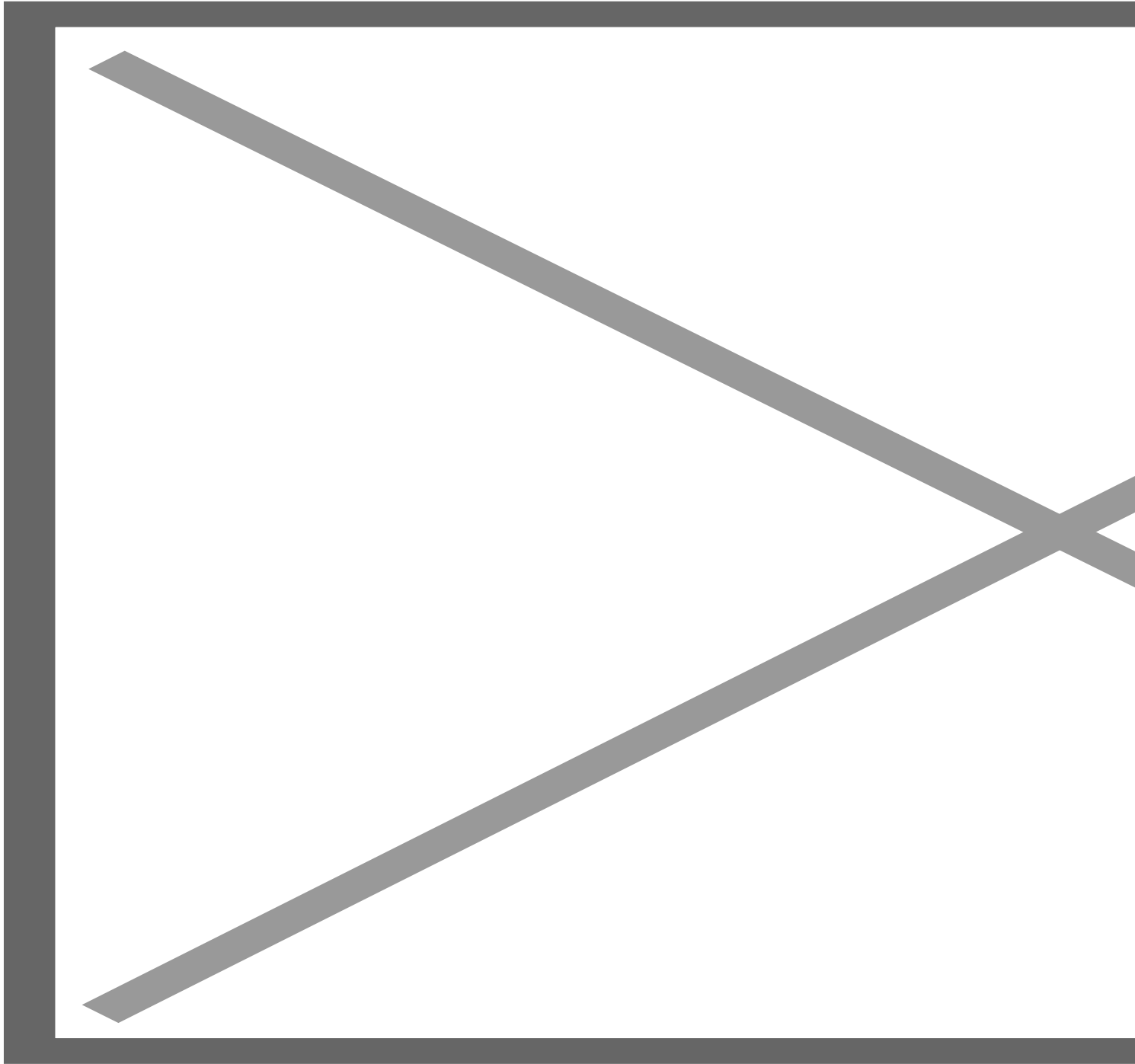


I'm dreaming of a disarmed faith

In the Bethlehem cattle stall, no coercion is in the air. No imposition of will.

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [December 2025](#) issue

Published on December 1, 2025



*The Nativity* by Puccio di Simone (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY)

Friend in ministry Barbara Lundblad tells of a vacation Bible school experience she had as a child at which the theme was “putting on the whole armor of God.” That summer a creative leader came up with the idea of fashioning helmets of salvation (Eph. 6:17) out of old Clorox jugs. Cut off the bottom, trim parts of the sides to accommodate little kids’ ears, stick some feathers in the spout on top, and—voila!—you have an army of little medieval knights running around the churchyard, preparing for some kind of battle.

I have a wild dream floating around my head right now: What if every politically zealous Christian in our country, especially those using armor of God language to crush all who don’t align with their own God-ordained sense of superiority, crammed their head into an empty Clorox bottle? Perhaps a whiff of residual bleach would help clear their mind of the angry, vengeful, and apocalyptic rhetoric that aims to turn every political battle into spiritual warfare.

We’re living through a time where discouragingly large numbers of political and evangelical leaders and their followers are integrating combat language into their understanding and practice of Christianity. Thoroughly convinced of their own righteousness, these fervent believers are co-opting biblical phrases to undergird their ideological purity. On many days it’s ferocious behavior that’s quick to declare a battle between good and evil, in which everyone who refuses to embrace the MAGA world is embodied evil.

Whoever first dubbed Charlie Kirk a Christian martyr helped ignite a firestorm of conquest rhetoric. Just days after Kirk was killed, J. D. Vance spoke with righteous indignation, railing against the “far left” and calling on people in distress to put on the full armor of God.

Politicizing the military metaphors in the book of Ephesians long predates the Kirk tragedy, of course. Donald Trump himself, who’s arguably the most powerful evangelist for Christian nationalism, has baselessly claimed that the “radical left” (translation: anyone who opposes Trump administration priorities) aims to “wipe away every trace of religion from national life.” Campaigning in 2020, Trump declared that Joe Biden would “take away your guns, destroy your Second Amendment. No religion. No anything. Hurt the Bible. Hurt God. He’s against God.”

Secretary of defense Pete Hegseth, in his book *American Crusade: Our Fight to Stay Free*, calls for a “360-degree holy war” against leftists, progressives, and Democrats, whom together he labels as “enemies of freedom, the American Constitution, and the United States.” Hegseth writes that conservatives must “mock, humiliate, intimidate, and crush” these opponents, praising the brutality of the Crusades as righteous example.

If you’re as tired of this militant Christianity as I am, my word to you is simple: Christmas is waiting for you. It’s actually waiting for all of us who claim Christ as Lord, including those smitten by the aphrodisiac of controlling power who, in my fantasy, are walking around with old Clorox bottles on their heads. Wherever we situate Bethlehem, let’s be clear that it’s far away from the corridors of power. God shows up in profound humility, taking up very little oxygen in that cattle stall. No coercion is in the air. No imposition of will. No compulsion to intimidate those shepherds angling for a glimpse. In fact, the manger is so small there’s no room inside it for arrogance or pomposity, no space for self-righteous power plays or siege mentalities. In the awesome simplicity of a child, God comes to redeem hearts, not rule nations.

I’m convinced there is no such thing as a perfect Christmas. But we can make of it what we will, either receiving the tenderness of God as an astonishing gift to humanity or, after singing a few carols, returning to a life of giving orders, dishing out insults, and acting as righteous warriors. I know where I want to land on Christmas night.