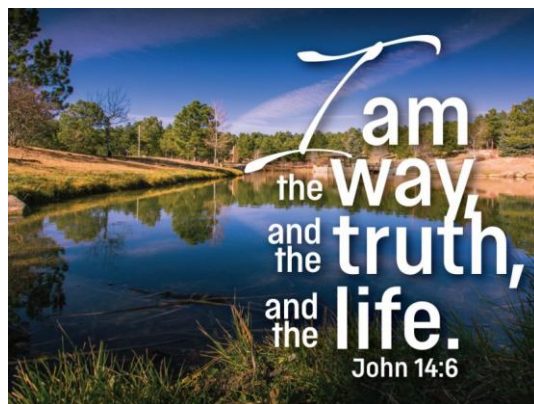


*Fifth Sunday After Easter*  
*Sunday, May 10, 2020*



## PRELUDE

## INTRODUCTION

As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today's gospel includes Jesus' promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in his Father's house. Our baptism commissions us to share Jesus' mission in the world. As 1 Peter reminds us, we are a holy people, called to proclaim the one who called us out of darkness into light. In words and deeds we bear witness to the risen Christ—our way, our truth, our life.

## WELCOME

## GATHERING HYMN

*"Alleluia! Christ Is Arisen"*

*Refrain*



Al - le - lu - ia! Christ is a - ris - en.



Bright is the dawn-ing of the Lord's day.



1 Run, faith - ful wom-en, to the grave-side. Mar - vel, the  
2 Rise, Mag - da - len - a, from your weep-ing; Christ stands be -  
3 Gath - er, dis - ci - ples, in the eve - ning; sud - den - ly  
4 Thom-as, where were you on that eve - ning? "I'll not be -



stone is rolled a - way! Hear from the an - gel, "He is  
fore your ver - y eyes. Quick - ly re - turn to the dis -  
Christ your Lord ap - pears. "Look, it is I, your wound - ed  
lieve un - less I see." Christ comes a - gain, and ev - 'ry



*Refrain*

ris - en." Christ goes be - fore you all the way,  
ci - ples; bear the good news: "He is a - live."  
Sav - ior. Peace be with you, and do not fear."  
Lord's day: "Touch me and see; have faith in me."

Text: Luis Bojos, b. 1937; tr. Martin A. Seltz, b. 1951

Music: SANTO DOMINGO, Luis Bojos, b. 1937

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## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

## KYRIE


**Refrain**

*Assistant:* *Congregation:*




Let us pray to the Lord, have mer - cy, Christ, have

*to Verses*




mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy.

*Assistant:*



Help, save and de - fend us, O

*Congregation:*



God. A - men.

# HYMN OF PRAISE

## Refrain

*Congregation:*

Now the feast and cel - e - bra - tion,  
all of cre - a - tion sings for joy  
to the God of life and love and  
free - dom: praise and glo - ry for ev -  
er - more!

## Verse 1

*Congregation or Congregation 1:*

1. Now is the feast of the Lamb once  
slain, whose blood has freed and u -

nit-ed us to be one great peo - ple of  
 God. *to Refrain*

**Verse 2**

*Congregation or Congregation 2:*

2. Pow - er and rich-es, wis - dom and  
 might, all hon - or and glo - ry to Christ  
 for ev - er. *to Refrain*

**Verse 3**

*Congregation:*

3. For God has come to dwell with us, to  
 make us peo - ple of God; to make  
 all things new. *to Refrain*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Word

### FIRST READING

**Acts 7:55-60**

*Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the apostles to serve tables so that the apostles could be free to serve the word (Acts 6:1-6). Stephen does more than distribute food, however. For his preaching of God's word, he becomes the first martyr of the faith. A reading from Acts.*

<sup>55</sup>Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>“Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” <sup>57</sup>But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup>Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup>Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM

*(Read responsively)*

**Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16**

<sup>1</sup>In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.

<sup>2</sup>**Incline your ear to me;**  
**make haste to deliver me.**

<sup>3</sup>Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold;  
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

<sup>4</sup>**Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,**  
**for you are my tower of strength.**

<sup>5</sup>Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.

<sup>15</sup>**My times are in your hand;**  
**rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.**

<sup>16</sup>Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.”

