THE DAILY BREAD

The Fiat of the Beloved



The Cloud of Witnesses

Women Saints

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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The Communion of Saints for Women

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INTRODUCTION

You Are Not the First

Every woman who tries to live her faith seriously comes, sooner or later, to a feeling of being alone in it, as though she were facing her particular struggles, her doubts, her failures, her longings, by herself, the first to walk this hard and narrow road. The temptations she fights feel like hers alone; the doubts she wrestles seem like no one else's; the longing for holiness that keeps outrunning her reach feels like a private and lonely burden. And so the life of faith can feel like a solitary climb, a woman alone against her weaknesses, with no one who has gone before and no one beside her on the way.

The Catholic faith says something entirely different. It says that a woman is not alone, that she is not the first to face what she is facing, that she walks her road in the company of everyone who has ever walked it well, a great multitude of women and men who faced the same temptations, doubts, failures, and longings, and found a way through. These are the saints, and they are not distant marble figures in stained glass but sisters and mothers in faith, a living communion surrounding every woman who believes, praying for her, cheering her on, showing her the way. This book is an invitation to discover that she is not alone, that she belongs to a great cloud of witnesses, a living communion of saints who have gone before and who walk with her still.

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. — Hebrews 12:1

The Scripture pictures the woman of faith not as a solitary runner but as a runner surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, a stadium full of those who have finished the race and who now surround and cheer the ones still running. This book will show what that means: that the communion of saints is a living reality, a present community and not a doctrine about the past; that the saints are sisters and mothers, not marble figures, who faced what every woman faces; that holiness is not for extraordinary people but for ordinary women like her; that the saints are praying for her right now; that she can learn from those who went before; that they finished the race and so prove it can be done; and that she is made for the company of this great multitude. A woman is not alone, and this book is an invitation to discover the great company that surrounds her.

CHAPTER ONE

A Living Communion

Not a Doctrine About the Past

The first thing to understand about the saints is that the communion of saints is a living reality, a present community of which a woman is a part, and not merely a doctrine about holy people who lived long ago. The Church professes belief in the communion of saints, and this is not a statement about history but about a present and living fellowship that binds together all the members of Christ, those on earth, those being purified, and those in glory, into one living communion. Understanding the communion of saints as a living reality, a present community and not a doctrine about the past, is the foundation of a woman's relationship with the saints.

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. — Ephesians 2:19

One Household Across Death

The communion of saints means that all the members of Christ, whether on earth or in heaven, belong to one household, one family that death does not divide, so that a woman is joined in a living fellowship with the saints in glory. In Christ, death does not sever the bonds of the family of God, and so those who have died in Christ are not cut off from the living but remain members of the same household, the same body, bound to those still on earth in a communion that death cannot break. This means a woman is a fellow citizen with the saints, a member of the same household of God, joined to those in glory in a living fellowship that spans the divide of death, part of one family that includes the saints in heaven. The communion of saints is therefore not a distant doctrine but a present reality of belonging, a woman joined in one household to all who are in Christ, living and dead. One household across death is the heart of the communion of saints, that all the members of Christ belong to one family that death does not divide, so that a woman is joined in living fellowship to the saints in glory, a fellow citizen with them and a member of the same household of God.

A Present Community

Because the communion of saints is a living reality, the saints are not figures of the past but a present community, alive in glory, aware of and joined to the woman on earth, so that her relationship with them is with living persons, not with memories. The saints are not dead and gone but alive in God, more alive than they ever were on earth, present to God and, in Him, present to the woman who is joined to them in the communion of saints, so that they form a living community surrounding her now. This changes a woman's relationship with the saints from the admiration of historical figures to the fellowship of a living community, a company of sisters and mothers who are alive and

present, joined to her in the communion of saints and aware of her as she runs her race. The woman who grasps that the communion of saints is a present community relates to the saints not as figures of the past but as living members of her own family, present and alive in glory. A present community is what the saints are, alive in glory and joined to the woman on earth rather than figures of the past, so that her relationship with them is with living persons, a company of sisters and mothers present and aware of her now.

