

RAISING THE BAR

A DECATO LAW OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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“CHRISTMAS IS”

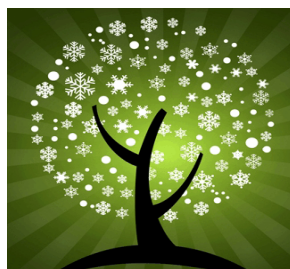
Christmas means a lot of different things to different people. For some, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of Christ. For others, Christmas is the time when we exchange gifts. For still others, it is a combination of the two.

Regardless of what Christmas is to you, it is an historical fact that Jesus Christ was born some twenty centuries ago and He lived amongst us for some thirty-three years. For Christians, Jesus Christ was the son of God. Non-Christians have a different point of view. But for both Christians and non-Christians alike, Jesus is a significant figure who has affected the course of life on this planet since his arrival twenty centuries ago.

Jesus was a philosopher. He was non-violent - the original pacifist. His philosophy of life was simple: love your God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. It appears that Jesus never harmed a living soul, although I understand He got a little angry with some money-changers, but who doesn't. It is written that He cared deeply about the suffering of others. It is evident that Jesus loved man and he loved mankind. He taught those who listened to Him to do likewise.

Jesus inspired the likes of Ghandi and Martin Luther King. It was Ghandi who wrote: “The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still voice therein.” Jesus might have written those words Himself. In the end, I suspect He inspired them. In 1963, Martin Luther King wrote: “Man was born into barbarism when killing his fellow man was a normal condition of existence. He became endowed with a conscience. And he has now reached the day when violence toward another human being must become as abhorrent as eating another's flesh.” Jesus could have written these words. Although He didn't write them, He must have inspired them.

In this country, we celebrate the birthdays of heroes. We celebrate Washington, Lincoln and King to name three. We also celebrate the birthday of Christ. We celebrate these birthdays because we cherish their legacies. We know that each of them has enriched us - some with their leadership, some with their words. Most of all, we know that each of them has taught us how to properly conduct our lives.



From time to time, our citizenry is dragged into the debate about whether a manger scene can be publicly displayed. We are told that to have a manger scene in a public place is to help establish a religion - the Christian religion. We are told that it is inappropriate to refer to God when conducting the public's business and inappropriate to have "in God we Trust" on our currency. All this we are told in order to separate Church from State.

I wish we could find a balance where we could honor our heritage and acknowledge the philosophers/religious leaders who have shaped our lives and informed us of what is right and what is wrong. In an ordered society, there are those who have come before us who have informed us how to live. We should be able to honor them by acknowledging their birth, their teachings and the goodness of their lives. We should be able to do so without crossing the line into the establishment of a religion.

I realize that Christmas is also about the spirit of giving (and receiving), so I want to share with you one my favorite and most memorable Christmas gifts.

One year, my mother and father gave me a cowboy hat, cowboy shirt, a holster and a cap gun. I was quite happy with my gift and if I do say so myself, I looked quite formidable in my little "outfit."

During the spring following Christmas, while dressed like Roy Rogers, I decided to go over to my father's garage to pay a visit. Unfortunately for me (and my father), there was an Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) fuel truck in the yard. The driver was filling the underground tank with fuel oil and the cap was off the filler pipe. The pipe looked like a good place to put my cap gun. I pulled the trigger and I immediately learned about the lyrics to Bruce Springsteen's song, "I'm on fire."

Christmas came early that year. I was able to smother the fire on myself and the Atlantic Richfield man was able to put the cap back on the filler pipe and put out the fire in the tank. My father was pleased with that.

For me, celebrating Christ's birth and giving/receiving gifts have always come on the same day. I've always seen these activities as being linked. The whole idea of giving seems to me to be something Christ would approve. Giving has its roots in love and Christ's legacy is rooted in love.

Let me end by saying to all who read this newsletter: whether you be a believer or non-believer, be filled/consumed with the Christmas spirit this year. Let us all wish good will to mankind and avoid putting your cap guns in filler pipes.

