

Unhappy Holidays

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

(Helen Keller)

Christmas is celebrated by billions, even among societies who do not consider themselves Christian. For multitudes this holiday season is surrounded by festivities enjoyed with family and friends. Beautiful songs telling the story of Christ's birth fill the air: Away in a Manger, Silent Night, O Little Town of Bethlehem, The First Noel But for many this holiday is anything but joyous; commercialization of this sacred season detract from its message, creating stress and anxiety in families. Some even find themselves being pushed over the edge and they explode. None will soon forget how Bruce Prado, stinging from an acrimonious divorce, dressed up like Santa Claus, went to his former in-law's Christmas Eve party and rang the doorbell. When an eight year old girl opened the door he shot her in the face and then slaughtered seven people before killing himself.

Christmas has a dark past. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was for a moment esteemed as an unfaithful adulterer. She left Nazareth, traveled to southern Israel for three months and returned pregnant; claiming that her child was a male and conceived by the Holy Spirit. She called Him Jesus the Son of God. Joseph her fiancée, heartbroken and crushed, did not believe her and decided to end the engagement. But God intervened. Three wise men bearing gifts traveled from the east to King Herod's palace. They had seen a star, a divine sign, proclaiming the birth of a great king. Herod, the tyrant ruler of Israel, wanted the magi to reveal to him the identity of the Messiah, whom he planned to kill. But after worshipping the Christ child, they fled and did not return. Herod was livid, sending soldiers to Bethlehem who killed every male child two years old and under.

But the pain of those who suffered at Christ's coming was not in vain; their sacrifices became the seeds for the hope of change in the world. The message of the Gospel of Christ brought light to the eyes of people, causing nations to abandon idolatry, human sacrifice and mythical gods. The practice of witchcraft and the worship of demons diminished; those civilizations who embraced the message of the Christ advanced. Christmas changed the world. So what is this holiday all about? Amges M. Pharo says, "It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future."

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