A Communion She Belongs To

The communion of saints is not something a woman observes from outside but a communion she belongs to, a family of which she is a member, so that the saints are her own family, her sisters and mothers, and she has a place among them. A woman does not stand outside the communion of saints looking in, admiring a company she is not part of, but belongs to that communion herself, a member of the same household, joined to the saints as family, with a place among the great company that surrounds her. This belonging means the saints are hers, her own sisters and mothers in faith, and that she is not a stranger to them but a member of their family, joined to them in the communion of saints and surrounded by them as her own. The woman who knows she belongs to the communion of saints relates to the saints as family, as her own sisters and mothers, not as distant figures she admires from outside but as the company to which she herself belongs. A communion she belongs to is what the saints offer, a family of which a woman is a member rather than one she observes from outside, so that the saints are her own sisters and mothers in faith and she has a place among the great company that surrounds her.

CHAPTER TWO

Sisters and Mothers, Not Marble

They Faced What You Face

The saints are often imagined as distant, perfect, marble figures, serene and untroubled, utterly unlike an ordinary struggling woman, but this image is false, for the saints were real women and men who faced the same temptations, doubts, failures, and longings that every woman carries, and they are sisters and mothers, not marble. To know the saints rightly is to know them not as flawless statues but as real people who struggled as a woman struggles and found a way through, sisters and mothers in faith who understand her because they faced what she faces.

Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother. — Mark 3:35

Real Women Who Struggled

The women saints were not born serene and perfect but were real women who struggled, who battled temptation, wrestled doubt, failed and repented, longed and waited, and became holy not by escaping these struggles but through them. The saints knew the full range of a woman's struggles, for they were sinners before they were saints, people who fought their weaknesses, endured their doubts, suffered their failures, and carried their longings, and their holiness was not the absence of these struggles but the fruit of grappling with them by grace. This means the saints understand a woman's struggles from the inside, for they faced them too, and their holiness is not a rebuke to her struggles but a proof that holiness is reached through such struggles and not around them. The woman who knows the saints as real women who struggled finds in them not distant perfection but sisters who understand, who faced what she faces and became holy through it. Real women who struggled is what the saints were, not serene and perfect from birth but people who battled temptation, doubt, failure, and longing and became holy through these struggles rather than around them, so that they understand a woman's struggles from the inside.

Sisters and Mothers in Faith

Because the saints faced what a woman faces, they are not distant figures but sisters and mothers in faith, members of her own family who understand her and walk with her, close rather than remote. Jesus called whoever does the will of God His brother and sister and mother, binding those who follow God into a family, and the saints are a woman's family in this sense, her sisters who faced the same road and her mothers who can guide her, close to her because they are her own. This means a woman can relate to the saints with the closeness of family, bringing her struggles to sisters who understand them and seeking the guidance of mothers who have walked the road, finding in the saints not remote figures but close companions who know her from the inside. The woman who knows the saints as sisters and mothers relates to them as family, close and understanding, not as marble figures but as her own. Sisters and mothers in faith is what the saints are, members of a woman's own family who understand her because they faced what she faces, so that she can relate to them with the closeness of family, bringing her struggles to sisters who understand and seeking the guidance of mothers who walked the road.

Companions Who Understand

The saints, having faced what a woman faces, are companions who understand her particular struggles, so that for nearly every situation a woman meets, there is a saint

who faced something like it and can accompany her through it. Whatever a woman carries, a difficult marriage, the loss of a child, a wayward son, chronic illness, doubt, loneliness, the struggle for holiness in ordinary life, there is a saint who carried something like it and found a way through, a sister who understands that particular burden from the inside. This means a woman is never alone in her particular struggle, for there is a saint who faced it, a companion who understands and can walk with her through what she is facing, having faced it herself. The woman who knows the saints as companions who understand finds, for whatever she carries, a sister who faced something like it and can accompany her through it. Companions who understand is what the saints are, having faced what a woman faces so that for nearly every situation there is a saint who met something like it, a sister who understands that particular burden from the inside and can walk with her through it.

CHAPTER THREE

Holiness Is for You

Your Ordinary Life Qualifies

Many women carry a quiet assumption that the saints were extraordinary people living extraordinary lives, and that their own ordinary life, with its dishes and diapers and daily routines, somehow does not qualify for holiness, which belongs to others. This assumption is false, and the saints themselves correct it directly, for holiness is the call of every baptized woman, reached not by extraordinary deeds but in and through the ordinary life she actually lives. Understanding that holiness is for every woman, that her ordinary life qualifies, removes the greatest obstacle between a woman and the sainthood she is made for.

