



Merry Christmas!

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Editor

Merry Christmas! At my house we say Merry Christmas. I am not being disrespectful or apolitically correct, just honest. And if you celebrate Hannukah or Ramadan, then just take my happy exclamation and apply it to your beliefs. For in fact you know what I mean. Kwanzaa isn't a religious event, but if you acknowledge this seven-day remembrance of African culture, then by all means Merry Christmas to you, too!

Yes, Merry Christmas to all!!! It seems that during this time of year I have the opportunity to reflect upon the many blessings I enjoy in my life. Mid-summer is a bad time, as my mind is focused upon self-centered thoughts such as keeping my grass green and green grass playable. But come snow time I often ponder my fortunes.

As a youth I lay awake dreaming about the wondrous gifts wrapped in spectacular fashion under the Christmas tree. Usually I received clothing, books and toys meant to stimulate my mind. But sometimes I'd actually get a present I had been wishing for, perhaps a Sheridan Blue Streak Pellet gun, a toboggan or my favorite model rocket ship.

But today, a bit older and wiser, I appreciate the season as so much more than "gifts for me." I am a very fortunate man. My family is loving and my health pretty good. I thank God that I don't smoke, drink or do drugs anymore. However, I value the lessons I learned when I did. My friends are honest and respect-

ful, my religious beliefs comforting.

I give thanks for, and am hopeful for, continued success with work, family and play. During this lull I remember in detail my relationships and the knowledge I have learned from those who have passed away. My mind tends to wander and wonder about my children's future, my friends who are experiencing bumps in the road of life and those who put themselves in danger for my continued prosperity.

God bless our police force, our fire department and our volunteer military service personnel who are in and out of harms way. You have my utmost respect and I honor your dedication and willingness to protect me as I lead my life in a free America. I wish you all a Merry Christmas.

And at this time of year I am hopeful that addicted persons seek the help they need to become productive members of our society again. I pray for our enemies to appreciate freedom over oppression. And I reflect upon those who have less than I do and who struggle from day to day, searching for a way out of their rut in life. Where there is a will there is a way.

Thankfully I was born in a country that accepts the freedom of decision, the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion and the ability to be political. Fortunately I was raised in a community that values individual thought and those potential opportunities that arise from hard work and dedication. Gratefully, my parents raised me with values that support me on "cruise control" when my mind is elsewhere.

I shout "Merry Christmas" to each of you, my friends and peers. Take this time to celebrate your achievements, reflect upon your challenges and be thankful for the opportunities you have in this great country we share together.

Love your friends, love your family and love yourself. For your self worth and what you give through thought, word and deed are the true presents of life.

The Desiderata

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible, without surrender,
be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others,
even to the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.
Avoid loud and aggressive persons;
they are vexations to the spirit.
If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain or bitter,
for always there will be greater and
lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.
Keep interested in your own career, however humble,
it's a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.
Exercise caution in your business affairs,
for the world is full of trickery.
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals,
and everywhere life is full of heroism.
Be yourself.
Especially do not feign affection.
Neither be cynical about love;*

*for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment,
it is as perennial as the grass.
Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.
You are a child of the universe
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.
Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive him to be.
And whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life,
keep peace in your soul.
With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.
Be cheerful.
Strive to be happy.*

by Max Ehrmann