

December 19

This year's advent devotionals feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's selection comes from *Encountering God: Christian Faith in Turbulent Times*. It is written by PTS faculty member Andrew Purves and recently retired professor Charles Partee. It is published by Westminster John Knox Press and is available through [Cokesbury.com](http://Cokesbury.com).

The reading comes from p. 170:

We turn now finally to consider a deep mystery at the heart of Christian joy, namely, the relationship between the cross and joy. Christian joy does not mean happiness because we have avoided or survived suffering and sorrow. Joy is a deeper and more subtle thing, more than an emotion. Joy is a state of faith in which fullness and peace and confidence in God in and through suffering and sorrow are present. We find a clue about this joy at Hebrews 12:2, where the writer tells us that Jesus "who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross." The journey to the cross was not a course he took for himself alone, but a course he took for us and for our salvation. His joy was that he took on the sins of the whole world as the means of redemption. This act was the fulfillment of his innermost being as the Son of the Father, as Emmanuel, as God with us and God for us.

Prayer

Wonderful God, with the choirs we sing "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!" but seldom do we consider the mystery of this joy. Help us to look behind our emotions and feelings so that we would know the peace and confidence of real joy found in Jesus Christ. Come Emmanuel, inspire us for joyful living. Amen.