This is the will of God, your sanctification. — 1 Thessalonians 4:3

The Universal Call to Holiness

The call to holiness is not for a select few but for every baptized woman, the will of God for each of His children, so that holiness is not an extraordinary vocation for the rare but the ordinary calling of every woman. The Church teaches that all the faithful, whatever their state of life, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity, that holiness is the will of God for every woman and not the special preserve of priests, religious, or spiritual elites. This means a woman is called to be a saint, not as a remote or optional possibility but as the very purpose of her baptism, the will of God for her life, the destiny for which she was made. The woman who grasps the universal call to

holiness understands that sainthood is not for others but for her, the ordinary calling of her baptism and the will of God for her life. The universal call to holiness means that holiness is the will of God for every baptized woman and not the preserve of a select few, so that a woman is called to be a saint as the very purpose of her baptism, the destiny for which she was made.

Holiness in the Ordinary

The saints became holy not mainly through extraordinary deeds but in and through the ordinary circumstances of their lives, and so holiness is reached not by escaping a woman's ordinary life but within it, in the faithful doing of ordinary duties with love. Many of the saints lived outwardly ordinary lives, and even those who did great things became holy chiefly through fidelity in small things, through love poured into ordinary duties, so that holiness is not a matter of extraordinary acts but of ordinary life lived with extraordinary love. This means a woman's ordinary life, her duties and routines, her care for her family, her daily work, is not an obstacle to holiness but the very material of it, the place where she becomes holy by doing ordinary things with love. The woman who understands holiness in the ordinary sees her daily life not as a barrier to sainthood but as the path to it, the place where holiness is actually reached through love poured into ordinary duties. Holiness in the ordinary means the saints became holy through the ordinary circumstances of their lives rather than through extraordinary deeds, so that a woman's ordinary life and duties are not an obstacle to holiness but the very material of it, the place where she becomes holy by doing ordinary things with love.

The Little Way

One of the women Doctors of the Church, Saint Therese of Lisieux, gave the Church a path to holiness she called the little way, the way of becoming holy through small things done with great love, and this little way shows every ordinary woman that her life qualifies for sainthood. Therese, who lived a hidden life in a convent and died young, taught that holiness is reached not by great deeds but by doing small, ordinary things with great love, offering the little duties and sacrifices of each day to God with love and trust, a way open to everyone, however ordinary their life. This little way corrects directly the assumption that holiness requires extraordinary deeds, showing that the smallest acts of an ordinary life, done with love, are the very path to sainthood, so that a woman's ordinary life is not too small for holiness but exactly where holiness is found. The woman who learns the little way sees that her ordinary life, with its small duties done in love, is the path to the sainthood she is made for. The little way of Saint Therese of Lisieux shows that holiness is reached by doing small, ordinary things with great love, so that an

ordinary woman's life qualifies for sainthood, her smallest daily duties, offered to God with love, becoming the very path to holiness.

CHAPTER FOUR

They Are Praying for You Now

The Intercession of the Saints

The saints in glory are not passive but active on behalf of the woman on earth, praying for her, interceding for her before God, so that she is surrounded not only by witnesses who went before but by intercessors who are pleading for her right now. This is one of the most consoling truths of the communion of saints, that a woman is not alone in her prayer but joined by a great company of saints who pray with her and for her, carrying her needs before God. Understanding that the saints are praying for her now, interceding for her before God, assures a woman that she is surrounded by prayer and never prays alone.

The twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. — Revelation 5:8

The Saints Pray for You

The saints in heaven, united to God in love, share His love for the woman on earth and intercede for her, praying for her before the throne of God, so that she is the object of their prayers even now. The saints in glory are not indifferent to those still running the race but, filled with God's love, love the woman on earth and pray for her, bringing her before God, interceding for her needs, caring for her as members of the same family care for one another. This means a woman is surrounded by intercessors, a great company of saints who are praying for her right now, carrying her before God in love, so that she is never alone in her need but upheld by the prayers of the saints. The woman who knows the saints pray for her understands that she is the object of a great company's intercession, upheld in her struggles by sisters and mothers who bring her before God. The saints pray for you, united to God in love and sharing His love for the woman on earth, interceding for her before the throne so that she is the object of their prayers even now, surrounded by a great company who carry her before God in love.

