

Rabbi Richard Margolis

Religious Perspectives - Judaism

Does it offend you when someone wishes you a “Merry Christmas”?

“I would like to come at this Christmas thing from a, by the way, I would not be offended if someone wished me a Merry Christmas. That is perfectly okay with me. But I want to approach that from another perspective. As I think I understand what’s beneath the question. Which excuse me is the dumming down of religion in our time and the denying the religious values which are such a deep part of our culture and our civilization. That bothers me.

It would bother me much more if someone came along and said, ‘Richard, Happy Holidays’ than if someone didn’t know I was a Rabbi whatever and I don’t observe Christmas in a religious sense. Although I get plenty of invitations to parties and you bet I go to a number of them. Now this whole, it’s very important, you’ve put on the uniform of the United States of America to defend to uphold our values and our teachings. I want to say something that’s controversial, maybe you’ll discuss it in your groups. It’s come up occasionally over the years here but it’s very important.

This notion of political correctness is an European, not an American, concept. And it’s not one I personally, now I don’t want to go around offending everybody, but I don’t want to bend over backwards and stop being who I am or ask you to stop being who you are for fear that I am going to offend anybody.

That is not the American way. We manage, I mean what does it say, E pluribus unum, right? We make one out of many. That’s us! And it’s infected the universities, it’s infected the popular culture but this whole notion of politically...don’t dare say anything because somebody might be offended, that we have to stop being who we are. That would offend me. That would bother me.

I have boxes and boxes of cards from numerous friends in the Christian clergy, dozens of them. I would be remiss if I didn’t wish them a Merry Christmas. And people I know from all walks of my life. So I don’t want to see that go away. I think it’s an indigenous part of who we are as a people. And to diminish anyone’s religious traditions in the name of pretending that we are all the same, is more offensive to me than anything else. Thank you for a very cogent question.”

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