

## Blanket of snow

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Like much of the country just now, my parish is buried under snow. It is lovely.

The physical beauty of the shimmering clean white cover over everything is stunning. But there is also the spiritual beauty of a big snow fall. It is a universal Sabbath, given to us by God or nature or both.

In 2003 I wrote about the beauty and blessing of snow. It is still true:

"This blanket of snow is a spiritual experience. It is a sign of God's grace and a metaphor for how that grace is experienced."

First of all it is powerful.

The snow is a reflection of the power of God. It disrupts our plans and makes us rethink our priorities. Whatever was on the agenda before the blizzard is canceled. What we thought was important becomes unimportant. We discover that we can live without doing this and going there. Snow is a gentle sign of God's great power and reminds us that he is the sovereign of the universe. It is his plan, not ours, that prevails. Snow reminds us of God's power.

Second, it is silent.

It falls silently and makes the world around into a sort of monastery. The contemplative life of monks and nuns requires silence, so they can listen to God -- not the world. We need silence too. When there is silence, we can hear God speaking to us in the stillness of our hearts. When all other noise is muffled and only the soft crunch of our boots is heard on the snow, we experience the world in a contemplative way. Snow reminds us that our souls need stillness to wait upon the Lord.

Third, it is beautiful and bright.

According to the ancient philosophers, beauty is one the attributes of God. This shimmering blanket covers everything in softness. It makes the whole world brilliant with radiant light. When the world is illuminated so intensely by the sun reflected off the snow, we remember that God is "light from light." He is perfect beauty itself. We are moved to think of the luminous mystery of God and to yearn for him. Snow reminds us that God is found in light and beauty.

Fourth, like God's grace, the snow covers everything.

St. Paul advises us, "Over all things we should put on love." (Colossians 3:14). When we see the snow all about, I think it is like God's love covering everything. It makes hard edges softer. It makes ugly things beautiful. It is a generous outpouring of God's love. Like rain, snow falls "on the just and unjust" and offers us all a chance for renewal. Snow reminds us of God's love, which covers all sin and makes it all things new in Christ.

Finally, snow is pure and clean.

In Psalm 51, David prays that God will forgive his sin and make him whiter than snow. This light blanket is absolutely pure when it comes from God. Later, it may be stained by our soot and sin, but for now it is pure, like all of creation at the beginning. Snow reminds us of the purity and goodness of God.

Tomorrow will be time enough for shoveling and getting back to our routines. For one day anyway, we have a real Sabbath imposed on us by the hand of God. This snow makes us rest and turn our thoughts to God. It is a grace that fell from heaven."

All still true 13 years later.