Asking Their Prayers

Because the saints pray for the woman on earth, she can ask for their prayers as she would ask a friend on earth to pray for her, seeking the intercession of the saints who are so near to God. Just as a woman asks those she trusts on earth to pray for her, she can ask the saints in glory, who are alive and near to God, to pray for her, seeking their intercession and enlisting their powerful prayers on her behalf. This asking is not worship, which belongs to God alone, but the seeking of a sister's prayer, the request that those who love her and are near to God would bring her needs before Him, and it enlists the saints as intercessors in a woman's own struggles and prayers. The woman who asks the saints' prayers enlists a great company of intercessors near to God, seeking their prayers as she would seek the prayers of a trusted friend, but from sisters already in glory. Asking their prayers means seeking the intercession of the saints as a woman would ask a friend on earth to pray for her, not worship but the request that those near to God would bring her needs before Him, enlisting the saints as powerful intercessors in her own struggles.

Never Praying Alone

Because she is surrounded by the praying saints, a woman never prays alone but joins her prayer to the prayers of a great company, so that her small prayer is taken up into the mighty intercession of the whole communion of saints. When a woman prays, she does not pray in isolation but adds her voice to the prayer of the whole Church, living and dead, joining the great chorus of the saints who are praying before God, so that her prayer is upheld and surrounded by theirs. This means a woman's prayer, however small or weak it feels, is never alone but joined to the prayers of the saints, taken up into a great company's intercession, surrounded and strengthened by the prayer of the whole communion. The woman who knows she never prays alone prays with confidence, joining her prayer to the great company of the saints and knowing that her small voice is upheld by their mighty chorus. Never praying alone is the gift of the communion of saints, that a woman joins her prayer to the prayers of a great company rather than praying in isolation, so that her small prayer is taken up into the mighty intercession of the whole communion and surrounded by the prayer of the saints.

CHAPTER FIVE

Learning from Those Who Went Before

The Saints as Teachers

The saints are not only intercessors but teachers, women and men who learned how to follow God and who pass on what they learned, so that a woman can learn from those who went before, drawing on their wisdom and imitating their faith. The Church holds up the saints not merely to be admired but to be imitated and learned from, for they discovered how to live the faith well, and their lives and teachings are a treasury of wisdom for the woman still learning the way. Understanding that a woman can learn from those who went before, imitating their faith and drawing on their wisdom, opens the saints as teachers for her own journey.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. — Hebrews 13:7

Imitating Their Faith

The Scripture counsels remembering those who went before and imitating their faith, considering how they lived and following their example, and so a woman learns from the saints by imitating the faith they modeled. The saints show, by the outcome of their way of life, what faith looks like lived out, how to trust God, how to endure suffering, how to love, how to persevere, and a woman learns from them by considering their example and imitating their faith, following the path they walked. This imitation is not slavish copying but learning the shape of faith from those who lived it well, taking the saints as models of how to follow God and letting their example teach and form her own faith. The woman who imitates the saints' faith learns from those who went before, taking their lives as models and letting their example shape how she follows God. Imitating their faith means learning from the saints by considering how they lived and following their example, taking them as models of how to trust, endure, love, and persevere, so that their example teaches and forms a woman's own faith.

A Treasury of Wisdom

The saints, and especially the Doctors of the Church, left a treasury of spiritual wisdom, teaching on prayer, on suffering, on the interior life, and a woman can draw on this wisdom as a rich inheritance for her own journey. Among the saints are the Doctors of the Church, including women like Saint Teresa of Avila, who taught deeply on prayer, and Saint Catherine of Siena, whose wisdom shaped the Church, and their teachings, along with the writings and examples of countless saints, form a treasury of spiritual wisdom available to every woman. A woman need not learn the spiritual life from scratch, for the saints have mapped the way, leaving guidance on prayer, on the struggles of the soul, on growth in holiness, a treasury she can draw on for her own journey. The woman who draws on the saints' wisdom inherits a rich treasury, learning the spiritual life from

those who mapped it and finding in their teaching guidance for her own way. A treasury of wisdom is what the saints left, especially the Doctors of the Church, teaching on prayer, suffering, and the interior life, so that a woman can draw on their guidance as a rich inheritance rather than learning the spiritual life from scratch.

