

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



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The Promises of Lent

Hello friends! Welcome back! Can you believe Ash Wednesday is a little more than a week away? Lent is my favorite liturgical season, a season of repentance and promises of redemption and renewal. Please let me know yours at my [blog](#).

Women Saints and Mercy

A little later this month, I'll be writing about Blessed Zdenka Cecilia Schelingova and the corporal act of mercy of visiting the imprisoned. Zdenka, a Slovakian nun, had a short life--from 1916 to 1955. But during that time, she not only helped an imprisoned priest escape from the hospital where she was working, she also went to prison herself for treason because of that act and attempting to help others escape. Zdenka was tortured in horrible ways and, to make matters worse, when she was released shortly before her death, her motherhouse and the hospital where she had worked both refused to take her in, fearful of the political consequences. But while Zdenka was broken physically, she remained strong spiritually. I love this quote from her: "I fill every hour of my life with the readiness to accept God's action and his graces."



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See the Wednesday's Woman entries in my blog.

Friends in Faith

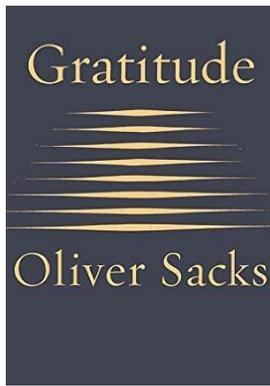
Christy Belt Grossman calls herself an introvert, and says that's why she works "behind the scenes" as the chief operating officer and social media guru of a family-founded northern Virginia real estate firm, [The Belt Team](#). Consider the firm's values: "God, Family, Then Business." Even if I hadn't already known Christy, the Belt Team would have been the Realtors my sister and I chose when we decided to buy a condo in 2014. Christy lives those values personally every day, putting the Lord first, followed by her beloved husband Bill; daughters Katie and Melissa; her parents and brother; and her other colleagues and those of us privileged to call her a friend.

Christy has a real servant's heart, whether she's ministering to her community or her clients. I am inspired by the way she challenges herself and moves out of her comfort zone when the Lord calls.



Which of your friends inspires you?

On the Nightstand



Some members of my family select a word each year to attempt to live by. (One word is easier to remember than a whole slew of resolutions, after all.) My word this year is gratitude, because I find myself being cranky and complaining about the small stuff rather than being grateful for all my blessings. I was talking about this with friends recently, and one couple recommended I read Oliver Sacks' *Gratitude*. He's the neurologist who died last summer, and is perhaps best known for *Awakenings*, which was turned into a movie. It's a short book—fewer than fifty pages—but based on my friends' recommendations, I'm anticipating it will be a slow, thought-provoking read.

What's on your nightstand?

What's Going On?

So. February. Lots of opportunities to see a lot of my DC area friends and make some new ones.

- A doubleheader on **February 21** for women saints and the Jubilee Year of Mercy. I'll be at [St. Peter Catholic Church](#) in Washington, VA, for a talk and discussion in the morning, and in the evening, will be presenting at [St. Timothy Catholic Church](#) in Chantilly, VA.
- Snowzilla delayed this one from January, but on **February 22**, I'll be with my friends at [Landings International](#) for a webinar titled "Feed His Sheep—What You Need to Know About Returning Catholics." More fun on **February 27**, when I've been given space at the Landings table at the [2016 Archdiocese of Washington Women's Conference](#) in Bladensburg, MD. Oh, and if you're a Cursillista or would like to know more about this apostolic movement to help people grow in faith and Christian leadership, the evening of the 27th, I'll be giving a witness on transformation at a [Cursillo gathering](#) at my home parish of St. Agnes in Arlington, VA.
- And, the evening of **February 23**, I'll be talking about how the women saints' journeys can inspire and inform our lives today at [St. Elizabeth Catholic Church](#) in Rockville, MD.

May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

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