A wistfulness pervades the air this time of year. The old year is nearly over, and we inevitably look back. We do a lot of thinking about what has happened in the last 12 months, both the happy memories and the sad ones.

Some people we know spend their lives gazing at the rear-view mirror of their memory. We have always preferred the view out the windshield—after all, how are you going to get anywhere if you're not looking forward?

But the last half of December is different. We think about the things we have done and didn't do and should have done and maybe shouldn't have. We think about the people we know, the friends we love and hold dear in our heart.

Absent friends—those who have moved away, those who have died and those whom we simply haven't seen very much recently. We remember the last kiss we shared, the last warm hug, the last laugh, the last drink we quaffed together. At that time, we never thought it would be the last one.

Sometimes you see something or hear a piece of music or something someone says—and the memories come rushing back. We sit and remember and wish those good times could come back somehow. Sometimes they can. Sometimes they can only live on in treasured memory.

Have you lost someone this year? You are hardly alone. All of us write our own story, our own joys and heartaches. The cast always changes. People exit the stage of our lives, never to return.

Then new characters enter. New people come who maybe are also feeling a little lost and lonely and who are looking for a friend. Maybe you're that friend they are looking for. But how will you know if you don't look out that windshield and think about the future?

Now we're at that time of year when we think about the ones who are gone from our lives, remembering the good times we shared together. The ghost of Christmas past.

It's OK. We all do that this time of year. In a few weeks we can look ahead to 2012. But not right now. Let's enjoy the warm thoughts for a while.

Let's also enjoy each other during this holiday season. We can't see what lies ahead. Probably that's just as well. But we have today. Our reality today is the people who are now around us—our friends, our family, the people we meet every day.

Tomorrow, today will be yesterday. So let's enjoy today. Tomorrow may be too late.

--Peter Nocerini