



# Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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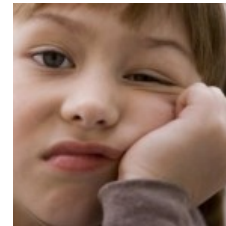
## Are You Ever Bored?

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on JANUARY 20, 2014.

A British computer scientist wanted to determine which day was the most boring day in the 20th Century. So he fed 300 million facts into his computer and soon he got his answer: April 11, 1954.

On that day, nothing important happened, he said. No famous person was born, no famous person died, no war broke out, no natural disaster occurred. It was a boring day—at least according to the facts the scientist fed into his computer. (I personally object to his conclusion. My older brother John turned 13 on April 11, 1954. That day was far from boring for him!)

Boredom is a very real problem for some of us. Remember when you were a kid and you went complaining to your mother or father, “I’m bored!” You were hoping they’d come up with something exciting for you to do. Instead my mother often said, “I have a few chores you could do if you’re bored.” Needless to say, I got un-bored in a flash!



Boredom, ironically, can be caused by over stimulation. In our age, we are constantly bombarded with all kinds of sights and sounds from TV, radio, music, movies, video games, cellphones, the Internet. Such stimulation can give us unrealistic expectations that life should be exciting every single minute. And if it isn’t, something’s wrong.

Another cause for boredom may be this: we are too self-focused. The problem isn’t out there with life; it’s inside of us. We’ve become so focused on ourselves we can’t even begin to see the beauty and wonder of ordinary life—let alone the needs of people all around us.

## About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

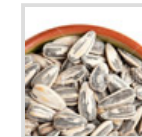
Sister of Notre Dame,  
teacher, student, author,  
speaker, listener, friend,  
poet, farm girl.



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## About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I’ll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality—the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we’re all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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So what can we do when we find ourselves bored? First we can remain faithful to our ordinary duties and responsibilities—which can often be boring. One thing that helps me, is to look beyond the task at hand to the people I am doing the task for—whether it's cleaning the kitchen, cooking a meal, or writing my blog. Other routine tasks include things like attending a meeting, writing a report for work, taking care of a customer or client, studying for a test, shoveling snow, correcting homework papers, running to the store for a prescription, getting an oil change. The task itself may be ordinary and even boring; but the love with which we do the task and the people we are doing it for makes the task beautiful and significant.



A second way to deal with boredom is related to the first: find someone who needs help. We don't have to look far. We can read the parish bulletin or the local newspaper for volunteering opportunities. Or we can reach out to someone who has lost a loved one, is ill, is overworked, or is elderly. People needing our help are in our own neighborhoods. Some are even in our own families. Serving others is one way to banish boredom.

Another way we can deal with boredom is to reflect on it. Might it be a nudge from the Holy Spirit to change something in our life? Perhaps God is asking us to shake off our old way of doing things and to try something new. The Danish philosopher, theologian, and poet Soren Kierkegaard said something interesting about boredom: "Boredom is...the despairing refusal to be oneself." Perhaps our boredom can be God calling us beyond the person we are to the new person we could be!

Let us conclude this reflection with a short prayer:

*God of Love, today is another day. Let me detect the beauty and wonder in this day, a day I have never lived before, a day that will never be again. Keep me faithful to my personal responsibilities. Help me to see beyond my routine tasks to the people I am doing them for. And when I am tempted to be too focused on myself, break me out of my cocoon of self-preoccupation so that I see the people around me who need my help. And if my boredom lingers, help me to determine if it is your Spirit, Dear God, who is nudging me to let go of my old self to become a new and better version of who I am. I ask these things of you, Dear One, believing you are never bored with me—and you will never grow weary of loving me. Amen.*

Are you ever bored? If so, what do you do about it?

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**NOTE:** If you did not take the survey last week, I'm attaching it below again. As I said last week, I would like some feedback on my blog. The survey should take only about 5 minutes. The deadline is January 31, 2014. One lucky person (chosen randomly) will receive one of my books just for filling out the survey! Thank you!

