



caring for the spirit in viha

THE GRACE OF SNOW

While we don't get that much snow on the west coast we do get the occasional dump. As a born and bred west coaster I've never been a huge fan of the white stuff. It always just seemed to get in the way. Rain I could accept. Snow – not so much.

Being from the prairies my wife had a different take on snow. For her snow was that consistent wintry gift that turned a dull brown landscape into a bright-white new world. She has affection for snow. She sees a grace in it. Slowly over the years her affection for the flakes has begun to take a hold on me as well.

So what can we learn from snow?

The first fall of snow is not only an event, it is a magical event. You go to bed in one kind of world and wake up in another quite different, and if this is not enchantment then where is it to be found?

J. B. Priestly.



For starters there is graciousness to snow. Grace has to do with the generous dumping of gifts on others regardless of their character. This is precisely what snow does. Snow covers everything and everyone. No one is left out. Snow playfully balances on top of fence posts and street signs. It breaks in through the slightest of cracks in doors and windows. It crawls into our jackets and dives into our boots. Snow gets everywhere. Not a square inch of life is untouched when snow comes to blanket the earth. It gets

everywhere. It touches everything.

And as it touches everything we are able to see the world in a whole new way. Snow will take the familiar landscapes of our backyards and neighborhoods and transform them into whole new spaces. Snow helps us realize that how we see the world is not the only way to see it. It teaches us that we are free to look at the bland, familiar areas of our lives (an illness, the loss of a job, broken relationships) in new ways. We are not constrained to only see them one way.

The other gift of snow is that it invites us to slow down. Snow literally makes us stop. Snow slows us down from hurling down highways and running down sidewalks. Snow forces us to pay attention, not only to the drivers and pedestrians around us, but to the world around us.

Snow also makes us slow down because snow is often the culprit behind power outages. Snow laden evergreens sag onto power lines tripping transformers which force us to stop all our doing. Snow moves families to take their eyes off of screens in order to look at each other through golden candlelight. The darkness snow creates makes us stop our business to swap stories and play games.

We can get all bothered by how snow changes our lives. It forces us to cancel our very important meetings. It makes our commute difficult and gets our pant cuffs wet. But snow also invites us to not take ourselves so seriously.

It is perhaps children who understand the graciousness of snow the best. Children get how snow is literally a gift from the heavens. A scant centimeter of snow on the lawn has children bolting from their beds shouting "SNOW DAY!" while they dive for their mittens and toques. Children get the graciousness of snow. They get it that some of the most beautiful things in life just come to us out of the sky. Happy Holidays. D. Colyn



Happy Holidays!

From your VIHA chaplains

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