

AN OPEN LETTER TO CHRISTMAS “CULTURE WARRIORS”

For the past several years some media pundits and “culture warriors” have launched an aggressive campaign against a so-called “War on Christmas.”

Targeting department stores, local governments and school systems for replacing Merry Christmas with “Happy Holidays” or “Seasons Greetings,” Bill O’Reilly and John Gibson of Fox News have led the charge against what they call a “secular progressive agenda” determined to drive religion out of the public square. William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights ominously warns of “cultural fascists” taking over Christmas.

It’s time for a ceasefire in the Christmas culture wars.

As Americans of faith, we also see a dangerous assault on the true meaning of this sacred day. But our outrage has little to do with a few examples of people saying “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” We believe the real assault on Christmas is how a season of peace, forgiveness and goodwill has been sidelined by a focus on excessive consumerism.

The powerful message Christ brings to the world is “good news for the poor.” Instead, Christmas is being reduced to a corporate-sponsored holiday that idolizes commerce and materialism. Shopping and gift giving are meaningful traditions that can express the season’s values, but perspective is lost when relentless advertising and maxed-out credit cards define the holiday. It’s time to reclaim the virtue of shared sacrifice for the common good.

To focus on how department stores greet customers at a time when American soldiers are dying in Iraq and 37 million of our neighbors live in poverty is a distraction from the profound moral challenges we face in confronting the real threats to human dignity in our world.

We invite Messrs. O’Reilly, Gibson and Donohue to join us in a new campaign of civility and conscience that restores our focus on the common good during this holy season. Together we can change the culture – not with strident attacks or shouting matches on television – but with an unwavering commitment to justice and peace for all of God’s children.

Please join our campaign at www.ChristmasCampaign.org

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