



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.

***"A humble soul does not trust itself, but places all its confidence in God"--Maria Faustina Kowalska***

Faustina. Oh, Faustina. How could someone like me, as proud of my Polish heritage as I am of the English and Irish lines, have not turned to you earlier? I suspect it had something to do with this saint, who died October 5, 1938, at age thirty-three, was so single-minded in her drive to fulfill Jesus's requests related to the Divine Mercy devotion. (The Divine Mercy image shows Jesus providing a blessing with his right hand; touching his heart, with rays radiating from it, with his left hand; and the words "Jesus, I trust in you" near the bottom. Catholics observe Divine Mercy Sunday the Sunday after Easter). Faustina's laser focus on the Lord at times put distance between her and other members of her congregation. Her intensity seemed almost, well, frightening.



But during Lent this year, I found myself returning again and

again to an incident that occurred when Faustina was nineteen. She was at a dance with her sister, and Jesus told her to go to Warsaw, eighty-five miles away, and join a convent. She left that night, without even talking with her parents. And so, inspired by her, I surrendered to something I knew was the Lord's desire but not mine. It's funny--or not--how much better I've slept and prayed and lived since.

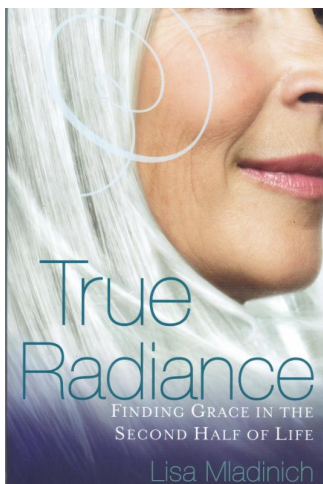
## ***Being Christ in Our Lives: Nora Lawson***

For the past ten years, Nora Lawson has been the go-to person for funerals at a parish near my home. She helped grieving families plan the readings and music and arranged for priests and post-Mass or service gatherings. Nora has a gift for listening to the stories about the loved one, and sharing those stories with the celebrant. She also spent countless hours helping the homebound, whether through her own service or by organizing others. Now, she's moving on to another parish where I am sure those gifts will be greatly appreciated. We had a little gathering recently to send her off in style, and the room was full of joy and love... just like Nora.



*Who reflects Christ to you?*

## ***On the Nightstand: True Radiance: Finding Grace in the Second Half of Life***



As some of you know, I'm part of a looseknit spiritual group of wonderful women in my area called Churchwomen of a Certain Age. (Most of us are 50 or older, though we've allowed a young'un or two in.) I didn't know any of these women when they were in their twenties or thirties, but I don't think they could have been any more lovely then. That's why I'm so excited to be reading Lisa Mladinich's *True Radiance: Finding Grace in the Second Half of Life*. The text on the back says it all:

"Prayerful, faith-filled women become more beautiful as they age, not less." Amen! I read the first chapter of Lisa's book last Sunday night, and it was difficult to stop and wait for October!

Whether you're in your second half or have a mother or sister or a friend a bit further

on life's journey than you are, this one is worth checking out.

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

## ***What's Going On***

September was a month full of blessings. I had some quiet time at a [Faithbooking](#) retreat in Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley; great food and sistership at a local [Blessed Is She](#) brunch; marvelous praise and worship with the Women's Ministry at [Holy Comforter - St. Cyprian Catholic Church](#) in Washington, DC; and a fun interview about *Blessed Are You* with "[Catholic Views](#)" radio show. But the highlight, without a doubt, was attending the Junipero Serra canonization Mass at the [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#)... and actually getting two glimpses of Pope Francis. God was definitely good; I was one of four people in my parish who won tickets in a lottery. The photo was taken at the end of Mass as people were leaving... and chatting about this amazing gift.



This month, I'm headed back to South Dakota to speak about women saints to Catholic Daughters at [Saints Peter and Paul Church](#) in Pierre, and to get together with some wonderful relatives as well as friends I haven't seen for far too long. I hope October is good to you as well.

May God bless you exceedingly! Melanie

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