

Snow teaches us not to miss the miracle

Mother Teresa once said: "I know God won't give me more than I can handle, but sometimes I wish he wouldn't trust me so much!"

These past weeks, we have had more snow than most of us care to handle. I'm writing this column just after the second major blizzard. God only knows how much more snow will arrive before this column is finally printed.

Being snowed in for a week was quite a "torture" for me. I'm always "on the go" somewhere - to various locations for Masses, to retreat centers for retreats, to schools and groups for talks, to parishes for missions and so on. St. Augustine is famously quoted as saying, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God." Well, I've got the restlessness down pat!

The "resting in God" part is a real challenge. That was the first lesson I learned from the snow. Ironically, by "coincidence" (I believe coincidence is when God remains anonymous), the following meditation appeared in my daily "Twenty-Four Hours A Day" on Feb. 11 (in the midst of my captivity).

"There is almost no work in life so hard as waiting. And yet God wants me to wait. All motion is easier than calm waiting. Yet, I must wait until God shows me his will. So many people have married their work and hindered the growth of their spiritual lives by too much activity. If I wait patiently, preparing myself always, I will someday be at the place where I would be. And much toil and activity could not have accomplished the journey so soon."

Wow. I needed that.

The second lesson that I think we all learned from the blizzards is the nonsense of the myth of the "rugged individual," or the "self-made man or woman." We all needed others to survive - plows to clear roads, maintenance people to clear sidewalks, neighbors to help shovel, friends to call and so on. The news was filled with countless inspiring stories of neighbors helping neighbors, strangers helping

strangers. Our society is healthier and our world is better when we all focus on the “We” instead of focusing on the “Me.”

A final lesson, at least for this short column, is a more subtle lesson. I think the snows taught us not to take any part of life for granted. Most days, we simply open our doors, walk to our cars, turn the key and drive away. We take it all for granted.

The blizzards changed everything. Suddenly, we couldn’t even get out our front doors! If we could find our cars, we couldn’t get in them. Once we scraped and brushed the snow and ice off of them, we found our doors were frozen. If we actually managed to get our cars going, we discovered there was no place to go!

The snows taught us the profound lesson of never taking any part of life for granted. We take so much for granted. We presume our feet will step, our legs will move, our eyes will see, our ears will hear, our nose will smell, our hands will touch and on and on. Scientists tell us that tens of thousands of biochemical reactions are occurring at every moment inside our bodies. However, until something goes wrong, we take it all for granted.

As the snow gradually fades, let’s resolve not to miss the miracle that is life. Let’s resolve not to take anything for granted again.

A holy spiritual director summed up life in two sentences: “We are only unhappy if we want what we do not have. We are happy if we are grateful for what we do have.” Let’s retrain our thoughts away from “what isn’t,” and focus instead on “what is.” All of life at all times is a miracle. Let’s not miss the miracle.