

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

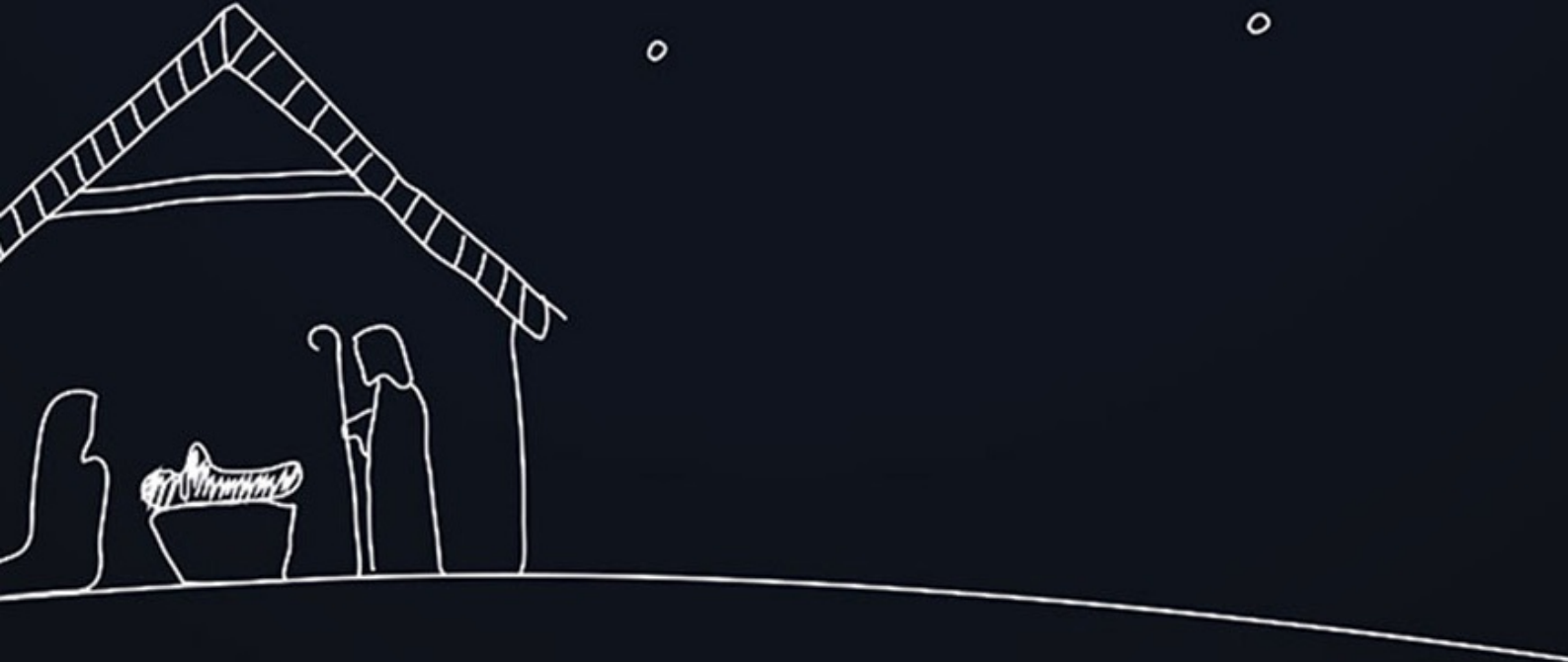


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Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry

Spiritual Formation Certificate

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Continuing Education

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Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 14, 2020

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 22:39-53

39 He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. 40 When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." 41 Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." 43 Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. 44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. 45 When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, 46 and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial." 47 While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; 48 but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" 49 When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" 50 Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? 53 When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!"

DEVOTIONAL

Dr. Patricia Sharbaugh '99

Images of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane evoke feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is an aspect of every person's life. All of us are born alone, all of us die alone, and all of us visit many lonely spaces and places along the way. Loneliness is an ingredient in so many experiences of life. We may be able to repress our feelings of loneliness. We may find ways to run from these feelings for a time, but ultimately, a time will come when we cannot escape our inherent loneliness.

If we are willing to listen closely enough, loneliness offers us many gifts. The most important gift loneliness offers is awareness of the deep emptiness that lies within us—an emptiness we cannot fill, an emptiness that urges us to reach beyond ourselves, to cry out to God, to pray.

In the Christian spiritual tradition, the word solitude recognizes our solitary lives before God. The experience of solitude can be an experience of profound loneliness; yet, paradoxically, in solitude one can also experience deep moments of grace, moments of awakening to the awareness of the gift of God's loving presence. The journey from loneliness to communion with God's loving presence is made through prayer.

Images of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane awaken us to the awareness of the deep communion between our loneliness and the loneliness of Jesus. Jesus is acquainted with loneliness. We do not have to find a way to escape our loneliness in order to find God; rather, God is with us in our moments of loneliness. Deeper and wider than our feelings of loneliness lies the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God, who came into the world to be with us in all the lonely places of life.

PRAYER

Gracious and merciful God, give us the courage to remain in the lonely spaces and places of our lives, to turn away from distractions and toward you. Help us find the courage to stand before you in our loneliness so that we discover your gracious presence already present within our hearts, thus drawing us more deeply into love.

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
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