

A CHRISTMAS MEMO 2005
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Each year, we have telephone calls from concerned parents that their children are not permitted to tell the true Christmas story, pass out Christmas cards referring to the virgin birth, or express some religious sentiment at public schools. In addition to public schools, public squares have also been scrutinized. You may recall the U.S. Supreme Court case which permitted a nativity scene to be erected by a city, so long as there were other aspects of Christmas present. This is pejoratively called the “plastic reindeer test.” In other words, the baby Jesus could be present as long as there were also plastic reindeer. Although this test may sound strange, it is really not too far removed from an appropriate appreciation for Christmas in all its aspects.

During Christmas 2004, we noticed for the first time an effort in the private sector to remove the Christian aspects of Christmas, *e.g.*, Macy’s required employees to express “Happy Holidays” and not “Merry Christmas” and major shopping centers had no Christian symbols. In some places, Christmas trees were even removed from stores and open areas and this would certainly lead you to believe that manglers were a no-no. It was not long ago that the only debate was whether Christmas trees were historically “Christian” or “heathen.” Oh, for simpler times.

Last year Christmas finally became politically incorrect. Many public schools did not let up on their efforts to sanitize (Santa-tize) Christmas, but for the first time, we saw major developments in virtually every area of American life to abandon our traditional cultural appreciation for Christmas. The fact is, America seemed to be celebrating every new and every secular aspect of Christmas, but the traditional and Christian religious aspect. There was a plastic reindeer, but no baby Jesus; there was a menorah, but no star; there was a *zawadi*, but no wise men; there was a Nutcracker, but no kernel of truth.

It is true we are a country of immigrants and not a homogenous society. Nevertheless, the first immigrants were of a Judeo-Christian heritage from Western Europe, although they were diverse in their doctrine. They brought with them many customs, most of which were integrated into the cultural traditional American Christmas as we know it. It was not too very long ago that we enjoyed all of the traditions of Christmas. It was not wrong to expect Santa Claus, because you still knew and, if you wished, celebrated the real “reason for the season.” Non-Christians were not forced to believe in the virgin birth, but it was accepted as part of the American tradition. One was not afraid to say “Happy Holidays”, and be mistaken for trying to avoid saying “Merry Christmas.” It was all part of the same thing.

The American population has changed with significantly more presence of other religions and traditions from parts of the world other than Western Europe. We should all respect these religious beliefs and customs. These Americans are entitled to celebrate and enjoy them under the freedoms granted by the United States Constitution. America has created its own nationalistic spirit, though being a county of immigrants with divergent views, by coming together under the banner of constitutional freedoms. Respect for another person is found in appreciation for his values and not the forsaking of your own values.

What we observe at Christmas is not a singular event, but a indication of something wrong. It is a multifaceted and complex problem, which must be approached in many different venues. It is a spiritual matter, as well as, a temporal matter. We need to do what we each can to respect one another, but at the same time preserve and respect what we have. We may be in the public sector or we may be in the private sector; wherever, we have an obligation to protect America’s traditions, while respecting the individual beliefs of others.

What can you do? Wish “Merry Christmas” to all you meet; encourage store management to display “Christmas”; speak to your children’s public school teachers about protecting your child’s “Christmas Rights”; write letters to your editor; enjoy the true meaning of the season and put worship of the Savior at the top of your list. It is not morally wrong or unlawful to celebrate Christmas publicly. The **“Keep Christmas Alive”** message should be published everywhere. To understand this spirit, attend the annual **“Festival of Sacred Christmas Music”** in Huntsville, Alabama, or have a **“Keep Christmas Alive”** event in your area and see the true spirit and meaning of Christmas come alive once again.

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