Inviting the prayerful anticipation of Advent

Years ago a memorable television commercial featured ketchup being slowly poured from a bottle onto a hamburger while the refrain from Carly Simon's "Anticipation" played in the background:

"Anticipation, anticipation
Is makin' me late
Is keepin' me waitin'"

After years of sponsorship and months of anticipation, Autumn Domingue finally meets her sponsored child, Jacinto, during a 2011 CFCA mission awareness trip to Guatemala.

That clever commercial took a perceived negative (ketchup taking a long time to pour) and turned it into a positive (our ketchup is so thick and rich it is worth the wait!).

The pros and cons of slow ketchup aside, there is an important truth here: how we experience something depends on our point of view.

Advent is a case in point. This is the time when our faith asks us to slow down, reflect and engage in prayerful preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas. But it is also the time when society starts revving up for its annual stretch of hyper-busyness; shopping, parties, and all other things related to the secularized holiday season.

It isn't that any of these things are bad, but they make it difficult to engage in the prayerful anticipation that Advent calls us to. This is especially true for young people who have been raised in a culture that doesn't exactly value the virtue of patience.

To help you invite the young people in your youth program to enter into Advent reflection, we have a simple daily exercise. For each of the 28 days of Advent, we offer a single word for reflection. Some come from the Scriptures of the season, some from Catholic tradition, and some are just intended to stimulate creative thinking.

If you have a Facebook or Twitter account, you can post a new word each day and invite the youth to offer short reflections (or tweets) on what that word means to them as they prepare for Christmas. Preface each day's message with something like "Today our word for Advent is…", and end with "What does this say to you?"

Our hope is that this exercise might complement the lifestyle of the youth with whom you work while gently inviting them into a form of contemplative prayer. We hope you find it helpful, and if you do, we invite you to check out our other resources for young people and those who work with them at www.walkwiththepoor.org.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Nov. 27 God	Nov. 28 Return	Nov. 29 Justice	Nov. 30 Follow	Dec. 1 Enduring	Dec. 2 Vision	Dec. 3 Prepare
Dec. 4 Waiting	Dec. 5 Comfort	Dec. 6 Discover	Dec. 7 Anticipate	Dec. 8 Living	Dec. 9 Receiving	Dec. 10 Renew
Dec. 11 Awe	Dec. 12 Healing	Dec. 13 Wonder	Dec. 14 Listen	Dec. 15 Reflect	Dec. 16 Hope	Dec. 17 Fulfillment
Dec. 18 Change	Dec. 19 Forgive	Dec. 20 Grow	Dec. 21 Savior	Dec. 22 Reveal	Dec. 23 Promise	Dec. 24 Human

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