

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

The Big Chill

I'm sure this hasn't escaped your attention: We have still two weeks of winter. And I think most of us will agree: We've had just about enough of this, haven't we?

I had that thought for the first time when I stepped off a curb in Manhattan the other day and sank up to my knees in melting slush.

I had that thought again when a city bus rounded a corner and sprayed me with brown ice.

“Winter Wonderland?” Where?

We are in a chilly twilight zone, frozen in more ways than one. We seem to be stuck in time. Not too long ago, we were all so merry. The tree was still up, the lights were still strung, and the after-Christmas sales were making us drunk with bargains.

And now? Although spring is around the corner, it seems like we will never thaw. Bah. Humbug.

What would Jesus do? On the subject of winter, scripture is suspiciously silent. Jesus, we know, walked on water. We are not told if He also walked on ice.

Snow and frost are mentioned here and there in the Bible, but this meteorological phenomenon doesn't seem to have loomed large in a place best known for palm trees and sand. The children of Abraham wandered for years, looking for a land of milk and honey. Far as I know, they weren't looking for hot cocoa.

To the best of my knowledge, pharaoh's chariots did not have snow tires.

And yet, as I survey the bleached white landscape out my window, I can't help but think it *does* resemble, in so many ways, the desert. The drifting dunes, the blowing particles, the bleak and barren ground where nothing can grow ... it doesn't take much to imagine the wintry world of Queens as the desolate desert of Palestine.

In the early days of the church, men went out into the desert to form the first monasteries—to detach from the world and live the simplest and most austere of lives. These “desert fathers” sought communion with God by separating themselves from the cities. They went out to “a place apart” to pray. They lived in silence and solitude, and found Life in a place devoid of life.

I'm not sure I can find that in the frozen tundra that is now along Queens Boulevard.

But the arctic temperatures and icy storms do encourage me to go to a place apart—deep under a winter blanket, perhaps—to find comfort, and to pray.

My number one prayer: for spring. Soon. Please.

Amen.

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS

“Praying the Stations with Mary, the Mother of Jesus”
Fridays during Lent, at 7:30 p.m., followed by Benediction