

Common Meditation for Friday, December 23, 2011:

A Christmas Meditation

Newsletters from other churches arrive in the mail every day. So I read them, and they get me to thinking. For example:

Ministers' columns at this time of the year say one of two things: "The holiday season is a happy time," or "The holidays are depressing." The "happy time" school of thought makes a case for generosity, good cheer, and a deepening spirituality, whereas the "depression" advocates cite studies that prove the winter holidays are difficult. At the moment, the "happy holidays" group has a slight edge, the freshest crop of Ph.D.s having studied our December moods and found them to be merry after all.

I beg to differ. With no empirical work at all to back me up, I'd like to make a case for people being regular people even when December rolls around. Sure, Mom is frantic after Thanksgiving, but she is a frantic person in general. Brother John is nonchalant about the holidays, but he's always been the laid-back type. Aunt Martha gears up for a family squabble, but remember, she set up a round or two in July. Uncle John is a natural Santa, but he's a sweetie all year long.

In our family, we will incessantly exclaim, "Where's your Christmas spirit?" from Thanksgiving until the twenty-fifth. This phrase, at our house, has always been an obnoxious code for "Lighten up, it's Christmastime, act merry, not human."

I'm changing the code. This year "Christmas spirit" will refer to the fact that we are who we are, merry or depressed, and we love each other anyway.

"The Christmas Spirit" by Jane Rzepka from "A Small Heaven: A Meditation Manual"