

# Say it loud and proud: 'Merry Christmas'

**THEO CALDWELL**

When the guide's heresy was reported to her superiors, she was firmly told that the decorated greenery were most certainly not "Christmas trees," and a heated debate ensued as to just what to call the arboreal splendour. It was decided that guides would refer only to "Festive Bushes" for the remainder of the holiday season.

But this year, Quebec Premier Jean Charest quickly corrected an overeager staffer who declared that a "Holiday Tree" would be lighted in the provincial capital. Charest's commonsensical statement that it was, in fact, a "Christmas Tree" was a welcome rebuke to the seasonal game of sensitivity and silly bears that goes on every year.

In this cold world, a kind word is always welcome, so if one person genuinely hopes for another to enjoy his or her holiday, or wishes to greet that person in the spirit of the season, far be it from me to cast a stone. But, in the weeks leading up to Dec. 25, if you make a conscious choice to avoid saying "Merry Christmas," there's a good chance you have decided that a divine gift that was meant for all mankind, and in which billions of people rejoice each year, is too offensive a notion to cross your lips.

Yes, yes, I know -- folks say "Happy Holidays" and other insipid stuff because not everyone is Christian, so this is a way to be inclusive. But there is no inclusion to be had by euphemizing the warmest wish of a particular religion, presuming it to be objectionable to non-believers.

Of course, there are many different religions and faiths in the world. This is something folks are taught by the age of, say, four or five. So, if you are older than this, yet you eschew "Merry Christmas," what you are putting forward is that one of the world's religions is uniquely unsuitable for public acknowledgement.

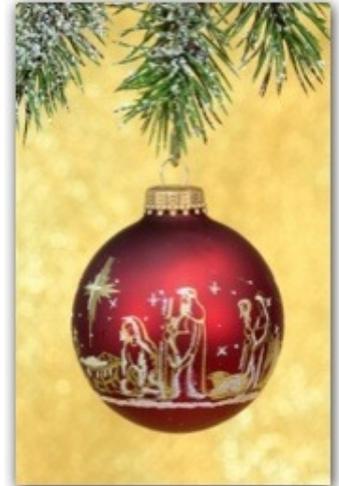
No one frets about being "inclusive" during Passover or Ramadan, nor should they. Ironically, the purported inclusiveness of the "Season's Greetings" police is actually about exclusion. To wit, it's about excluding just one religion, Christianity, from any rightful place in modern society.

The left has long since extrapolated vague, fashionable notions of history -- from the horrors of the Crusades to the dull intolerance of the 1950s -- to name Christianity the culprit for all the world's evil. And so, budding iconoclasts can tee off on the faith, or inflict their petty "Holiday Tree" policies with impunity. And well they might, for it is a riskless proposition. The worst that will happen is they may stumble across a column like this one, calling courage-free conformity by its name.

Indeed, those politically correct paragons who browbeat Christians in movies and television, classrooms and print, would be much more credible if, just once, they decided to try their censorious tactics on one of those religions where the practitioners react, shall we say, stringently to being muzzled or criticized.

Christians, the sensitivity cops point out, are in the majority, and so their holidays do not merit the same exclusive attention and protection as those of other religions. But is tolerance a numbers game? Is courtesy quantifiable? Is the respect a religion merits inversely proportional to its number of believers? Is it calculated like a marginal tax rate, off the last adherent rather than the last dollar earned?

Christmas is about Jesus Christ, Son of God, coming down to Earth to show us how a proper life should be lived, then dying unpleasantly for our sins. Believe it or don't. I may not be the world's greatest Christian, but we do one another no favours by pretending this happiest of holidays is about anything but Him.



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