



reflections on life's similarities and differences between Minnesota and Venezuela

Did you know?

by the Venezuelan Mission of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis



Why Venezuela doesn't have Daylight Saving Time

"Hey, what time is it?" Seems like a simple question, but the variety of answers you could receive, depending on the year and location, may surprise you. With the advent of railroads in the 1800's travel became a lot faster than ever before. A trip that may previously have taken weeks could now be made in just a few days. But working out a schedule of when trains would arrive or depart from towns and cities along the route was a huge problem. Every town basically determined their own time. When the sun was directly overhead at any given location was their noontime. To solve the scheduling problem of arrivals and departures along the lines, the major railroads got congress to adopt a "standard time" within four time zones in the 1880's. Whew! One problem solved. Then, along came DST...Daylight Saving Time.

The United States enacted DST in 1918 to save energy during World War I. One less hour of lights being on and radios playing in the evening added up, but DST was so unpopular that congress repealed it the next year, making it a local option which only a few states and cities continued. Pres. Roosevelt instituted year-round DST during World War II. After the war, from 1945 to 1966 there was no federal mandate. States and localities were free to decide for themselves whether or not to observe DST as well as when it would begin and end each year. At one point there was an hour time difference between Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the local time could change 8 or 10 times just crossing Minnesota. In 1966 congress passed the Uniform Time Act setting uniform "spring ahead" and "fall back" dates and making DST a state rather than municipal decision.



Hawaii and Arizona are currently the only two states that don't observe DST...and for good reason. In Minnesota people like DST in the summer because it gives them an extra hour in the evening for golf and softball and other outdoor activities. For people in Arizona, however, where summers are very hot, the best time to go outdoors is after sunset when it cools down a bit. The same is true here in Venezuela.

Located much closer to the equator than Minnesota at the 8th parallel compared to the 45th in Minneapolis...the sun is more directly overhead in Venezuela and the length of daylight and temperatures far more consistent throughout the year. In Minnesota the sun is up for 15 hours 33 minutes on the longest day in July and 8 hours 46 minutes on the shortest day in January...a difference of 6 hours 47 minutes. In San Felix, Venezuela, the sun shines for 12 hours 36 minutes on the longest day and 11 hours 38 minutes on the shortest...a difference of less than an hour! As far as temperature is concerned, you know how cold it can get in the winter in



Minnesota and how hot it can get in the summer. In San Felix the temperature is far more consistent. In the course of the past year the low nighttime temperatures varied between 69 and 75 and daytime highs between 86 and 102.

With the days so hot and nights cooling off, especially with pleasant breezes from the Atlantic Ocean 100 miles away, you can see why Venezuela, like Arizona, doesn't observe Daylight Saving Time. President Hugo Chavez actually tried the opposite, mandating a "Nighttime Saving Time" (not the official name) in 2007, the sun, in effect, going down a half hour earlier, something Venezuela actually tried from 1912 to 1964. It turned out not to save energy and put Venezuela out of sync with all their neighbors, so President Nicolás Maduro reversed the order in 2016, putting Venezuela time back to two hours ahead of Minnesota standard time.

Points to ponder

What do you like and what don't you like about Daylight Saving Time? Some states are asking to repeal DST altogether while others are asking to make DST year round. What would be your preference? Why? Would you prefer to live with the climate and change of seasons in Minnesota or in Venezuela?

The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has staffed and supported parishes in the diocese of Ciudad Guayana in Venezuela since 1970. These "Did you know?" papers are designed to give you a better understanding of life in Venezuela and to strengthen connections between the parishes of the Archdiocese and their archdiocesan mission during our 50th anniversary year. Please direct any comments or suggestions for future papers to Fr. Denny Dempsey at ddempsey@churchofstdominic.org or 651-368-7324.