



A Better Story

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I just received an email offer to purchase the new “Hallmark Channel: Countdown to Christmas” book loaded with recipes, such as macaroni and cheese and classic eggnog, and with tips like upgrading your gingerbread house.

Normally, I'd be pretty jazzed about such an “ultimate, deck-the-halls guide,” but as I sit here and write this meditation, it's a 95-degree day in October and Christmas feels far away. There's a lot of pain and suffering in the news. War rages in Ukraine. The city of Los Angeles is rocked by the hurtful, horrible words heard in a leaked recording of some council members. The toll of sky-high, rising prices is creating hardships for many people and families.

It's hard to believe that under this milieu we're supposed to prepare to celebrate Christmas with trees, ornaments, presents, music, candy, and so much food. Oh, and research novel gift-toppers.

On one hand, it may feel disingenuous. On the other hand, maybe it's exactly what we need. We need to coalesce around something stronger and more hopeful than what confronts us in our daily lives.

Edward Lavin Sr., a Jesuit priest, writes about this in *Life Meditations*:

When I look into the crevices of the world, dark movements assault my eyes. Evil makes me sad. On the contrary, the great movements of the universe expand my heart, and fill me with joy.

Connecting to the wonder of God, to the bold ideas of truth, service, and justice, and to our great emotions of love and energy can carry us forward even in the toughest of times, he writes. The Earth may feel a bit parched in many ways right now. But celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ by gathering with friends and family, teaching children about the Christmas story, and singing carols over and over again are traditions that can refresh a weary soul.

So, go ahead and break out the tinsel. I'm buying the Hallmark book. We have a real-life story to celebrate and it's better than any headline.