

## God, Life, and Everything Storm Warning

Sunday evening, I made the mistake of going to the grocery store. I know, Sunday evening is *always* a bad time to go shopping, but in my line of work, sometimes that's the only time I get.

But this Sunday, well, it was Black Friday for food.

Of course, I thought, banging my shopping cart into a freezer case to avoid the rush of other carts careening down the aisle, the storm.

For some reason, we as a society go into full-blown panic mode whenever a snow storm approaches. Aside from hurricanes, I know of no other weather event that elicits such preparatory hysteria. People were grabbing all of the milk, eggs, and bread - which, as luck would have it, I also needed. I barely got out of there with my discount key tag intact.

When I got home, I got online and checked out a couple of different weather websites. They all disagreed on exact location and snowfall amounts, but they were united in their belief that this was going to be a big one. Since I have to have this column in before the snow actually flies, I can't know what the final total will be - either a snowpocalypse or a dud - but I can consider the panic.

Why do we panic?

Back in the old days, a major snowstorm could mean mass death if one wasn't prepared. You weren't going to get more food than what you laid up. You were not going to get more fuel - other than by chopping wood, if you could get to it. If something happened, there was no way to easily and quickly get help. A major snowstorm could cause devastation and isolation like we have never seen.

Things are different today. Yes, there will be /has been snow, even a considerable amount. But...

-We have snow plows. Even if three feet were to fall, they would have major streets drivable within a day.

-We mostly have warm places to stay. Even if power goes out for a couple of days, a modern house is bearable with proper clothing. And you certainly don't have to worry about food storage - just stick it out the window.

-We are relatively close to our neighbors, so if things go really wrong, we are not necessarily isolated.

The biggest trouble we get into in our modern setting is when we go out onto the streets before they are safe. In the case of driving, doing nothing may be the safest thing to do.

Still, we have the instinct to fill the larder with three weeks of food to hold us over for the day or two we will be stuck at home. It's in our DNA - prepare for Armageddon because, "This is the big one!"

I don't mean to mock preparations. Indeed, everyone *should* have sufficient supplies stored up for a few days.

Just this Monday, our diocese sent out this recommendation to churches all across the area:

"Everyone is reminded that **one should be prepared to be self-sufficient for a period of 24-72 hours**. Please make sure that you have enough water, food, medications, flashlights, batteries, warm

clothing and adequate bedding for up to 72 hours. It is recommended to have cash on hand; to have at least half a tank of gas in your car; and a charged phone and computer. Please also check on your elderly neighbors to see if they are ok and if they need anything."

Emergency experts recommend having a "go bag" on hand at all times with essentials listed above. They say that these bags ought to be readily available 24/7 - because emergencies of all sorts happen without warning. Fires, floods, zombie apocalypse... You need something you can grab without thinking and that will be sufficient to tide you over.

So, if it seems like I'm sending out a mixed message, I am. First, have a plan and be prepared in general. But Two, Don't Panic! In our day and age, in our setting, even a big dumping of snow is more of an inconvenience than a crisis. Just be smart.

And most importantly, don't crowd me out at the grocery store!