I recall a weekend when an unexpected phone call came from my sister-in-law. “We’re okay,” she said. “But Mom and Dad aren’t.”

She was talking about my wife’s parents. A “Snowmageddon” storm had stampeded the mid-Atlantic and had dumped around three feet of snow on suburban Maryland, and at the time my sister-in-law called, it was still coming down.

“They lost power sometime last night,” she explained. “They have no heat. Mom can’t cook. And the plows can’t reach them. So they’re stuck. But they wanted me to call everyone and let them know they’re doing okay.”

Thousands of people found themselves in similar straits that weekend, as the snow fell and drifts piled up and the accumulation became relentless. This was epic. And, by all accounts, it wasn’t fun. It may have been pretty. It may have been dramatic. But the lived experience, according to those who went through it, was something altogether unwelcome—cold, inconvenient, at times downright claustrophobic.

A priest in the Archdiocese of Washington blogged about it.

As Msgr. Charles Pope put it, the storm may have been God’s way of telling the world: “Stop!”

“In some places God really put on the pressure,” Msgr. Pope wrote. “There were power outages which prevent TVs etc. from blaring. Why, some people even rediscovered the art of conversation and telling stories. Quite remarkable actually.

But I agree with him on this: sometimes, powerful meteorological activity can be God sending us all a much-needed message.

God may be saying: Take a breath. Look around at those you know, and have forgotten about. Don’t worry about football, or getting dinner done, or meeting all those self-imposed deadlines.

Stop. Look. Listen.