

2010: The early months

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I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.' That shall be to you both better than light, and safer than a known way.' May the Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all.

These are words which King George VI addressed to the nation in a Christmas broadcast. Surely these words could guide us in 2010.

It might be thought that the early months of the New Year are somewhat dull. But a glance at the calendar will show that it is not so.

On January 6th is the feast of Epiphany – the visit to Christ by the Magi. These learned men came from the East and were of Semitic origin. I picture that they had land and great households, where peace and serenity held sway. Without fuss, they prepared for their journey, packed their gifts, and bade farewell to their wives. No doubt telling them that they might be away for some time and that it was their duty to watch over the household!

The camels were drawn up in the courtyard and so the Magi mounted and rode away, accompanied by an entourage of servants as befitted such eminent men.

After weeks of travelling they arrived and reverently presented their gifts to the infant Christ: Gold of course, that precious metal, and Frankincense and Myrrh – aromatic plants, foreshadowing Christ's death. Then with a deep salaam they would have left the presence and quietly travelled home.

Next in the church's calendar comes the season of Candlemas. What a lovely word – what a lovely meaning.

Old Simeon receives the Holy Child. With what care, and what trembling arms,

Simeon must have held the baby – the fulfilment of his life and now he could go to be with God the Father. And we join with him every time we sing the *Nunc Dimmittis*.

The season of Candlemas sets a pattern for our journey through life. We are challenged to show the Light of the World in all we do.

On a more secular note, February brings St Valentine's Day; when would be suitors send anonymous gifts to the objects of their desires. But a saint is here too – St Valentine. I must admit to never having heard of him in any other connection!

And, of course, even we Sassenachs are prepared to celebrate Scotland's greatest poet Rabbin Burns on January 25th. And there are many more feasts, some highlighted on the next page.

So the early months are not dull at all; there is much to celebrate, much to lift our spirits. Or, if they are dull, perhaps the fault lies in us. We have all been given gifts and it is our duty to exercise them – not bury them.

In this year of grace 2010, may we use our talents to the full.

