

## **Dear Garrison,**

I was in Minneapolis last weekend, and in the airport I saw a local wearing a t-shirt and shorts; it was 14 degrees F. out; in the van to Rochester, another man was clad in a short-sleeve summer shirt. Were they vestigial remnants of Ventura-ism, or harbingers of a new “no brain, no pain” movement for your state? Also, I saw in the airport large signs for “authentic Mexican food”; a long way to travel for chimichanga. But in vain I searched for a lutefisk stand. Having just eaten (and enjoyed) haggis in Scotland in August, I was prepared to sample some of your local fare, but alas it was not to be. Can you give me some insight into these features of Minnesota living?

Sincerely yours

Paul D. Holland, S.J.

## **Garrison Keillor’s Answer:**

Father Paul, the person in t-shirt and shorts was an exhibitionist making a bid for attention, same as you’d find in any part of the country, but here in Minnesota it takes less effort. In New York, you’d need to have your torso covered with tattoos and carry a boa constrictor on your shoulders and dye your mohawk bright green to get the sort of attention that shorts in March will get you in Minneapolis. Exhibitionism is a branch of the show biz, which I’m in, so I wouldn’t characterize them as “no brain, no pain” — I think of it as a sharing of one’s self. As for lutefisk, it is not a convenience food that can be prepared in advance: it must be eaten in its proper context, in a church basement, in December. The haggis you ate in Scotland was probably not very good, Father — I hate to say this, but it’s true, according to Scots I know: there is tourist haggis and then there is the real stuff that your old aunt might make. We spared you the experience of eating tourist lutefisk and you should thank us for that. As for Mexican food, we enjoy it in Minnesota, authentic or not, because it’s peasant food and that’s who we are down deep. It’s an excuse to eat beans, cheese, ground beef, tomato sauce, under an exotic label. Hot dish tastes even better when you call it an enchilada. Come back again around Labor Day, Father, and come to the Minnesota State Fair. You’ll find a culinary experience not available at the airport. Three words, Father: deep-fried cheese curds. And three more words: fresh sweet corn. With a bag of curds in one hand and an ear of corn in the other, you will be a very happy man. Praise the Lord.