Finding Your Teachers

Among the great company of the saints, a woman can find particular teachers whose lives and wisdom especially speak to her, saints who become her guides and companions on the way, teaching her from their own experience. Not every saint will speak to every woman in the same way, but among the great company each woman can find certain saints whose lives resonate with hers, whose struggles mirror her own, whose wisdom meets her needs, and these become her particular teachers and companions on the journey. Finding such teachers among the saints gives a woman guides who speak to her situation, saints she returns to, learns from, and walks with, drawing on their particular wisdom for her particular road. The woman who finds her teachers among the saints gains guides and companions whose lives and wisdom especially speak to her, learning from those whose road resembled her own. Finding your teachers means discovering among the great company of the saints particular ones whose lives and wisdom especially speak to a woman, saints who become her guides and companions, teaching her from their own experience and meeting her particular needs.

CHAPTER SIX

They Finished the Race

Proof That It Can Be Done

The saints are living proof that the race of faith can be finished, that an ordinary, struggling person can reach holiness and glory, and this is one of their greatest gifts to the woman still running, the encouragement of those who made it. When holiness feels impossible and a woman wonders whether she can ever reach it, the saints answer by their own lives, for they were ordinary strugglers like her and they finished the race, proving that what feels impossible is in fact possible by grace. Understanding that the saints finished the race, that they are proof it can be done, gives a woman courage to keep running when holiness feels beyond her.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. — 2 Timothy 4:7

Ordinary People Who Made It

The saints were ordinary people who struggled as a woman struggles and yet finished the race, and this proves that holiness is possible not only for the exceptional but for ordinary strugglers, for people like her. If the saints had been superhuman, their success would prove nothing for an ordinary woman, but they were ordinary people who battled the same weaknesses, and their finishing the race proves that an ordinary struggler can reach the goal, that holiness is possible for people like her. This means a woman can look at the saints and see not an impossible standard but a possible one, proof that someone like her, struggling as she struggles, can finish the race and reach holiness by the grace available to her too. The woman who sees the saints as ordinary people who made it finds in them proof that she can make it too, that holiness is possible for an ordinary struggler like herself. Ordinary people who made it is what the saints were, strugglers like a woman who yet finished the race, proving that holiness is possible not only for the exceptional but for ordinary people like her, reachable by the grace available to her too.

Encouragement to Keep Running

Because the saints finished the race, they encourage the woman still running to keep going, to endure, to not give up, for they surround her as witnesses who made it and cheer her toward the same goal. The great cloud of witnesses is not a passive crowd but an encouraging one, surrounding the woman still running with the testimony of their own finished race, urging her to keep going, to endure, to press on toward the goal they have reached. This encouragement sustains a woman when the race is long and holiness feels far, for she runs surrounded by those who finished, cheered on by a great company who prove the goal is reachable and urge her not to give up. The woman who feels the encouragement of the saints keeps running with endurance, sustained by the great company who finished before her and cheer her on. Encouragement to keep running is the gift of the saints who finished the race, surrounding the woman still running as witnesses who made it and urging her to endure and press on, sustaining her when the race is long and holiness feels far.

Your Race Can Be Finished Too

What the saints finished, a woman can finish too, for the same grace that carried them to the goal is available to her, and their finished race is a promise that hers can be finished as well. The saints did not finish the race by their own strength but by the grace of God, and that same grace is offered to the woman still running, so that their finishing is not only a proof but a promise, the assurance that the grace which brought them home is available to bring her home too. This means a woman can run with hope, knowing that

her race can be finished, that the goal the saints reached is reachable for her by the same grace, that she too can one day say, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. The woman who knows her race can be finished runs with hope, trusting the grace that carried the saints to carry her as well to the same goal. Your race can be finished too, for the same grace that carried the saints to the goal is available to a woman now, so that their finished race is a promise that hers can be finished as well, and she can run with the hope of one day saying, I have finished the race.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Company You Are Made For

Your Place Among the Great Multitude

The communion of saints is not only a company that surrounds a woman now but the company she is made for, the great multitude she is destined to join, so that the saints are not only her present companions but her future home. The deepest truth about the saints is that a woman is made to become one of them, to take her place among the great multitude before the throne, and the whole life of faith is the journey toward that company. Understanding that the communion of saints is the company a woman is made for, her place among the great multitude, reveals the destiny toward which her whole life of faith is moving.

