

God, Life, and Everything "Abusing Christmas"

Want some Christmas cheer? Well, you can't have any. Not today, at least.

Why the Grinchy mood? Simple. Too many people on all sides of the political and commercial divide are abusing Christmas, and I get tired of dealing with them. In particular, there are three abuses that get under my skin.

First, there are those self-righteous, sanctimonious folks who every year insist on whining about a "War on Christmas." How many bumper stickers and Facebook posts (not to mention mass e-mailings, Tweets, Instagram posts and so on) have I seen that proudly proclaim: "We don't care what the PC police say. Our family says 'Merry Christmas.'"

Ugh!

There are two major things wrong with this.

One: They somehow think "Happy Holidays" is a new, PC thing. It's not. People have been saying it since at least the Civil War. Maybe because there's more than one holiday in this general season. All their grouching does is make Christians look like insufferable prigs.

Two: Our family doesn't say Merry Christmas -- BECAUSE IT'S NOT CHRISTMAS YET! In our church, we do not observe Christmas until Christmas. In the meantime, we observe the Holy Season of Advent, a season of reflection, penitence, and quiet watchfulness. We say, "Have a Blessed Advent."

Second, there is our annual orgy of consumption wrapped in a veneer of vague religiosity with a jolly old guy in red pajamas as its high priest. I doubt anyone will kill off that completely secular, totally self-serving aspect of Christmas, but if the above-mentioned self-righteous folks (see the first abuse) want to complain about anything, they can complain about using a sacred day specific to one religion to hawk their wares.

Third, there are people with whom I am mostly in agreement abusing the Nativity. This is a new development: People who support the continuation of Syrian refugee immigration into this country have started to make comparisons with the infant Jesus and his supposed "homeless, refugee" status.

Let me be clear that I believe our country should allow many more refugees into our country. They are the least likely to be terrorists. They are vetted far more stringently than people coming in on tourist visas. They have proven time and again to improve our economy and our overall health as a nation. To deny these folks who are suffering and have suffered for so long is simply unChristian.

BUT, to equate them with the Holy Family looking for a place to stay and being forced to give birth to the Son of God in a stable is dishonest. Jesus' family were not homeless. They were not refugees. They were (and only in Luke's Gospel) traveling to Bethlehem to be counted for Caesar's census. The fact that there was no room in the Inn just means they had some bad luck and had to settle for the next best thing. Sleeping in a stable was not ideal, but it was hardly unusual, either. People have been doing that for a very long time, and while it tells us the Son of God is not afraid to be counted among the most humble, it does not make them refugees or homeless.

So knock it off! Knock it off with the sanctimony. Knock it off with monetizing Jesus. And knock it off with manipulating the Nativity story. None of these things serves humanity or the Gospel.

They just get me grumpy - and nobody wants that.