

December 24

This year's advent devotionals will feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from the book *The Luminous Dusk* written by Dale Allison. Allison is the Errett M. Grable Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Early Christianity at PTS. The book is published by Eerdmans Publishing Company and is available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading is found on page 44:

Silence is not nothing. It is instead the divine liturgy leading to communion with God, the mute awe and reverence required by encounter with the holy. I am reminded of the legend in an old apocryphal gospel. When the Virgin Mary conceived, when God became a human being,

a great silence descended with a great fear. For even the winds stopped, they made no breezes. There was no motion of tree leaves no sound of water. The streams did not flow; there was no motion of the sea. All things in the ocean were silent, and no human voice was heard... Time almost stopped its measure. All, overwhelmed with great fear, kept silent.

As with the advent of God in the world, so too with the advent of God in our lives: silence is the only appropriate greeting.

Beyond the noise of this world is the divine stillness of another, a stillness in which one may find "the Father who is in secret." And yet we typically pass our waking hours alert for every random murmur. Philo of Alexandria says somewhere: "Understanding is starved when the senses feast, as on the other side it makes merry when they are fasting." Our faith demands that we enable the ears of the soul to listen for what the poet Rilke calls "the uninterrupted news that grows out of the silence." "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord" (Zech. 2:13).

Prayer

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.