

Features:

## The 5th of May

### *It's Stross' birthday and my personal holy day*

Each year on the anniversary of my oldest child's birth, I observe a personal holy day. Like a Jewish High Holy Day, it calls me to a time of remembrance, reconciliation and praise.

This year will mark Stross' 17th birthday—and my 17th day of awakening. At dawn I'll feel a call to awareness that begins with a review of my life as a mother. It's a time that draws me into a renewed relationship with the Creator—the One who formed me in my mother's womb and shaped my son in the warm darkness of my own.

The previous 16 years have taught me what to expect. Sometime after Stross' birthday breakfast, with the opening of presents and promises of cake for later, I'll hear God speaking to me—Spirit to spirit. Then my prayers will spill forth, as tears of regret mixed with gratitude. Regret for all the moments I took for granted during previous years and gratitude for the gift of my son. Sometimes I find space to be alone. Other times I simply allow the day to unfold, accepting the moments as they come—whether driving the car or grocery shopping.

It doesn't matter what I plan to do that day. I've learned I can't circumvent the experience. I accept its certainty, allowing myself to be awed by its life-giving force.

When Stross arrived in the early morning on May 5, 1991, I wasn't prepared for the formidable force of his life. Born with multiple birth defects, physical and intellectual, he introduced me to a new way of looking at the world. Imperfect as he was by the world's standards, my son had arrived whole—perfect in my sight and in God's.

The awareness Stross brought me about God and the way God is at work in the world is beyond beautiful. I know I'll experience this anew this May 5. It will be a day when God, once again, sweeps in to meet me intimately and when God's divine pervasiveness cannot be denied.

Perhaps this imprint of God's has forever been part of me. Perhaps this divine pervasiveness is what enables not just me but anyone to access God's omniscience in moments of weakness or meekness, jubilation or celebration.

During my adolescence, I became aware of the heightened sense of introspection that my birthday caused. Now each year as my birthday approaches, I find myself looking back over the previous year of life, searching for evidence of growth—physical, intellectual and spiritual. Am I healthier or wiser? If so, in what ways? I want to know.

I search for evidence of God's divine partnership on my life's journey. When did God and I collaborate best these past 12 months? Did I miss opportunities to mature because the impulse of my spirit got in God's way?

The day of my son's birth has helped me see how my birthday is, always has been, a personal holy day too. But I regard Stross' birthday as more, a High Holy Day—a time of remembrance that leads to renewal.

Reliving the traumatic experiences that occurred on that first May 5 guides my life into divine focus, as it did that day. Recounting those moments, like reciting cherished Scripture, brings me fresh insights and sweetens the prospect of a new way to move through life with God.

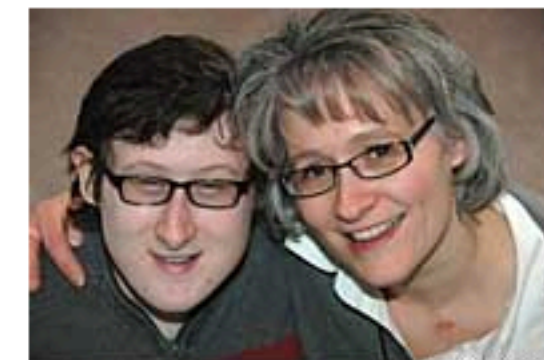
I bind these lessons to my heart: They make it possible for me to face the uncertain days of my son's future.

STORY BY  
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MARK NEWCOM

For Stross Newcom and his mother, Joy, May 5 is a special day. It's Stross' birthday—and Joy experiences anew 'God's divine pervasiveness.'

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