

## A Difficult Christmas

I've noticed the sadness of people this year for Christmas. A few of my friends have lost loved ones this year and it is going to be difficult for them to be happy for the holiday. How do you extend happy holiday greetings to people who you know are going to be struggling to find happiness or joy in the holiday? What do you say to comfort them when you know they are hurting so deeply inside?

We are told through TV and movies that Christmas is to be joyful and perfect. But we know that is not always the case. Christmas can be difficult for so many simply because people are not perfect, families are not always warm and loving and some people are alone. As I get older, I realize this more and more.

For those people that I know may be facing a difficult holiday, I simply say to them "I hope you can find some joy during this holiday season." I like to phrase it that way because then they can search for their own joy and what the holiday season may mean for them. For some, it is simply going to church to be with their church family. For others it may be sitting home with a good book and a glass of wine listening to Christmas music, even if they are alone. And for others, it may be working with the poor and the homeless. And, yes, for some people it will be sleeping the day away or drinking to get through it.

Regardless, the best we can do for all people is to be kind and loving. Help where we can. Give out hugs like they were candy. Visit the lonely. Listen to those who long to talk. Send a card or an email. Take someone to lunch. Make eye contact with the cashier or the waitress/waiter. Remember that your pastor is a person, too. The list goes on and on.

The true spirit of Christmas should last the whole year through, with the giving of love to our fellow humans. We are all connected through God. God is in each one of us and will always be so. Each day my heart beats with your heart, my smile meets your smile and my hand touches your hand. I know your sorrow, your pain and have shed your tears as you know my sorrow, my pain and have shed my tears. We are not separate. We are one and as one we are to care for one another. Each life is a beautiful tapestry being woven, interconnected.

Do not stop being kind or joyful just because Christmas will be over before you know it and it's back to "business as usual." Be unusual this year. Continue the Christmas spirit throughout the whole year.

Smudge and I offer you love for this holiday season and joy to see you through it.

*Ember*