

Piles of snow couldn't bury civility

Where were you last Thursday morning when the storm began to take over the lives of so many?

I was at home to start the day. At 7:30 a.m., I made a decision based on current reports and short-term forecasts to keep an appointment on the far side of town. I left with plenty of time to spare and, although traffic moved slowly, I arrived for my appointment in good time.

From then on, the story changed. The snow had picked up a great deal, and visibility was very poor. For those reasons I thought it would be wise to avoid the expressways, and decided to make my westward trip via Monroe Avenue.

Whether the choice of routes was a wise one, I'll never know for sure. But I can tell you that my trip home through the city was as "white knuckle" a driving experience as I have ever had.

I got stuck twice in deep snow. Once, a man with a truck who was charging \$10 for the service pushed me out.

The second time was at the mouth of our driveway at Sacred Heart. That time, Fathers Tom Mull, Tim Brown and two neighborhood boys did the honors.

Several times, I had to stop the car to clear the windshield of the ice that formed there at very fast rates. That was less dangerous than it sounds. Most drivers were in the same boat and were being very careful in consideration of the

along the way

By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK



safety of everyone.

Eventually one of my wipers broke off and the other one swept through only half of its arc. I think its motor was affected by the strain of the morning.

The storm is on my mind not only because we still feel its effects, but also because of the experience of that drive through the city.

You may recall my writing in a previous column that I had wanted to enjoy car time as prayer time during Lent to open my heart to God's quiet word, to think about life's events and absorb their meaning — to savor life. Well, I have to say that the storm afforded a strange opportunity for all of that.

On that 2½-hour drive, I was aware of a high level of concern on the part of drivers for their own safety and that of others. I witnessed many acts of kindness — "Will you give me a push?" "Sure, glad to." "Could I use your shovel for a moment?"

"Help yourself." "I left my scraper in the garage." "Use this!"

I really was impressed by what I saw and heard. I thought that, though I hope we never have to go through such a thing again, the level of human conduct the storm elicited put a redemptive touch to the experience.

We all know what it's like to be imperiled by careless or reckless drivers — people who run red lights, drive much too fast or much too slow on expressways. It could be we've done such things ourselves. I guess it's the kind of stuff that builds up to the phenomenon of road rage, which understandably concerns us all.

What I witnessed on Thursday bespoke a different and much more hopeful possibility for our community. We are capable of great civility, courtesy and generosity. I know that, and you know that. But we also know how tempting it is for all of us to go another way — to cut the corner, to gain an edge, to get even.

I did not like the storm. I did not like the damage it created for so many. But it came. And, if it had to come, I am happy for its reminder that mutual respect and recognition of one another's dignity can see us through just about anything.

My prayer has been that car time would be special during Lent. Who says that God doesn't hear our prayers?

Peace to all.

MISSION NEWS



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In Kembisa, a small village on the edge of the jungle in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), there is a small mound of dirt that symbolizes the hill of Calvary. Every year on Good Friday, a cross is carried through the streets of the village and placed on this spot

to remind all of the suffering of Jesus and the hope of salvation made possible by His death and resurrection.

In their native tongue, the people for whom pain and adversity have become part of daily life, sing: "he who wishes to serve Me must follow Me, for I am the way, the truth and the life." † This Lent, you can be a part of this story and so many others like it. Perhaps you can offer \$40 — a sacrifice of \$1 a day for each day of Lent? Whatever you send will be greatly appreciated, and so very much needed.



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