

Introduction

Pondering Life More

These stories go back and forth over eighteen years of my life, the years I spent raising children and helping my husband build his businesses. They reflect my growing desire to understand some of the reasons for being here, alive, on earth. When the book *Lean In* came out, urging women to step up their leadership in professional life, my initial response was, *Oh brother!* Women are already doing everything—now we also have to lean in? But all the talk about leaning in got me thinking about women who have had tremendous effects on this world, and yet, like so many, haven't gotten their due.

I decided to adopt a hobby: Wherever I was lucky enough to travel, if a shrine dedicated to a female saint was nearby, I would take myself there and make of it what I could. From my grandfather Cassidy's side of the family, my Catholic heritage goes back more than a thousand years. That is not an easy ship to jump from when the waters get rough, which they have been lately. In turning my eyes toward the women saints, I have found some fun, a lightness to the landscape where questions sprout everywhere—questions such as: So her body hasn't decomposed?

And she did what? With no money? And everybody said, no, no, no to her, but she did it anyway?

I didn't pre-select these lady saints. In a way, they selected me—I made the trek to see their shrines or miraculous sites only if my travels had brought me nearby. These “treks to go see” became enchanting alternatives to the repetitive realities of regular life. I could let my mind trip around between the seen and unseen worlds. These little adventures built up a fire in me for something I'd always had, but now have in infinitely richer ways: a love of God. These travels have taken me deep into God's world, coloring every aspect of my day. It's gorgeous and it's weird. And I have my time with the lady saints to thank for that.

A saint is a person who, when alive, did extraordinarily amazing things for...well, us all, really. Bestowing sainthood on someone is the Church's way of acknowledging this. And as I've gotten to know some of these women of history whose works live on, I've found the Church's acknowledgments to be more than deserved.

So...let's take an adventure together and wonder over the strange and inspiring achievements of gals who not only leaned in and broke glass ceilings, they actually bent reality.





