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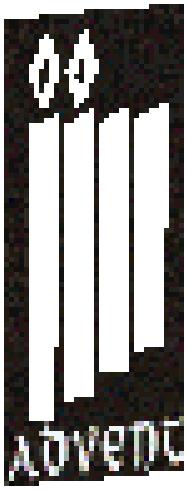
Advent is about waiting

Carol Meyer | Dec. 14, 2010 Eco Catholic

With all the bustle of Christmas preparation, I?m not so sure waiting is a big theme of Advent anymore. Kids may find it hard to wait until Christmas, but not most adults. Sadly, half of them are probably waiting for it to be over! But waiting is a reality in all our lives, so this is still a good  season to reflect on it.

Trusting in the timing of things. In spite of our culture?s insistence on instant satisfaction, everything has its own beautiful process of coming into being that takes a while. Mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme says that the timing of the universe is perfect. For instance, the galaxies were formed when conditions were just right, and it couldn?t have happened earlier or later. If this is true on a cosmic scale, it must be true of us. I love the idea that you just can?t rush or force things. There?s a freedom in knowing you don?t have to. ?Don?t push the river. It flows by itself,? is a maxim worth recalling often.

How we wait matters. We can either fret and worry while we wait, and thus waste precious God-given time, or we can wait joyfully and peacefully, fully immersed in making this moment count. I recall my reaction to a 20-hour flight home from India a few years ago. I was cramped, bored, restless, and tired, and the hours dragged by. It presented a unique opportunity to try to be present to the now just as it was, and to be peaceful with something I had no control over. Life presents many such opportunities for we spoiled creatures to stop ranting and raving when we don?t get what we want right away.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, ?How much of human life is lost in waiting.? We always have our sights and focus on what is NOT, and fail to appreciate what is. We wait for our lives to get better, for some prayer to be answered, some dream to come true. Spiritual wisdom says to trust that these things will be manifested at the right time, so just get busy making the most of the here and now. Waiting is really an act of faith, of knowing God is at work when we can do nothing.

Waiting can be good for us. My granddaughter Taylor picked out a gift for herself for Christmas a couple of weeks ago. As I took the box from her to wrap and put under the tree, she balked. She wanted it NOW and I wanted to teach her the value of delayed gratification. We all need to learn that virtue, and waiting can provide

it. Often the reason we have to wait on a certain good to come to us, is that we need to learn a spiritual lesson first. It?s good to ask ourselves, ?How am I not ready yet to receive this blessing? How are my thoughts and feelings blocking what I want? How can I purify myself and grow as I wait??

"I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord."

These words from Psalm 27 sum it all up. Almost all the scripture passages about waiting tell us to wait for God. Ah, now there is something worth waiting for. Life?s little waitings are all just rehearsals for the big waiting. The Psalm implies that courage is offered to us, like a cookie on a platter, that we can reach out and take. And once we have courage, the waiting is easy, the anticipation blissful.

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