I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, standing before the throne. — Revelation 7:9

Made for That Company

A woman is made for the company of the saints, destined not merely to admire them from afar but to join them, to become one of the great multitude before the throne, for this is the end for which she was created and redeemed. God did not make a woman for this life only but for eternal glory in the company of the saints, destining her to join the great multitude that no one can number, so that the communion of saints is not only her present family but the company she is made to belong to forever. This means the saints show a woman her own destiny, the company she is made for, the multitude she is meant to join, so that when she looks at the saints she sees not only companions but her own future, the glory for which she was made. The woman who knows she is made for the company of the saints sees in them her destiny, the great multitude she is meant to join and the glory for which she was created. Made for that company, a woman is destined not merely to admire the saints but to join them, to become one of the great multitude before

the throne, for this is the end for which she was created and redeemed, so that the saints show her her own future.

The Journey Toward the Throne

The whole life of faith is a journey toward the great multitude before the throne, a running of the race that ends in that company, so that a woman's daily faithfulness is moving her, step by step, toward the place among the saints she is made for. Every day of a woman's faithful life is a step on the journey toward the throne, toward the company of the saints, so that her ordinary faithfulness, her daily yes to God, is not aimless but directed toward the great multitude she is destined to join. This gives a woman's journey a destination and a hope, for she is not wandering but traveling home, moving through her faithful life toward the company she is made for, the great multitude before the throne. The woman who sees her life as a journey toward the throne runs with purpose, knowing that her daily faithfulness is bringing her, step by step, toward her place among the saints. The journey toward the throne is what the life of faith is, a running of the race toward the great multitude, so that a woman's daily faithfulness is moving her step by step toward the company she is made for, her journey not aimless but directed home.

Surrounded Now, Joined Then

A woman is surrounded by the saints now and will be joined to them fully then, so that the communion she experiences in part on earth will be completed in glory, when she takes her place among the great multitude she now runs toward. On earth a woman belongs to the communion of saints in part, surrounded by their prayers and their example, joined to them across the divide of death, and in glory she will belong to it fully, united to the great multitude face to face, the communion begun now completed then. This means the company of the saints a woman knows now, imperfectly and by faith, is the same company she will join fully in glory, so that her present fellowship with the saints is a foretaste of the eternal company she is made for. The woman who is surrounded by the saints now looks forward to being joined to them fully then, when the communion she knows in part is completed in the great multitude before the throne. Surrounded now, joined then, a woman belongs to the communion of saints in part on earth and will belong to it fully in glory, so that the company she knows now by faith is the same great multitude she will join face to face, her present fellowship a foretaste of the eternal company she is made for.

CONCLUSION

You Are Not Alone

The woman who felt alone in her faith, the first and only one facing her particular struggles, has discovered in these pages that she is not alone at all, but surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. We have seen that the communion of saints is a living reality, a present community she belongs to; that the saints are sisters and mothers, not marble, who faced what she faces; that holiness is for her, her ordinary life qualifying her for sainthood; that the saints are praying for her now; that she can learn from those who went before; that they finished the race and prove it can be done; and that she is made for the company of the great multitude she is destined to join.

Through all of it runs a single truth: a woman is not alone. She runs her race surrounded by a great company who went before and walk with her still, sisters and mothers who faced what she faces, who pray for her now, who teach her the way, who prove by their finished race that the goal is reachable, and who wait to welcome her into the company she is made for. The life of faith is not a solitary climb but a race run in the midst of a great cloud of witnesses, a woman surrounded by the whole communion of saints.

So let a woman run her race knowing she is not alone. Let her claim the saints as her own family, her sisters and mothers in faith. Let her bring her struggles to those who faced what she faces, ask the prayers of those who are praying for her now, learn from those who went before, and take courage from those who finished the race. Let her believe that holiness is for her, that her ordinary life qualifies, and that she is made for the company of the great multitude. And let her run with endurance the race set before her, surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, toward the throne where the whole communion waits to welcome her home. She is not the first to face what she is facing, and she is not alone. She belongs to a great company, and that company is cheering her home.

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