

December 11

This year's advent devotionals will feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *After Baptism* written by John Burgess, James Henry Snowden Professor of Systematic Theology. It is published by Westminster John Knox Press and is available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading begins on page 5

Every time the church baptizes a baby, it testifies to a God who knows how to bring life out of death, strength out of weakness, and something out of nothing:

“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.” (1 Peter 2:10)

Like Israel and the first followers of Christ, we too would be nothing, a people without a name, home, or identity, had not God bestowed a new life and a new identity on us. We do not first have to create an identity and ask God to approve it, nor do we have to earn an identity and ask God to deliver it to us as our just wages. In Jesus Christ, God has already placed his seal of approval on us, before we could do anything about it. From the beginning, God has known us better than we will ever know ourselves: “It was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb” (Ps. 139:13). God has claimed us and identified us as his own.

Prayer

Gracious God, we rejoice when you come to us. We give you thanks, Emmanuel, for loving us and choosing us. May we find mercy in the living of our days and courage for following you. As we are loved, so let us love one another, in this season and always. Amen.