## SECOND READING

**1 Peter 2:2-10**

*Christ is the cornerstone of God’s saving work and the foundation of our lives. We are God’s chosen, holy people who continuously celebrate and declare the mercy of God we experience through Jesus Christ. A reading from 1 Peter.*

<sup>2</sup>Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—<sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup>Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and <sup>5</sup>like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture: See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” <sup>7</sup>To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” <sup>8</sup>and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. <sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*Congregation:*

Al-le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we  
go? You have the words of e - ter - nal  
life. Al - le - lu - ia!

*Optional Repeat*

The holy gospel according to the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

## GOSPEL

**John 14:1-14**

*On the night that he is to be arrested, Jesus shares final words with his disciples. As the one through whom God is known, he promises to go before them and act on their behalf.*

Jesus said to the disciples: <sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” <sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

*“When I get to heaven, I’m gonna shake God’s hand  
Thank him for more blessings than one man can stand  
Then I’m gonna get a guitar and start a rock-n-roll band  
Check into a swell hotel; ain’t the afterlife grand?”*

*And then I’m gonna get a cocktail: vodka and ginger ale  
I’m gonna smoke a cigarette that’s nine miles long  
I’m gonna kiss that pretty girl on the tilt-a-whirl  
‘Cause this old man is goin’ to town.”*

Those words come from a song that came out in 2018. They were written, and sung, by the great singer-songwriter John Prine, who died just a month ago from complications due to the corona virus. John was 72 at the time of his death. That song was the last song on his final album.



And as fun as that song may be, once we start thinking about the words, we might have to admit that John's ideas about what's waiting for us after we die are kind of surprising. Most of us have probably never thought about heaven as a place for rock-n-roll bands, cocktails and nine-mile cigarettes. We might even be a little afraid that even thinking such things might be just a little bit blasphemous.

But as I said in the class about heaven that I taught last fall, there's a lot more that we don't know about heaven than what we do. The Bible gives us a few, tantalizing details, but then leaves the rest mostly shrouded in mystery.

We get a few of those details in the gospel we just shared. In fact, along with certain parts of the book of Revelation, John, chapter 14, tells us the most about what's waiting for us: the Father's house with its many rooms (or many mansions, if you're reading the King James version); the place that is being prepared there for all of us; the promise of Jesus' return along with the promise to take us there—to take us all the way to himself. And I don't think we can even begin to imagine the number of times this passage has been read at someone's funeral or memorial service throughout history or how much comfort it has brought to grieving families.

And Jesus meant these words to be comforting. In the gospel, they show up right after Jesus has told his disciples that he is going to be going away from them. Jesus will be leaving soon, and where he is going his disciples are not going to be able to follow. Now, John doesn't tell us how the disciples reacted to these words, but I think we can imagine. They must've felt shocked, dismayed, saddened. How they must have struggled to try and understand. But Jesus immediately follows up with these words of comfort for them, full of promises about the Father's house. About going home.

Which ought to tell us that, above all, our God is a prodigal. I know that we might not always like that word, because it probably reminds us of the parable of the prodigal son. And when we think of the prodigal son, we probably think of someone who was extravagantly wasteful—who took his share of his father's property and threw it all away and ended up with nothing. A word like that couldn't describe God, could it?

And yet, try to think of prodigal as a word that can also mean extraordinarily generous, excessively giving, effusive, overflowing. And then also think of some of the examples of prodigality from Jesus' own ministry:

When the wine is running low at the wedding at Cana, Jesus makes more from some water the servants provide. And not just a little wine—not just enough to tide them over until the end of the party—we're talking 150 gallons of wine.

When the crowds are with Jesus out in the wilderness and it's been a long day, Jesus wants to give them all something to eat. And when the disciples discover that there's only a little bread and fish at hand, Jesus blesses the food and it becomes enough to feed 5,000, with plenty of leftovers.

When the outsider comes to Jesus—someone who has probably been told all their life that they'll never fit in, they'll never belong—he welcomes, he invites, he includes—and whole lives are changed.

The night of his betrayal, Jesus gathered with his disciples for a final meal. And at that meal, he gave them, not just bread and wine, but also his body and blood. And the next day, on the cross, he gave his life.

And ever since then, whenever followers of Jesus come together to remember and celebrate these things, we know that he is with us still. And his body and blood, his life and his spirit continue to uphold us, to guide us and strengthen us, all throughout our lives. And when those lives are over, we believe that we will be welcomed home.

