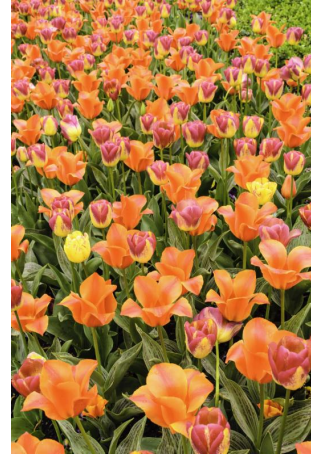


Of saints, friends, books, and what's going on in my crazy life.

The Promise and Glory of Spring

It was a ritual for many years. My friend Peter and I would spend a lunchtime or two each spring at the National Park Service Floral Library near where we worked. We'd view the thousands of tulips and their cousins, and talk about Lent and Easter and what we'd done and read to attempt to grow closer to Christ in this holiest of seasons. (This photo isn't from the Floral Library, but it brought back memories.)

Then I got a different job, not within walking distance of the Floral Library. Peter and I still get together frequently to talk about faith and life, but I miss those walks and the dizzying array of flowers, here just for a few weeks, then gone. Here's to special friends, the beauty of nature, and the Lord who brings them both to us.



It Only Takes a Spark...

In this space, I typically write about a woman saint who inspires me. But this month, I'm thinking about the people around them whose holiness we may overlook. The Vatican



announced this month that Sister Rani Maria of India, who was murdered in 1995, will be beatified later this year. The grace around her story didn't end with her death. Her sister eventually became friends with the man, who said he had a "rebirth" during their first meeting, and her family successfully sought his release from prison. A [documentary](#) on this story is available. The story reminds me in many ways of that of Maria Goretti, a child who forgave her murderer on her deathbed; he later had a conversion experience, was forgiven by Maria's mother, and attended the girl's canonization.

Truly, Rani Maria and Maria Goretti are examples of holiness. So are their families. And so are their killers... who show us all that no one is beyond redemption.

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

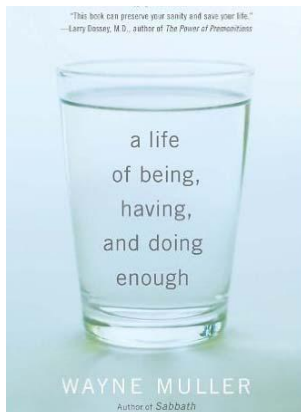
Friends in Faith: Molly Kiko

Molly Eschelbach Kiko is great at saying yes to God... and following with a smile where He leads. Molly, who suffers from a degenerative eye disease that eventually will lead to the loss of nearly all her sight, said yes to Mileigh, her guide dog and friend who helps her navigate confidently everywhere outside her home, including when she cantors at Mass. Molly said yes to another friend when he asked her to marry him... and move to Arlington, VA, hundreds of miles from her family in Michigan. A lifelong Lutheran with a master's in theological studies, she said yes to converting to Catholicism a few years ago. To many of us, Molly's life is fraught with challenges. To Molly, it's all about following fearlessly.

Which of your friends inspires you?



On the Nightstand: *A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough*



My parish's latest *Walking with Purpose* women's Bible study session ended last week (wah! we all cried), and a new session won't begin for a few weeks. So, in the meantime, besides Scripture, I'll be reading a book a member recommended: Wayne Muller's *A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough*. I don't have so much of a problem with the having part, but oh, to have the faith I'm doing enough... and am enough. Muller also wrote *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, which I featured here a while back and found very helpful.

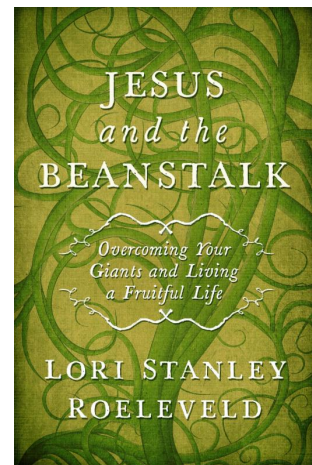
What's on your nightstand?

Fairy Tales *DO* Come True: Book Giveaway!

Remember the story of Jack and the Beanstalk? Author Lori Stanley Roeleveld has a new take on it: *Jesus and the Beanstalk (Overcoming Your Giants and Living a Fruitful Life)*. In an [interview](#) with Whitney Hopley, Lori shows how this story can help us grow in faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, affection for others, and love. I hope you'll take a look at the interview and consider checking out Lori's books and blogs.

Lori is offering a signed copy of her book—thanks, Lori! I hope you'll consider [entering](#) by the deadline of noon next Saturday.

May God bless you exceedingly! --Melanie



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