

December 7

This year's advent devotionals will feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* by Edwin Christian van Driel, Assistant Professor of Theology. It is published by Oxford University Press. To order the book visit [Cokesbury.com](http://Cokesbury.com).

The theologically important point about conceiving of God's relating to humanity as a form of friendship is friendship's motivational structure. Friendship is motivated by a delight in and love for the other. It enjoys the other's goodness and the goodness the relationship with the other embodies. Of course, friendship can be disrupted, disregarded, betrayed. All of these can motivate friends to seek forgiveness, reconciliation, healing of their relationship. The friendship itself is not based on the episode of disruption and reconciliation, but on a deeper sense of love and delight. Therefore, when God calls Abraham, Moses, and the people of Israel God's friends, and when Jesus addresses his disciples as friends, not slaves, this defines these relationships as motivated not only by human sin and need for reconciliation, but by a deeper, preordained sense of love. All of them are tainted by human failure and betrayal. The narratives of Abraham, Moses, and Israel are full of stories of distrust, disobedience, and unbelief. Jesus calls his disciples friends in the context of a conversation about his imminent death: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). But while the death is motivated by the friendship, the friendship is not motivated by death. Jesus becomes his disciples' savior because he is their friend; not the other way around.

Prayer

Holy God, in this advent season we thank you for being our friend. In friendship and perfect love you reach out to us in Jesus Christ inviting us to reconciliation and peace. Because of this, life is full of promise. For this we give you our thanks and praise. Amen.