God is a prodigal.

And sometimes, our view of what life is and what life is all about can be so miserly. It's measured and limited. Oh, it usually starts out hopefully enough, with so much potential, but in the end it always fades away. It can be long or it can be much too brief, but the truth is, in every case, it's never long enough. And when the end comes, we've all got to face facts and admit defeat.

But if God is a prodigal—which is just what the Bible tells us—then we've got plenty of reason to hold onto hope. For the God who so recklessly, extravagantly and over-flowingly gave life in the first place, will also give life beyond death. And what sometimes seems to us like the end of the road is in reality a homecoming. Look at all that God has gone through down through the ages to save us, find us, embrace us. Shall death defeat the plans of such an extravagantly life-giving God? I don't think so.

I don't really know if we can expect to find cocktails and tilt-a-whirls in the afterlife. All I really know is that there are many rooms in the Father's house. And one fine day, by the grace of God, you and I will be there, too. Home. Amen.

# HYMN OF THE DAY

## “On Eagle’s Wings”



1 You who dwell in the shel-ter of the Lord, who a-bide in this shad-ow for life,



say to the Lord: “My ref - uge, my rock in whom I trust!”



And he will raise you up on ea - gle’s wings, bear you on the breath on dawn,



make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.



2 The snare of the fowl-er will nev-er cap-ture you, and fam-ine will bring you no



fear; un - der God’s wings your ref-uge, with faith-ful-ness your shield.



3 You need not fear the ter-ror of the night, nor the ar-row that flies by



day; though thou-sands fall a - bout you, near you it shall not come.

4 For to the an-gels God's giv-en a com-mand to

guard you in all of your ways; up - on their hands they will

bear you up, lest you dash your foot a - gainst a stone.

*Final refrain*

And he will raise you up on ea-gle's wings, bear you on the breath on dawn,

make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.

And hold you, hold you in the palm of his hand.

Text: Michael Joncas, b. 1957

Music: ON EAGLE'S WINGS, Michael Joncas

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## NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God,**

**the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

**the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation**

**he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,**

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Build us up, mothering God, as living stones united in your spiritual house. Continually strengthen your church as it is sent forth to proclaim your love. We pray especially for new congregations and those in redevelopment. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Humble us, creator God, as part of your creation. Fill us with respect and awe for the world you have made, including volcanoes, ocean currents, tropical rainstorms, glaciers, and other forces that both destroy and create. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Align our ways to your love, O God. We pray for countries, leaders, and other organizations as they prepare places for those seeking refuge and safety. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we ask for your help for all who are not able to work or find work because of the coronavirus. For all who struggle to keep going, and for all who live in fear of tomorrow. Be the calming and uplifting presence we all need. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of healing and rest, help those whose hearts are heavy and weighed down by many troubles. Comfort their suffering, ease their distress, and carry their burdens, especially those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, we pray for those who tend and teach young children, for the safe pregnancies of expectant parents, and for families who struggle with infertility and miscarriage. We give thanks for all who have shown mothering care, and we remember all for whom this day is difficult. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Generous God, you call into your brilliant light all who have died. Give us faith to take hold of the promise of your eternal life. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **PEACE**

## **OFFERING**

*“First Song of Isaiah”*

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray. Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

# Sending

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### BLESSING OF MOTHERS

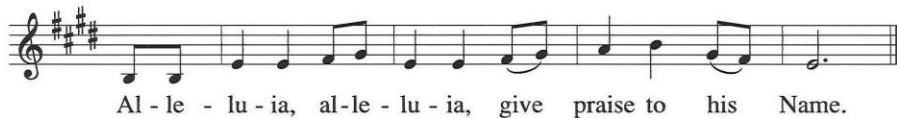
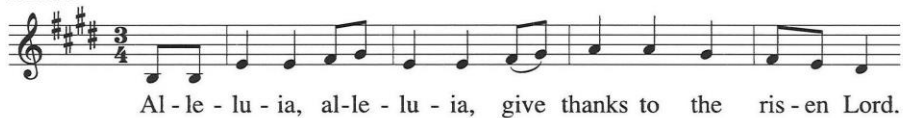
### BLESSING

