

December 18

This year's advent devotionals feature readings from publications by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faculty members. Today's reading comes from a book written by retired faculty member Bonnie Thurston. Dr. Thurston continues to lead many continuing education seminars at PTS. This book, entitled *The Spiritual Landscape of Mark* is published by Liturgical Press and available through Cokesbury.com.

The reading comes from p. 62:

I don't know what your personal sufferings have been, but I know that you have had them. I don't know what they will be but I know they will come. And I know that God did not, and will not, abandon you to them. As Jürgen Moltmann so eloquently argued in *The Crucified God*, God suffers with us. In that face is the irreversibility of the cross. After Calvary no one ever need suffer or die alone. Writing on Psalm 22, American church historian and journalist Martin Marty notes: "The crucified victim was the *only* forsaken one, the true derelict. The rest of us die in company, *his* company. God certified his gift and his act and 'raised him up.' Never again is aloneness to be so stark for others.

The fact of the cross of Jesus Christ in human history is irreversible, both because it is unique in history and because its influence in our history continues. And, as Mark's gospel so clearly dramatizes, the mystery of the cross is found in its solitariness and solidarity.

Prayer

Eternal God, in the midst of the joy of this season, the pain of our past and present is also very close to us. Remind us again that you do not abandon us and that indeed you suffer with us. We are not alone. You go with us every step of our journey for in this season of Advent we rejoice that Christ has entered our lives. In the cross, we find our hope and comfort. Amen.