

December 15

This year's advent devotionals feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *Ecstasy and Intimacy: When the Holy Spirit Meets the Human Spirit*. It is written by Edith M. Humphrey, William F. Orr Professor of New Testament at PTS. It is published by Eerdmans Publishing Company and is available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading begins on page 74:

In the light of what God has done in Christ, there is no need for us to go far afield to find ultimate reality. We need neither to ascend to the realms of heaven nor trek down to the abyss (Romans 10:5-7), nor need we search feverishly for methods, spiritual techniques, and unseen power. For this One who is the very active Word of God is near us; indeed he has visited us, has plunged into the matter of this world, rescued us from the darkest regions, and now dwells intimately with us through the Spirit. It is due to his questing, his agony, and his victory that "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Faith, then, does not mean believing "in spite of the evidence." Faith is not a human accomplishment or work. Human trust, or faith, simply responds to the faithful work of the God who creates out of nothing, and gives life to the dead. Our confidence in God responds to this story of all stories, and so can stand the test, during trial, and during times of suffering when the end cannot yet be seen; yet that faith is not "blind" nor "mindless," but has a God-given grounding in history, in God's actions for Israel and the world, as well as in a Person, in the character of the creating and resurrecting Lord of all.

Prayer

Wonderful God, in you we find our confidence and hope. In this advent season we thank you that you have plunged into our world and you now dwell among us through the Spirit. Only through you do we find joy even in the midst of suffering, and faith in the dark night. Rejoice! Emmanuel! Alleluia! Amen.