

Jan. 29, 2017

it's time to turn up the temperature

My first indication that something was amiss was just after getting out of bed. It was cold. Really cold. I had icicles hanging off my nose and beard.

I walked to the back door and looked outside. The scene was oddly familiar!

I realized that it was the same thing that I see when I look in my freezer, only instead of months-old Hot Pockets encased in ice, there were trees, power lines, and feral cats, all frozen in large blocks of ice!

I darted over to my thermostat to crank it up to a toasty 120 degrees, the icicles on my beard clacking together.

The digital thermostat was as blank as my brain on a Monday morning (and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday). "That's odd," I thought.

I tried the kitchen light. *Nothing.* I tried the bathroom light. *Nothing.* I checked the clock on the stove. *Nothing.* I checked the light above the stove. *Nothing.* I tried the TV. *Nothing.* I tried the other TV. *Nothing.* I tried the computer. *Nothing.* I checked the cordless phone. *Nothing.* I checked the living room lamp. *Nothing.* I tried the TV again. *Nothing.* I tried the other TV again. *Nothing.* I tried the porch lights. *Nothing.*

"Hmmm. I bet the electricity is out."

It was Monday, Jan. 16. The Catholic chancery had already been closed due to the ice storm that weather prognosticators had been prognosticating.

My wife and I kept the curtains shut to keep in any warmth, and used two lanterns to light our way around the house, although that didn't stop me from flipping the light switches about 1,400 times thinking that it would be nice to have a little light during the electrical outage. (Isn't this the definition of insanity?)

Large, broken branches littered the yard. Seeing all the work that needed to be done, I crawled under the blankets and read, as did my wife, each of us wearing two stocking caps, gloves, and our entire collection of outerwear.

When it came time to eat, I pulled out an old Sterno camping stove and a couple of Sterno canisters. We enjoyed tomato soup for lunch, and if you can believe it, warmed up left-over lasagna for dinner. Sternos are pretty darned awesome. Probably one of the best inventions ever. Get yours today! (*Note to self: Write to Sterno people. Free samples pending.*)

After 14 hours, the electricity came back on. Oddly enough, having the power come back on was a bit of a letdown. I mean, it had been almost like camping! Huddling under the blankets with a lantern, cooking on the Sterno

That's when the thought struck me.... There are a multitude of people right here in our own back yard who have to choose between food for their family and paying their utilities bill. Or between getting their prescription medicine and paying rent. These folks aren't anticipating their heat coming back on. They're eating. That's the price they pay.

These people are out there. They live amongst us. In fact, there are far more of them than there are those as fortunate as me, and likely you.

Among the ministries that our diocesan appeal is serving are those of Catholic Charities--ministries that include feeding the hungry, helping people move from homelessness to housing, helping them to take classes, get jobs and achieve goals--working tirelessly to help those in *immediate* need.

These are the heroes that the Vibrant Ministries--Uniting Our Church Appeal supports. I honestly cannot think of a worthier cause.