

December 10

This year's advent devotionals will feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from a book written by retired faculty member Bonnie Thurston. Dr. Thurston continues to lead many continuing education seminars at PTS. This book, entitled *To Everything a Season: A Spirituality of Time* is published by Crossroad Publishing and available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading comes from p. 75

Nothing I "do" ultimately assures my value. My value as a human being is already secured by God as the source of my creation and by Jesus Christ as the source of my salvation. I may choose to engage in "good works" – benevolence, charity, whatever – as a grateful response to those gifts, but there is absolutely nothing I could do to earn them. The bottom line is I don't have to do anything: I just have to be, that is, to accept God's gift of life and to respond by grateful living. Why is it that this Christian ontology is so hard to accept? Could it be because the nature of God is so foreign to us? We do not deeply, existentially, understand that God is Love, that God loves us because that is God's nature, not because we are smart or pretty or productive or "worthy" of such love. Because human love so rarely comes to us unconditionally, many of us have decided that God's love never could either. We are wrong in this assumption, as the cross of Jesus Christ so clearly demonstrates.

Prayer

Loving God, how difficult it is for us to comprehend or believe your love for us! May Emmanuel descend to us once again, we pray, casting out all doubt and sin so that we can stand firm and confident in the knowledge and assurance of your love. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.