thought that she went into the desert to worship as a hermitess the Prince Charming she'd had all along... Jesus.

Isidora's story reminds us to keep God front and center, whether we're being persecuted or being treated like a celebrity. False idols are false idols, after all, regardless of their form, and I doubt it's much fun being one after the initial rush. I'd rather have the happy ending we hope for in heaven.

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



## Friends in Faith: Cathy Elliott



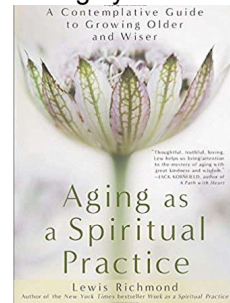
Sharon and Nikki McCutcheon

Cathy Elliott is a seeker. She's always looking for ways to deepen her relationship with the Lord, not so much in a restless way as in a thirst to grow closer. I first met her through the [Cursillo](#) movement... earlier, she was very involved in the Legion of Mary, a lay association that seeks to build up the Catholic faith. A few years ago, I was privileged to attend the gathering where Cathy took her first step toward becoming a Lay Dominican. While Cathy spends much time in prayer and contemplation, her charism also includes boundless hospitality, whether it's offering up muffins for the pre-dawn Advent novena at our old parish or opening her home to prayer discussions. Cathy shows me that devoting ourselves to God rather than treating faith as a check-the-box exercise results in inner and outer beauty.

Which of your friends inspires you?

## On the Nightstand: *Aging as a Spiritual Practice*

My memory is still pretty good, but no longer razor sharp. I need hearing aids. The gray hairs are beginning to take over. There's more sand out of the hourglass than I can reasonably expect is remaining. I might be concerned about all this if I slowed down long enough to think about it. Or I might welcome these changes. I'm hoping *Aging as a Spiritual Practice: A Contemplative Guide to Growing Older and Wiser* will help me do the latter. It's written by a Zen Buddhist priest and is said to assist those navigating the waters of age to do so with "a wealth of appreciation and gratitude for the life journey itself." Hard to argue with the need for us all to do that, regardless of how many birthdays we've had.



What's on your nightstand?

## Congrats to Candace Means!

Congrats to Candace Means, who lives not far from me in Arlington, VA! Candace won a signed copy of Lori Stanley Roeleveld's *Jesus and the Beanstalk (Overcoming Your Giants and Living a Fruitful Life)*.

If there's a book published in the past year (and written by a woman) that has helped you on your spiritual journey, please [email me](#)! If your recommendation is selected for Whitney Hopler's occasional [Author Spotlight](#) interviews on my website, you'll win a \$20 Amazon gift card.

## This and That

Lots of local fun this month. Next weekend, I'll be staffing a table for the [Arlington Diocese Council of Catholic Women](#) at an [event at my parish](#). Please stop by if you're a fellow St. Agnes parishioner (there will be chocolate!). On May 9, my friend Kathy and I will begin leading a nine-week [Walking with Purpose](#) women's Bible study at St. Agnes.

On May 20, I'll join my friend Pat Watson from [Landings International](#) at a table at the [Archdiocese of Washington's women's conference](#) at Catholic University. I'll be spreading the word about this October's [Future with Hope](#) conference in Falls Church, VA, for Catholic women over 40.

I'm also going to get together with a couple friends I haven't seen in far too long; attend a Washington Nationals baseball game; and hope the Washington Capitals can make it past Pittsburgh in the Stanley Cup playoffs. This is such a great sports town... until we get to the playoffs. :(



May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

STAY CONNECTED:



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