

No Santa, no Christmas

One of the most common comments we've gotten this year from well-meaning people about Katja is "Oh, this Christmas she'll really be able to enjoy it!"

We don't celebrate Christmas. I'm still learning how to respond to that comment, so I'm quite happy that it will all be over and done with in a few days.

It's not that we won't have a holiday celebration. We'll have a four day long celebration, in fact. One day is the feast day, specifically a goose, which we've been doing for years. One day will be for presents. One is for service, volunteering time and donating what we don't need. One day will be spent making goodies for people we care about. I figure that basically covers all the bases and it de-emphasizes all of the Christmas consumerism that makes me so very angry.

I want Katja to have a winter celebration. As an atheist family, we're not willing to bring religion into the house just because everyone else does it. We decided to create our own and build it around the things we feel are important. She will have a celebration that emphasizes sharing food, making gifts for others, and doing good. Presents are part of it, yes, but not the only thing.

I have heard people talk about the "war on Christmas" and complain that Christians are being persecuted in the US. I have several issues with that statement, but one of the most obvious is holidays. Christmas is a day off for the whole country. If someone has to work on Christmas, they get paid extra. Christmas trees go up in practically every city and town. Christmas stuff gets sold from the day after Halloween. I tell people we don't celebrate Christmas and I get funny looks. I've even had a few people tell me that we're not being fair to Katja because we're not buying into this celebration

that has become all about how much stuff people can get. I know, I know, the celebration is supposed to be about the birth of Christ, about giving and kindness and all that jazz. Look around, though. Do you see a holiday focused on kindness? Do you see people going out of their way to help others, to love their neighbors? Or do you see riots over toys and prizes on Black Friday, people stomping on each other to get to the front of the line? How about the TV commercials written to make you feel guilty if you don't buy the perfect gift? Fear, uncertainty, and doubt are wielded to make you worry about whether your family will love you or be disappointed after they open their gifts.

No, I don't like Christmas. I like what we will be teaching our daughter about what is important. I like that we can create our own little corner that is separate from all of the craziness. I like that our daughter will learn that it's important to give to others, to care about people less fortunate, and to help where we can.

I believe in a lot of things. I believe in people, in kindness, and in hope. I just don't believe in a god, or in Santa, or in some virgin birth. If you have problems with that, I don't mind. You don't get to tell me that I'm doing wrong by my daughter, though. She'll be raised knowing that the important part of the winter holiday is not the part where she gets stuff; that part is minor. It is about family, sharing, love, and helping people. She'll get some neat presents, but that's only one day, and I hope that the full celebration will have more depth than just the "Gimme!" approach that Christmas seems to engender in so many people.