

5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## Endings

**“A good beginning makes a good ending.”**

*Proverb, Early 14<sup>th</sup> century*

For centuries, Twelfth Night (also known as “Epiphany Eve”) has been a festival in some branches of Christianity. It takes place on the last night of the Twelve Days of Christmas, before the marking of Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>. There’s a superstition that it’s unlucky to leave Christmas decorations up after Twelfth Night. Indeed, there are similar superstitions attached to Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, and many other Christmas festivals. In other words, let the festival and celebrations have their day, but don’t linger over them. For the Christian Year – as with life itself – inevitably moves on.

Today, therefore, is a time of endings. If you’ve not already done so, the decorations will be taken down, the lights that have brightened your streets switched off, the Christmas tree put away for another year, the baubles and tinsel packed up safely. Your home, street, town will be very different, perhaps even dull and bare. And you may not like how it feels.

The old proverb tells us that a good beginning makes a good ending. But when endings don’t *feel* good, what do we do?

A familiar Scots phrase runs: “Back tae auld claes an’ purritch.” Back to old clothes and porridge ... in other words, back to ordinary clothes and basic fare after the celebrations. It’s used after a wedding, at the end of a holiday, and, of course, on a day such as Epiphany Eve. The fun is over. Festivities are done. It’s back to the ordinary, humdrum, routine, basic.

How, then, do we manage that? In different ways, I’m sure. But for me, it’s about recognising the wisdom of the ancients – we *can’t* linger at the festival. Time moves us on. Even the mundane will have its pleasures. Ordinary clothes, basic food will serve us just fine. So let’s get on with it. As we carry with us the memories that have sustained us thus far – family, friends, pleasures, worship, faith – and as time moves us inexorably forward, we can take with us the sustaining features of the past, to recall even on the darkest or most ordinary and basic of days. If the beginning of our festivities has been good, the ending on Epiphany Eve can be good too. Even “auld claes an’ purritch” will be enough to keep us going.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I expect you in the special, but you keep turning up in the ordinary too – thank God!*

*An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon*

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