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Apocalypses Television Style

Ken Briggs | Feb. 18, 2014 NCR Today

I wish Pope Francis would say something nice about snow. Those of us who rather like it are beleaguered. Liking snow is heresy and the pope's support would mean a lot.

Full disclosure. I'm a New Englander by background who once peddled newspapers from house to house at 6 a.m. in ice and snow. And I'm sympathetic to people whose work and/or health suffer for the white stuff, even though I scoff at the obligagory "deaths attributed to the storm" report. Death by snowflake?

Around here in Pennsylvania, a "southern" state to us, the frenzy and conniptions explode at the least mention of snow. Television warns of the "1 to 3" impending storm as our last moments on earth. Apocalypses are good for ratings. A crazed public swarms the super markets for the staples of the trip to the afterlife, the bread and milk offerings to the gods. Loud moaning and groaning run at fever pitch even when the tempest misses us completely. At such times, the few friends snow has had best hold their tongues.

Meanwhile, from my infidels' bunker, I and my anonymous cohorts marvel at the sheer beauty of it all. It is winter. Snow comes, stays a while, and leaves. Except perhaps for the guy whose hankering for Jim Beam places him behind the wheel of a fatal skid on a patch of ice, the public is overwhelmingly safe and warm. But that does not quiet the clamor to flee to hotter climates whose virtues are rarely what they're cracked up to me. At the same time, we have snow cones and cross country skiing.

Therefore I wish the pope would remind his rapt following that the Creator came up with snow to purify the crude and ugly places, to coat Christmas card farm houses in mystical white, to endear us to Robert Frost poems. He might also put in a word for us dissenters who don't always feel welcome in the Church of Climactic Perfection whose very name, he might add, betrays ignorance of nature's splendor. Snow is not your enemy, he might tell those who attack it almost before it hits the ground, so kick back and think of yourself as part of its nature rather than alien to it. Not so bad, really. And we have it on good authority that global warming may rid us of most or all of it, so as they say, be careful what you wish for.

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