

Nutcrackers!

Starting way back in the late 1960's and up through some time in the 1980's a comedian named Pat Paulsen used to run for President of the United States during every General Election. During his faux campaign, Paulsen would often be heard decrying his opponent's claims or proposals as "bullfeathers! . . ." expressing skepticism.

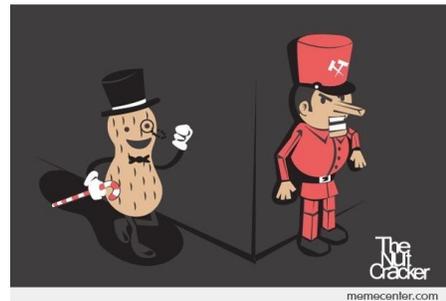
Pat Paulsen was a comedic curmudgeon. A curmudgeon is a cranky, cynical, disagreeable person: And I don't think any one of us wants to be that guy or gal. But there are a lot of things in life which make this very difficult: The ugly, gridlocked state of politics makes it difficult. The wasteful consumerism of so-called "Black Fridays" and "Cyber Mondays" can make it quite difficult. And the saccharin sentimentality super-imposed over the Advent-Christmas Season will challenge the patience of the best of us. In place of Paulsen's "bullfeathers" I say "nutcrackers!"

What does the Nutcracker have to do with Christmas anyhow? I realize that it is a performance that has deep roots in the artistic world, going back to late 19th century Russia and Tchaikovsky: And so, it should be appreciated as a bona fide, classic ballet, (if you are into that sort of thing). But, for this guy, it just adds to the noise and superficiality covering over the whole purpose and meaning of observing Christmas in the first place!

Here I am not interested in the political-culture wars which, I think, are mostly "bullfeathers." However, what we have, de facto, are two distinct celebrations occurring at the same time: There is a "winter carnival" which has adapted some Christian symbols to a Northern European and

Victorian English aesthetic, (or some such amalgam). And then there is the Christian observance of Christmas as the amazing, in-breaking of the Eternal Word of God in human form.

Why refer to something as Christmas which has little or nothing to do with Christ or Mass? To me it is tantamount to taking the name of the Lord in vain. Why not re-brand it as "Winter-Festival" or "Winter-Carnival." It isn't likely that this will happen in society at large, but it might be a distinction we maintain in our consciousness as we are bombarded by the sights and sounds of the moment.



After all, the "Light of the World" is not the illumination of trees and wreaths: He is the Co-Eternal Son of the Creator-Father who entered our history to confront and destroy the powers of evil and death. We are not talking man-made, enchanted wonderlands with gingerbread houses, candy-canes and animated snowmen. "Nutcrackers!" We are, rather, awe-struck by the Good News that God has assumed our human nature in order to rescue it from death and make it possible for us to live beyond time and space in the perfection of His Holy presence. Here, mere enchantment gives way to spiritual awe and wonder.

By all means, enjoy some "Winter Carnival," but rejoice in Christmas. There is an infinite difference between the two.