

Giftmas



The essay that all civilized people
agree ended once and for all
the War on Christmas.

by Mark Morelli

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“Mark Morelli
should win the
Nobel Peace
Prize.”

-Bill O'Reilly

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I am part of the marketing team that creates the advertising for a chain of retail stores.

Here is a true example of irony: When you work in retail, the word "merry" become the least merry word you know. Also, work in the retail marketing industry provides the rare opportunity to hate Christmas not once, not twice, but at least three times a year.

First, when you create the Christmas sales message, like in May.

Second, when you go through all of the administrative approval processes and release the materials to the media. Like, anywhere from September to early December.

Third, when the REAL Christmas season actually happens. That day begins sooner and sooner. I predict that, soon, it will be like political election cycles, never really ending.

How did this happen?

I believe there was a Five-Families-style meeting of the big retailers. They tried to figure out how to make

money out of Thanksgiving, which had required no gifts, no religion. There's something for everybody precisely because there's nothing for everybody. Except calories.

Once it was determined, try as they might, that no money could be made from Thanksgiving, they decided, "Thanksgiving is dead to us."

So they just flipped back a page on the calendar and decided that the Christmas shopping season would begin the moment after the last piece of Halloween candy is handed out. It is followed by an emotional and financial sinkhole spanning eight weeks (probably more next year and even more the year after) that will chew up, spit out, bust and disgust and fatten, stress out and hangover just about everybody.

Why? Because Christmas is all about the savior.

That is, the cross-your-fingers *savior* of third and fourth fiscal quarter sales that are essential for retailers and manufacturers to meet forecasted sales goals.

Capitalism needs Christmas more than Christians do.

**But That's Not the Real Meaning of Christmas,
Is It?**

What about the soldiers fighting on the side of Baby Jesus in the War on Christmas?

The “keep Christ in Christmas” warriors actually owe thanks to Madison Avenue and everyone else contributing to the commercialization of Christmas, or how else would these dull people experience the adrenaline of posing as Don Quixote tilting at secular media windmills. Being a victim is the greatest gift to them of all.

But enough about them, whom I advise to knock it off, declare victory and go off to a quiet room and pray where there are no cameras.

The Solution Isn't War. It's Truce and Separation.

There are really two Christmases in play here. One Christmas is a solemn commemoration of Christ's birth, although I think the solemnity of Christmas probably lasted about five minutes, 600 years ago.

The other Christmas is about Money.

We could call them North Christmas and South Christmas, but that's a little too geopolitical.

Instead, let's give Money-Christmas a different identity. Jesus-Christmas gets to keep the name. Money-Christmas will now be called...drum roll...

Giftmas!

Giftmas satisfies our desire to buy and receive without feeling hypocritical or paying lip service to a faith we may not genuinely practice or believe.

And it fits the schedule perfectly! Make Giftmas an 8-week celebration of consumption and gift-giving that serves two purposes:

- Express love, affection, butt-kissing and all the other reasons why we give gifts, willingly or not.
- Stimulate the economy. What Giftmas loses in religious meaning, it gains in patriotism as gift buying becomes a voluntary stimulus package that helps the economy.

Face it Folks, We're There. Christmas Is *Already* a Gaudy Theme Park

Quick quiz:

A.) Was Jesus squeezed out of Christmas after decades, even centuries, of padding the holiday with secular celebration add-ons?

B.) Was Jesus squeezed *into* existing pagan and winter festivals that were designed to liven up the winter blues?

Answer:

B.) It took hundreds of years for Christians to even get excited about Christmas. It finally became a liturgical feast day in the 4th century.

Then its celebration was piggybacked onto other winter festivities so Christians could participate in the

revelry and eventually claim it's part of their faith.

Some objected. The early settlers of America, the Puritans, prohibited the celebration of Christmas. It was still another workday and didn't become an American holiday until 1870.

Other than that, most of us were game for a party, so for centuries we padded on feasts, parties, dances, gifts, celebrations, traditions, decorations, theatrical Midnight Masses, Santas first in comics and books then in department stores, flying reindeer, TV shows, colored lights strung on homes with staple guns, more and more and more songs about silver bells and two front teeth and grandma getting run over by a reindeer and baby-it's-cold-outside, till finally, the straw that broke the wise men's camel's back: A nameless choleric Christian was greeted by a mall clerk with the words "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" as the clerk rang up her purchase of a Nintendo Game Boy to celebrate the birth of the divine baby who would grow up to tell us to love others who don't love us back, forgive others who hate and want to kill us, and sacrifice his life for the salvation of others.

That was the moment the modern War on Christmas was declared. But these words you read today are the manifesto of the peace accord ends this war.

It is inspired by wisdom that spoke to me one day through the clouds, saying, "What the hell does one

thing have to do with the other?"

And so as I write this, the two Christmases are now hereby peacefully separated in definition, spirit and intent.

To sum it up in its utter simplicity:

Giftmas = presents.

Christmas = Thanksgiving + Jesus.

Now go in peace, child of God. And spend with abandon, loyal citizen!

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Books by Mark Morelli

Tales of Zoalmont and the Melancholy Fringe

Effwords: Essays of Faith, Family, Fatherhood & That Other One

Rearview: Columns from Halfsquare, 2005-2008
including "Giftmas" the essay that ended the War on Christmas

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