

CHRISTMAS WITHOUT CHRIST

William A. Donohue

Even though roughly 80 percent of Americans are Christian, 96 percent celebrate Christmas. Can non-Christians and non-believers really celebrate Christmas? To some extent they can, just the same way those who are not Irish can celebrate St. Patrick's Day: they can partake in the fun aspects of it, but that's it. At bottom, it's a hollow exercise.

Multicultural propaganda maintains that the U.S. is so incredibly diverse that it is wrong to exclude non-Christians at Christmastime. But no one is excluding them: it is Christians who are being excluded—they are the ones being denied their right to celebrate Christmas in the schools, public parks and the workplace. That these exclusionary policies are being invoked in the name of inclusion is the ultimate irony.

Diversity gurus who spin the multicultural propaganda are fond of saying that there are thousands of religions in the U.S., and therefore it is wrong to make a big deal about Christmas. What they don't say is that 95 percent of Americans who are religious are Christian. In other words, only 5 percent of those who are religious belong to a religion other than Christianity. Yes, there are many religions in this country, but aside from Jews and Muslims, each comprising roughly two percent of the population, the rest are tiny. Some could fit all their members on a tugboat.

Approximately 40 percent of Americans say religion is an important part of their life; these are the "very religious," the ones who also attend church (or synagogue or mosque) on a weekly basis. The rest of the population is roughly split between those who occasionally attend church (they see religion as playing at least some role in their life), and

those who are not religious.

This last segment is the most diverse of the three: about half of these “non-religious” persons still go to church, albeit infrequently, and almost all of them believe in God; the other half, about 16 percent of the population, never attend church. Those who do not attend church are called the “nones”; when asked about their religious affiliation, they say they have none. But contrary to the popular perception, most of them are neither agnostic or atheist, and a slight majority still believe in God. Indeed, agnostics are only 3.3 percent of the population and atheists are a mere 2.4 percent. To show how few hard-core agnostics and atheists there are, consider that 13 percent of these two segments still attend church on a monthly or yearly basis.

Clearly, then, we have been misled, intentionally I would argue, about the religious profile of Americans. Those who do the misleading include professors (they are disproportionately represented among agnostics and atheists), professional atheist crusaders, and the diversity specialists who push the multicultural agenda. They would have us believe that all non-Christians are upset about Christmas celebrations, but this is a ruse: they are the ones who want to stamp out Christmas.

What do they want? They want to eviscerate the Judeo-Christian ethos from our society. They see Christianity, and especially Catholicism, as the enemy. So they seek to neuter Christmas and purge the textbooks of any positive treatment of Christianity. I’m not exaggerating: I recently debated the head of American Atheists on TV, and he told me before going on the air that he hates religion; the intensity of his remark was palpable. And judging from his work, it is Catholicism that upsets him the most.

Don’t get me wrong: most non-believers are not haters. Agnostics tend to be intellectually lazy; they are more indifferent than hostile. Atheists are varied as well, though

among this segment are the “new atheists,” the militant ones. It is they who are on the march, seeking to scrub our culture free of Christianity.

What can we do? Let them know that we will not walk away from making public statements about Christianity. When I took over as president in 1993, I noticed there was a huge menorah in Central Park, but no nativity scene. I was determined to change that: the next year, and every year since, we erected a life-size manger scene on the corner of 59th and 5th, at the foot of Central Park.

This year, in addition to our nativity scene, I wanted to do something different. A few years ago we answered an anti-Christmas billboard that was displayed on the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel with our own pro-Christmas billboard on the New York side. This year we are putting an enormous billboard in Times Square featuring a nativity scene that can be seen night and day. Send Modern-Day Scrooges a Message: Celebrate the Prince of Peace. See page 12.

Our crèche, and our billboard, are important cultural markers. It is critical that our side knows that it is not acceptable to dumb-down our sacred holiday. We want to make our side proud; we also want to embolden them. So, yes, it is okay for non-Christians and non-believers to partake in Christmas celebrations. But let’s not forget about its essence. We have a legal right and a moral duty to publicly proclaim our religion.

Merry Christmas!