



Christmas 2006

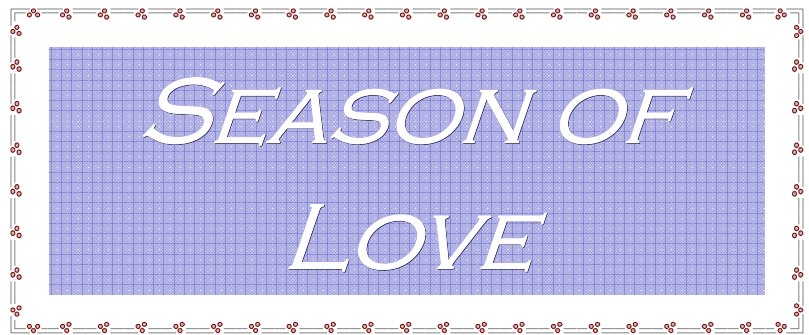
SERVANT LEADERS



Volume 2, Issue 6



St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, photo courtesy Dr. Z. A. Tusek



The once-cherished words “Season’s Greetings” have become fighting words to some Christians. The “reason for the season” is the glorious and redemptive birth of Christ, runs the argument, so it’s wrong to include holiday traditions of other religions (e.g. the Jewish feast of Hanukah) or cultures (Kwanza), or just plain secular traditions (Christmas trees, mistletoe, holly, and Santa Claus) in the celebration of Christmas. By this reasoning, the exclusive focus at Christmas time should be on Christ’s birth and what it means to man.

We would like to offer a counter-argument, if we may. What’s so bad about a season of love for all people, Christian and non-Christian alike? What could be wrong with emphasizing that which unites us, which is friendship, family, charity and

compassion? How can it hurt Christians to reach out to those who are not yet Christians in the spirit of love, which Christ brought from heaven to earth? And isn’t Christmas a unique and blessed opportunity to witness Christ’s love, not through words (“Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary,” said St. Francis of Assisi) but through acts of kindness and mercy?

In a multi-dimensional world culture, of which each American is a member (whether willingly or not), trying to isolate the Christian aspects of a national holiday is counterproductive to the command of Christ to tell the nations of His life and salvation. Drawing into a “fortress mentality” from which one peers at the larger culture and declares it evil (big surprise! The Bible teaches that the world is fallen, the devil’s domain) can only serve to fur-

ther marginalize the Christian church in an increasingly secular culture.

Instead of isolation and condemnation of the amazingly universal celebration of the birth of our own King, perhaps we Christians should be grateful and thankful for the opportunity to celebrate love during the holidays. The entire nation takes a break from the endless round of work, chores, tasks and errands, in order to reconnect with loved ones and family. People travel great distances and endure economic and sometimes physical hardship for the sake of expressing their love. That’s amazing and wonderful, whether the people realize that their love is from God or not (“... because God is love,” according to 1st John 4:8). What better time to gently share the love of God than at Christmas,

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when the whole world, including non-Christians, pagans and heathens, is briefly united in harmony and friendship.

Traditionally, troops call a cease-fire at Christmas. There's a lovely story about Christmas Eve, 1914 in WWI:

"It was 1914 in German-occupied France. The invading army and the Allies were literally dug into trenches, sometimes just 20 feet apart. To raise your head above the sandbags was to risk having it blown off. The opposing soldiers could hear one another, and, if they dared, even look into each other's eyes. Separating the two trenches was a small patch of earth dubbed No Man's Land—littered with shells, shrapnel, and the corpses of

On Christmas Eve, they placed the trees, with candles lit, in parapets atop the trenches, in clear sight of the enemy. And then one enlisted man who'd been fighting alongside his German comrades, began singing "Stille Nacht" ("Silent Night"). The Allied troops obviously knew the tune, and soon, all sides joined in on the singing from their trenches, each in their own language.

Soon, men were climbing out of their earthen dugouts, sans weapons, and toward one another—toward the enemy!—to join together in celebrating the birth of a Savior they all had in common, politics and the war be hanged. (Christianity Today, 03/16/06)

For Christians, surely "Jesus is the reason for the season." Within our

own community of believers, we can elevate Christ and celebrate for His sake. Yet isn't it great that people from entirely different religions and philosophies are willing to join in our celebration?

Why don't we accept these fellow celebrators in the spirit of love, as we witness to the

love of Christ, Who came as a baby to save all men? Then the traditional Christmas season will be a time in which, as Luke 3:6 says, "all mankind will see God's salvation."

**Merry Christmas—
and Happy Holidays to you!**

from Sara and Jarda Tusek



Knut and Gudrun are Back!

The Petersons are back from Prague, with new adventures and ways to minister the love of Christ in Prague and the US. Servant Leaders Press will publish the second volume of the Knut-and-Gudrun trilogy in Spring 2007. We hope our old friends will want to see how the Petersons have changed, and that new friends will become interested in our tale of life in a postmodern culture, as we share our knowledge of He who makes life worth living.



**VESELE VANOCE A
STASTNY NOVY
ROK!**

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND HAPPY NEW
YEAR!**

