

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

In Black and White and Brrr!



No, this is not how things look right now in Your Nation's Capital. The photo was taken in the winter of 1880-1881 in Dakota Territory where Laura Ingalls Wilder's children's book *The Long Winter* was set. In fact, a nine-day blizzard started there on February 2, 1881. Let's hope that doesn't happen again! Stay warm and dry wherever you are, as we near winter's midpoint.

"The Lord has loved me so much; we must love everyone." -- St. Josephine Bakhita (1868-1947)



Bakhita was one of the saints the Brownies at my parish and I chatted about a few weeks ago. (I hope they had half as much fun as I did!) I chose to talk about Bakhita with them because she was about their age when slave traders stole her from her family and scared her so much that she never remembered her name or birthdate. She was sold and resold, and branded all over her body other than her face. Eventually, she ended up with a family in Italy, and became a Christian when she learned about Jesus while she took care of the family's daughter, who attended parochial school.

The Church helped Bakhita win her freedom, and she then became a Canossian sister. The Brownies and I talked about what Bakhita said when she was asked later about what she would say if she encountered the slave traders. She said she would kiss their feet, because if it had not been for them, she would not have become a Christian. Bakhita's example reminds me that holding on to anger or bitterness, no matter how horrific the treatment we have received, accomplishes nothing and is not what the Lord desires.

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: Betsy Dill

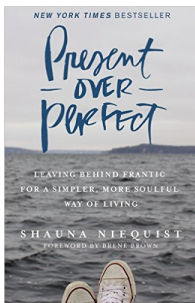
Every time I see something in my inbox from Betsy Dill, I smile. I know it's going to be filled with positivity, excitement, and faith. Betsy is the co-director of [Capital Christian Writers](#), and we've known each other for close to two decades. It all started back when I was editor of *Writer's Digest* magazine, living in Cincinnati, and CCW asked me to come out and give a one-day workshop. It was one of my first workshops as WD editor, and I hadn't been a practicing Christian for decades. But Betsy's bubbly nature spoke to me from the get-go. When I moved to northern Virginia and rediscovered faith, I joined CCW.

Since I've known her, Betsy has experienced more than her share of health, financial, and work challenges. She juggles so many part-time jobs, it boggles my mind. But you'll never hear a complaint out of her. Every struggle becomes a funny story, or a lesson learned. Betsy shows me that the Lord's grace is sufficient in every situation. We just have to believe it... and have some fun along the way.



Which of your friends inspires you?

On the Nightstand: *Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living*



The older I get, the less frantic my life becomes. Oh, things still are crazy at times, but overall, I'm learning to not to overcommit quite so much, and to say no more often. I'm hoping to pick up more tips and skills from this book by Shauna Niequist on embracing what's important and gently stepping away from what is less so.

What's on your nightstand?

Speaking of What's Important...

I'll be in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area the weekend of February 24, visiting family and friends and attending the 2017 WINE: Catholic Women's Conference. Closer to home, I'll be meeting a friend's beautiful three-month-old infant, reconnecting with a longtime friend who's going to be in town for work, and taking my sister to her first-ever professional hockey game (#gocaps #rockthered).

May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie

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