

Weekly Teaching

December 9, 2016

Last night, our Sholom Center for Interfaith Fellowship and Learning observed our annual public lighting of both the Chanukah Menorah and the Christmas Tree.



We are truly blessed to live in a country that can celebrate both our commonalities and our diversity.

America has historically been the greatest example of how a nation can affirm the value of both multi-cultures and religions.

America embraces, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc., etc., etc.

We also protect the right for both agnostic and atheist to live free from any religious coercion.

Thomas Jefferson beautifully wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which became the basis for our constitutional separation of “church and state:”

“No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be forced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.”

Certainly, the Judeo-Christian influence was primary in the beginnings of America’s intellectual history, however, the founding fathers created the impetus for the ability of America to value and safeguard religious diversity.

There have always been some who would attempt to impose their views and intolerance upon others, but fortunately as a society we have safeguarded the ideals of our U.S. Constitution.

The Sholom Center’s annual tradition is the paradigm for private institutions to come together and affirm a love and appreciation for the myriad of ways by which we can effectively help bring more of God’s light within our world.

The Chanukah story of the Maccabees is a narrative that reminds us that people have a right to be different; to be able to embrace their own prescription by which they can embrace holiness in a particularistic way while simultaneously assisting to foster a communal environment so as we can all better fulfill the Divine Imperative to love others as we love ourselves.

Chanukah lights — a Jewish prescription; Christmas lights — a Christian prescription; each particularistic prescription anchoring faith communities in a unique way, yet effectively re-igniting our own hearts, minds and souls.

This year, during our shared holy season, may the Chanukah Menorah and the Christmas Tree prompt us all to shine the light so as to cast away the evil that comes with both evil acts and silent indifference.

Shabbat Shalom,

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