



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.

"When God is the only goal, all disagreements are smoothed out, all difficulties overcome." --Saint Virginia Centurione Bracelli

Virginia (feast day, December 15) knew a bit about difficulties and disagreements. Born in Italy in 1587 to aristocratic parents, she wanted to become a woman religious. But her parents moved forward with plans for an arranged marriage when she was fifteen, a marriage to a man who drank and gambled too much. He died five years later, having repented, leaving her with two daughters. Virginia began working among the sick and elderly, part time at first, then devoted herself to this ministry after her daughters had grown. In its heyday, her organization had several locations serving hundreds of people and had government-encouraged sponsors. Eventually, Virginia left the leadership and went back to begging on the streets for those she served. Ironically, more than half her twenty-plus grandchildren entered religious life. Her story reminds me of the importance to serve where the Lord puts us, even if it's in a parish or job or ministry that is not what we had in mind.



Being Christ in Our Lives: Patricia Watson

Patricia Watson, a wife, mother of two, and grandmother of two adorable



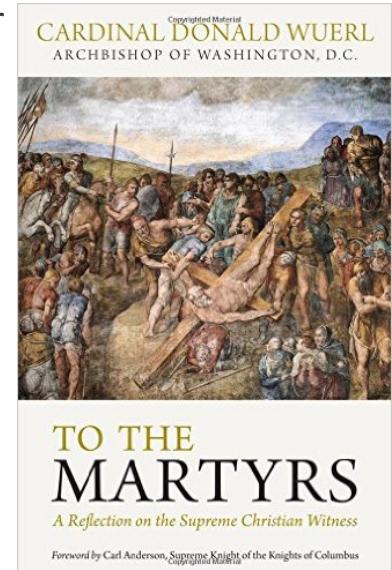
grandchildren, spent most of her working life as a teacher. And she enjoyed it immensely! Then one day, the bulletin for her Washington, DC, church had a notice looking for help with Landings International, a Paulist ministry for those considering a return to the Catholic Church. Pat says she decided to sign up because she knew and respected the parish contact who was listed. That decision led Pat into a whole new ministry. These days, she assists [Landings International](#) Director Father Thomas Kane, CSP, including representing the program at numerous conferences. This photo was taken at such a conference in November where Landings invited me to share table space. Pat inspires me by the way she says YES to God... and her positive, giving nature.

Who reflects Christ to you?

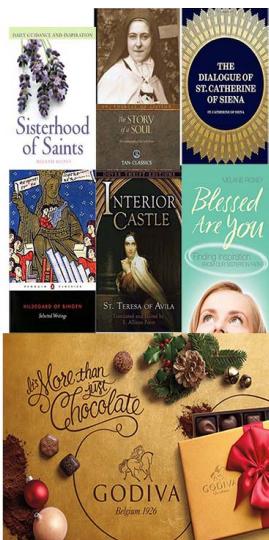
On the Nightstand: To the Martyrs: A Reflection on the Supreme Christian Witness

I've had some intense conversations with friends on whether it's harder to live for Christ or to die for him. Let's just agree that both are extremely challenging, and that martyrdom goes on today, in more places and situations than we care to acknowledge. Perhaps Pope Francis said it best, recently calling Christian persecution "a form of genocide." I'm looking forward to spending time this month with Cardinal Donald Wuerl's new book about martyrdom through the ages, including those who suffer for their faith today.

What's on your nightstand?



What's Going On



What's going on? A lot. I suspect it's the same in your household. I hope you'll check out my giveaway of books by the four women Doctors of the Catholic Church (Saints Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and Hildegard of Bingen), my saints books, and Godiva chocolate. The giveaway begins later today and runs through December 10. More details are available at my [website](#).

Speaking of giveaways, my friend [Pat Gohn](#) has a great one, including my books, going at her site. I hope you'll enter there as well. I'm also humbled to be the guest this week on Pat's Among Women podcast.

In addition, I'll be at the [Paschal Lamb](#)'s annual Advent open house this Saturday, December 5, in Fairfax, VA, from 1 to 3 p.m. And the following Saturday, December 12, come join us for Shopping, Scones, and Saints at 5 p.m. at [Joyful Spirit Gifts](#) near my home here in Arlington, VA.

What else do Advent and Christmas look like here? A sing-along "Messiah." Continued participation in the Walking with Purpose women's Bible study program at my parish. Most of the nine-day [Simbang Gabi](#) 5 a.m. Mass novena (yawn!) that begins at my old parish December 16. A trip out of town for the day job. A peaceful week in Santa Fe, hopefully including Christmas Eve Mass at the cathedral, with my longtime friend and romance author [Blythe Gifford](#).

May your Advent and Christmas be full of joy and wonder! Melanie

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