

# Find joy in the simple things



You wouldn't think that a small group of individuals going sledding during a winter storm would make the news, but on Jan. 29, as Winter Storm Kenan pummeled the Northeast, that's what happened.

It helps when the group in question are members of the Sisters of Life, making for idyllic photos of white habits, big coats, snow boots and wide smiles in a snowy landscape.

The group of sisters, based in New York City, took advantage of the winter weather when transportation ground to a halt while they were trying to get to a crisis pregnancy center in Lower Manhattan.

"We basically couldn't get our cars out of the snow. There were so many cars stuck, we decided to go sledding," said Sister Magdalene Teresa, the local superior. "It was really fun."

And what the sisters had fun doing, the world had fun taking in. It wasn't long before the New York Post had posted on social media photos of the sisters sliding down hills in Central Park on big black inner tubes and plastic toboggans, and the internet loved it. The pictures were reposted with many comments, including:

"This is the kind of news I'm here for." "Joy." "Love this. Joyful sisters sledding in the snow." And "these photos make me ridiculously happy for some reason."

After a short time playing and laughing, the sisters walked, sleds in tow, to their next stop: a baptism at St. Vincent Ferrer Church on Lexington Avenue, just a few blocks east of

the park.

“They let us put [the sleds] in the back,” Sister Magdalene told the New York Post.

What is it about these kinds of moments that are so life-giving, especially for those of us within the Church? Perhaps it is that they offer a glimpse into the humanity of the Body of Christ. It’s a reminder that the Church, so often handicapped by its over-institutionalization, is made up of human beings who breathe, eat, sleep and, yes, occasionally like to frolic in the snow. And when these moments of humanity involve religious sisters, unabashedly joyful in the midst of changing plans, cold weather and the unknown, it doesn’t hurt.

The Sisters of Life, founded by Cardinal John O’Connor of New York in 1991, is an order of women religious who are both contemplative and active in the world, professing the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but also a fourth vow: “to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life.” They are one of the most robust and life-filled groups of women religious in the country – and their witness of joy is one of the reasons why. They love Jesus, they value their work, they enjoy their community, and it shines through them. Shouldn’t this be the witness of every Christian?

We churchfolk should be joyful. Even with so many disagreements and causes for frustration within the Church these days, we were created to be people of love, of hope and of joy, not of perpetual bickering and stone-throwing. It calls to mind Pope Francis’ comments soon after his election in 2013, when he said that Christians are not to be sourpusses, or more accurately translated, should not have “the face of a pickled pepper.” Because how is that attractive?

Joy, Pope Francis said during that daily Mass homily, “is one of the virtues of the great,” of those who don’t allow

themselves to get caught up in silly little annoyances or in “little things inside the community of the Church; they always look to the horizon.”

For those Sisters of Life, the horizon that Saturday morning was a snow-covered hill in Manhattan, when they made the world smile. How can the rest of us do the same?

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