

Peaceful Christmas?



So here we are, well into the Advent season – a season barely recognized by the world any longer. It's a season that is meant for reflection, silence and anticipation. But everywhere we go, the Christmas carols have been playing for weeks now, and the only thing we're depending on is a lot of stress and frustration.

Can we really have a “merry little Christmas”? How can we reflect and pray for peace on earth when all is not “calm” or “bright”? We can barely get through a holiday dinner without someone reigniting an old argument or one of our fallen-away relatives taking shots at the Church. Combine the family dynamics with the stress of the holidays, and what is supposed to be “the most wonderful time of the year” seems like just the opposite. But it doesn't have to be this way. We can have a peaceful and joyful Christmas no matter what our situation.

Our blood pressure can get back down to a normal level if we start by realizing we're not alone. Despite what we think, very few people have families that could star in a Hallmark Channel Christmas movie. Every time I start to get a little hesitant about heading into a family get-together, I think about something a good deacon friend of ours told me and my husband some 20 years ago as we were about to give our marriage testimony in front of a crowd of 500-plus people during a World Marriage Day event. He said, “Everybody's got something. No matter how ‘together’ they seem to be on the outside, many are struggling and need encouragement.”

No truer words were ever spoken when it comes to family. While the Norman Rockwell paintings are lovely and the syrupy Hallmark movies make us feel all warm and fuzzy, they're not reality. And that's okay. Having a healthy understanding that we all have struggles can help us relax and make the most of

the moment. We're not perfect. We're all hopefully working at our holiness, but we all sin and fall short. And that's okay as long as we're willing to help each other get up, brush ourselves off and start all over again.

The "everybody's got something" approach is one of the many suggestions I'll be discussing on my next webcast sponsored by Our Sunday Visitor, entitled "Have Yourself a Peaceful Little Christmas." My guest will be well known author, speaker and Catholic convert Steve Ray. On Dec. 19 at 11 a.m. Eastern, Steve will share his experience as a father, brother and grandfather who comes from a family that has a lot of "somethings," so to speak.

Despite Steve's knowledge and enthusiasm for sharing the Faith as an apologist, he also knows that the holiday dinner table is probably not the most effective venue to witness to brother Bill or sister Susie. Nor is it the time or the place to discuss political issues and preferences. This doesn't mean we don't witness. It also doesn't mean we allow people to attack us on issues we hold near and dear to our hearts. It does mean there is a time and place for everything.

Speaking of time, you'll have plenty of time to ask questions and contribute to the conversation when you join us on the webcast. The monthly OSV webcasts are free, but you do need to register. You can find more information at teresatomeo.com/webcasts and osvcatholicbookstore.com/webcasts.

So, make the most of this special season by joining us for this timely webcast. Yes, everybody's got something, including you and me. But maybe we can make those "somethings" a little bit easier to deal with by learning how to be more like Christ especially at Christmas.

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[24/7 Catholic](#)" (OSV, \$14.95).