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

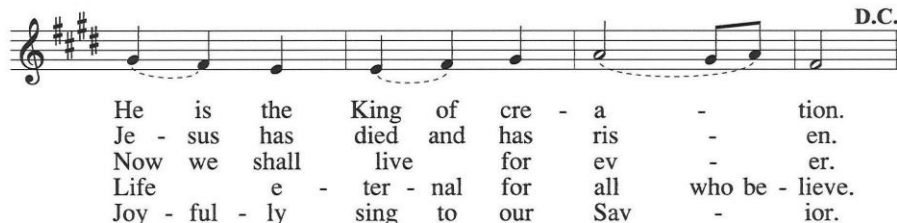
### SENDING HYMN

*“Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks”*

Refrain



Verses



Text: Donald Fishel, b.1950  
Tune: ALLELUIA NO. 1, 8 8 with refrain; Donald Fishel, b.1950  
© 1973, Word of God Music

### DISMISSAL

Christ is risen, just as he said. Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

### POSTLUDE

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MAY 10, 2020  
FIFTH SUNDAY  
OF EASTER



*Christian martyrs witness to God's love.*

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>John 14:1-14</b>	<b>Jesus is the way, truth, and life</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Acts 7:55-60</b>	<b>The stoning of Stephen</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>1 Peter 2:2-10</b>	<b>A chosen people</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Romans 8:31-39</b>	<b>God's love in Christ Jesus</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Hebrews 11:29-40</b>	<b>The faith of heroes</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>2 Corinthians 12:1-10</b>	<b>Contentment in suffering</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Psalms 31:1-5, 15-16</b>	<b>Prayer for deliverance</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>John 14:15-21</b>	<b>The promise of the Holy Spirit</b>

**SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK**

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” **John 14:12 (NRSV)**

**PRAYERS AND BLESSING**

**A Prayer for the Week:**

Almighty God, you send us out to witness to the work of Jesus; give us confidence and courage to be your faithful witnesses. Amen.

**Mealtime Prayer:**

Dear God, may this food strengthen the body and your word strengthen the soul to be your witnesses in the world. Amen.

**A Blessing to Give:**

May the face of God shine on you and bless you through the steadfast love of the Lord. (Psalm 31:16)



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**MAY 10, 2020**

**HYMN OF THE WEEK**

*Mothering God, You  
Gave Me Birth*



taking   
faith  
home

**WEEKLY MILESTONES**

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

**CARING CONVERSATIONS**



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Where do you see God's presence in the world?
- What does the life of Jesus tell you about God?
- John 14:12 is about a relationship with God. How do you help others have this relationship?

**DEVOTIONS**



*Read:* Acts 7:55-60.

Martyrdom is too often spoken of today in terms of suicide bombs that kill. That is not a Christian martyr. Stephen presents the model of Christian martyrdom for all time. He innocently suffers and dies at the hands of others; he does not act violently. Stephen imitates Christ's death by blessing one's enemies (v. 60). He also experiences the holy bliss of being filled with the Holy Spirit and seeing the glory of God and Jesus (v. 55). He has a rapturous experience of the triune God. Few of us will have that same experience, but we are still all martyrs. The word simply means "witness." We are witnesses to God's living presence when we suffer unfairly for the love of God, when we bless others, and when we experience the peace that passes all human understanding. In the midst of a world of hate, violence, and self-promotion, it is not possible to be a faithful witness on our own. It is the work of God that fills us with the Holy Spirit, witnesses to the love of God, and blesses others. Christian martyrdom is all around us. Who has been a witness to the love of God for you recently?

*Pray:* **O, Holy Jesus, give me faith to witness to your love, to suffer with others for the sake of love, and to bless others with hope in your Easter victory. Amen.**

**SERVICE**



Psalm 31 is a prayer of deliverance from enemies. Even though there is suffering and pain, the psalmist writes of trust in the Lord and of God's goodness. Watch or read today's news. Who in the world needs prayer for deliverance from enemies? Pray for their deliverance.

**RITUALS AND TRADITIONS**



Today is Mother's Day in the United States. It is a time to recognize and be thankful for those women in our lives who have cared for us and for others. Be a witness for God's love and reach out to a woman you know who deserves a special thank you with a phone call or a visit. Take time to talk and then say this prayer for her.

**Lord God, thank you for (name). May she know how grateful I am to have her in my life. Please bless her this day and every day with your love and care. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)