

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

'Enough' Is the Winner!



Happy February! Thanks to those of you who shared your word for the year--I've captured some of them above. Lauren Puzder of Bristow, VA, whose word is "Enough" was selected at random as the drawing winner. Lauren decided on *The Extraordinary Parents of St. Therese of Lisieux: Sts. Louis and Zelig Martin* as the resource to help her live "Enough" in 2018. Congratulations, Lauren!

Lent

It's going to be an interesting Lent (but aren't they all, even if your denomination doesn't observe it?). After all, when was the last time Ash Wednesday fell on Valentine's Day and Easter on April 1?



Call me a cheat, call me lazy, but my "giving up" is going to be what it was all through January: no sugar, no carbs, no dairy, no Starbucks iced venti decaf skinny mochas. So far, I'm feeling great... not at all what I expected from this form of self-mortification.

Whether you're Catholic or not, you know about ashes on Ash Wednesday, I'm sure. (if I'm wrong, check out Bill Donaghy's [great guide](#).) Last year (great cross, bad hair and makeup day) was the first time I remember ending up with anything other than "The Blob."

All joking aside, Lent is my favorite liturgical season. It makes me slow down. It makes me think about those last forty days of Jesus' life... and the glorious hope His resurrection gives us all.

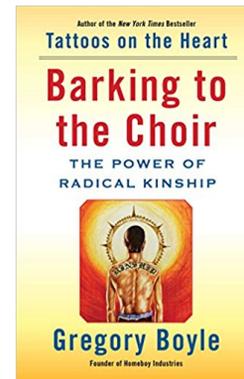
On the Nightstand: *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship*

At a recent lunch with some friends, the conversation turned to what we were reading. One friend, who happens to be a priest, recommended *Barking to the Choir* by Father Gregory Boyle who founded Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, a gang intervention program. Some of you may remember his *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. I picked this book for my February

reading not only because of my friend's recommendation, but also because of a recent homily in which my pastor said something to the effect of "Jesus doesn't call us to save the world--He's already done that. He calls us to comfort it."

There aren't too many gang members in my life, but there surely are people I find difficult to love because of what I perceive as swagger and attitude. I'm looking forward to a few chuckles and a lot of opportunities to feel humbled in reading this book.

What's on your nightstand?



Whoosh! Catch Me If You Can

This is one of those months. One of those two months, really. But one day at a time, right? I'm just saying that I wish this February had an extra day (or five).

Next weekend, I'll be staffing a parish pre-Lenten ministry table for a couple of organizations. The following brings Ash Wednesday, and then that weekend there's a board retreat for one of those groups.



Then on **February 24**, I'll be in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley for the Future with Hope Women's **Lenten Day of Reflection** featuring **Rose Folsom**. If you're in the area and haven't already registered, I hope you'll consider joining us.

The following week, I'll be in Ames, Iowa, visiting my niece (Go Cyclones!) and some friends, and speaking on women saints and Lent on **March 1** at **Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish** in Ankeny.

And yes, I'm still writing. A lot.

May February bring you many glimpses of the Lord! --Melanie

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