



## CHRISTMAS 2021

Dearest friends.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the young woman who always cut her Christmas turkey in half before she roasted it. Her son was six years old, and had recently taken a keen interest in all things culinary. As the mother painstakingly started to cut the turkey in half, the boy asked, "why do you cut it in half before you roast it?". The mother responded, "It's just how you do it - it's how my mother always roasted the turkey". Her son didn't relent: "but why?" he inquired again. The mom stopped as she realized her son's question was disruptively warranted. Why indeed? She picked up the phone and called her own mother to relay the question. "I'm not sure sweetie" her mom responded, "maybe it cooks faster, stays juicier? That's just how we do it, maybe ask your grandma". So she hung up and called her grandmother, restating the question. Her grandmother replied, "That's just how we Smith ladies have always done it, I'm not really sure".



Sadly, the investigation would stop here as Great-Grandma Smith had passed years ago. Then grandma began thinking out loud, "My Uncle Richard is still alive. He's 96 and sharp as a tack. I'll call him and get back to you". Richard picked up on the second ring and said hello as he was raising the phone toward his face - the crescendo effect wasn't lost on Grandma. "Uncle Rich, we're investigating something. Do you know why my mom always cut her turkey in half before she roasted it? Was it to keep it juicier? A Smith family secret?". Uncle Richard laughed heartily. "The only reason my sister cut her turkey in half all those years, is because her tiny flat had a tiny oven - a full turkey would never fit in it." The mystery was solved, and for the first time in more than 70 years, the Smith family turkey was roasted WHOLE. A tradition, which had been entirely necessary at first, died that day.

Doing things just because "that's just how it's done" can lead us to impractical, even destructive places. My challenge to you this Christmas? Mix it up. Sure, hang on to beautiful time-honoured traditions, but make sure you're doing them for the right reasons and that there's room at the Christmas table for all; it is LOVE, not pride, at the core of every good tradition.

So 'deck the halls' as you celebrate a God who brought the fullness of His light into the darkest of our nights. Recall the angel's assuring words, "Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to ALL people". So what's the good news? God has come for us, forgiven us, set us free, and He will NEVER leave us alone.

Let the love of God rule in our hearts.

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