

Come fill us a bowl of the best!



*“Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all.”*

For many, January dawns and with it the relief that Christmas is over. Christmas decorations and lights, which seem to go up earlier each year - reflecting perhaps more the advent theme of light amidst darkness than nativity – are quickly taken down and put away. Their disappearance taking with them the strains and stresses of Christmas shopping, unwanted gifts, and the complexity of strained family gatherings, are warmed by the longing for a return to a more predictable normality.

Yet the cold of winter and the ‘back to normal’ leaves some of us missing the festive glow of a more sociable time, and the opportunity to lose oneself in the gaiety of the season now passed. ‘*Blue Monday*’ (19th January) the day in many mental health calendars highlighted to be the most depressing day of the year (a bit of a myth), focuses attention on the challenges of what it means to keep one’s mind healthy. The increase in daylight hours, though helpful, still make this easier said than done. Amidst the shadows, spring feels a long way off.

The seventh verse of the Gloucester Wassail, an C18th Christmas Carol, gives warning that we need each other if our bowls are to be *filled of the best*. 2026 and the weathering of the storms of '*here we go again*', both physical and mental in different guises, require the renewing of the commitment to generous and constant hearts - sensitive and empathic to the needs of each other and to the needs of ourselves - exercise, eat well, drink sensibly, talk to someone who understands.

In the Christian calendar the 25th of December is but the beginning of a season. Far from taking down decorations our churches remain decked in white and gold, and the nativity scenes are only put away at Candlemas – 2nd February. Enough time to remind ourselves of the Christmas gift that God walks alongside, before the spring bulbs and the promise of new life begin to emerge.

God Bless.

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