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**Kathleen Magiera** January 20, 2014 at 5:44 am



Great topic Sr. Melannie. Sometimes the bitter cold and snow can limit what we do here in wester NY. Yesterday, I was feeling a little bored and I phoned a friend to check in with him on how he was feeling. It was a great conversation and lifted my spirits. No more boredom.

Kathleen

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 20, 2014 at 3:40 pm



Dear Kathleen, What a concrete illustration of what I was writing about. Thank you for sharing it with us! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Sister Miriam Ann** January 20, 2014 at 12:46 pm



How true it is, when bored or feeling lonely, do something for someone else and the act of doing for others surely brightens my own day as I know I have hopefully brighten others day. Think of others, not oneself, and life is truly fulfilling.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 20, 2014 at 3:39 pm



A good reminder, Sister Miriam Ann! Jesus was a good psychologist when he called us to reach out in love to others! Melannie

REPLY

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**Theresa** January 20, 2014 at 1:27 pm



This topic really hit home with me. I have 3 teenage children who complain of "boredom" all the time. They are part of the "plugged in" generation. They are overstimulated and therefore expect every moment to be exciting. When it is not, they seem lost. I have tried discussing this very issue with them. Thank you so much for this article. I am going to send it to each one of them through email... Probably the only way they will read it. :) Sometimes children hear the voice of others over the voice of their parents. Theresa

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 20, 2014 at 3:38 pm



Dear Theresa, How clever: to send this blog to your three teenagers via email. And yes, sadly it's true: "sometimes children hear the voice of others over the voice of their parents." Thank you your persistence and ingenuity as a parent! Melannie

REPLY

**Elaine Neri** January 20, 2014 at 2:46 pm



Great thoughts, Sister Melannie! We truly are challenged by the "plugged in overstimulated generation". There are so many opportunities that we miss because an ordinary "cry for assistance" does not necessarily come with a connection to technology. It is often inspired by God through a glance; a tear; a smile; or a touch --a human connection. Thank you for the beautiful prayerful conclusion.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 20, 2014 at 3:36 pm



Dear Elaine, Thank you for reminding us that a "cry for assistance" does not necessarily come "with a connection to technology." Often it is a direct human connection. It was great hearing from you again! Melannie

REPLY

**Maryann** January 20, 2014 at 8:21 pm



Beautiful post and prayer, Sr. Melanie! I think boredom can, at times, be a gift. I'm reminded of one of Gerda Weissmann Klein's books, "A Boring Evening at Home." Gerda was the only member of her family to survive the Holocaust, and her reflections of those experiences are powerful. The title of that book reminds me of how blessed I am to have the luxury of boredom now and then. And your post now reminds me to use that boredom as means to serve and grow. 😊

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 21, 2014 at 3:38 pm



Dear Maryann, Thank you for reminding us that, in one sense, boredom can be a "luxury." Always good to hear from you. Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Georgia Auckly** January 21, 2014 at 8:57 am



I heard someone say to kids one time, "Don't ever say you are bored, it means you are a boring person!" I think they meant that you need to use your imagination and then you won't be bored. Hobbies such as reading, crocheting, music, even some cleaning and organizing, writing, and the list goes on, are things we can do. Catching up talking to relatives and friends is another way to stave off boredom. Sometimes, you just have to start.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 21, 2014 at 3:40 pm



Dear Georgia, You made an interesting connection between being bored and being boring. Thank you for your concrete suggestions on how we can use our imagination to overcome feelings of boredom! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Marian** January 21, 2014 at 11:18 pm



Thank you for the reflection and prayer...seeking God and serving God in the ordinary seems to be the key to happiness...how blessed we are that God draws us to Him.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** January 22, 2014 at 1:55 pm



And thank you, Marian, for your response. I'm posting something on "the ordinary" in a few weeks. Melannie

REPLY

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**Sr. Priscilla Cohen, OSB** March 1, 2014 at 10:00 pm



Sr. Melannie,  
Just discovered your blog through Give Us This Day. I have enjoyed reading your books over the years. So glad I will finally get to meet you when you direct our retreat this June.  
Thanks for your writings and thanks for coming to give our retreat.

Sr. Priscilla  
Sacred Heart Monastery  
Cullman, AL

REPLY

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