

## Let it snow!

In my forty years in Mississippi, I rarely saw snow. If I needed to see some, I would visit some friends in Chicago just after the Christmas holidays. At that time of year, one was almost guaranteed to be embraced by snow.

Usually, I would take the train into downtown Chicago and check out the sights and sounds that surrounded me. The chill of the wind blowing in from Lake Michigan would send icicles embracing every fibre of my body. Still, it was a treat to be embraced but not for too long.

Since retiring in Ireland, yearly snow is as common place as the flu season in winter. When it arrives, there is excitement that later turns to dread.

I began thinking that the experience of snow is very much a microcosm of life itself. First of all, there are certain signs that indicate snow is possible. There is a certain hue in the surrounding sky, coupled with temperatures that are a few degrees above freezing. Seasoned weather observers can pinpoint the possible arrival of snow with a great degree of accuracy without embracing the expertise of the meteorologists.

Astute observers of life can discern nuances and changes in a person's life. They can tell whether a person is troubled, anxious or is "not their usual self."

The arrival of the first snow is like the arrival of a new baby. There is an excitement and anticipating in the air. The new arrival becomes the center of attention. Comparisons are made. The same happens with the arrival of the first snow of the year. It is welcomed in its purity, in its blanket of white coat that becomes a tapestry that covers the ugliness of winter's barrenness.

After a while, even the excitement at the arrival of a new baby becomes tarnished. The baby now dictates the schedule and it becomes very different than what parents were used to. Feeding times, crying bouts, nappy changing, listening for strange new sounds dictate daily chores.

Something similar happens with snow a few days after its first arrival. The snow turns to slush as it is beaten down by the daily traffic of life. The once pristine snow becomes a task. Schedules change; freezing conditions are anticipated; black ice on roadways and sheltered places demand extra caution; animals demand an adjustment in feeding schedules.

As the baby's routine becomes more predictable, so does the way we adjust our approach to snow. We make the necessary adjustments, know that the snow will not last. We do the same with a baby. We know they will begin to have their own routine that we can be comfortable with. Life will become more predictable.

As the baby begins to grow, life changes again. The terrible two's arrive. Potty training has to be faced and won. Life changes again with the snow as it melts. As it does, there is a certain relief; a certain confidence that, while it was pretty and novel initially, now we will not be sad to see it disappear.

There is always a sense of relief and accomplishment as the child begins school. The initial anticipation of that day and the adjustments that follow, bring a certain relief to parents, that, at least, their child is adjusting, growing up and forging ahead.

With snow and its demise, there is a certain relief that, while it was beautiful initially, no one will really miss it.

Our snow has come and gone. We have our video and pictures to prove it. Now, it is just a memory; just another of nature's surprises. It is nice to know it didn't overstay its visit. The child in all of us marvel at the newness of the snow but, soon the novelty wears off and we welcome normality once again as life goes on.