

Since Edward VII, the monarch has had an official birthday, usually on the 2nd Saturday of June. This is because the weather is more likely to be fine at that time and therefore a better Trooping the Colour on Horse Guards Parade to honour the monarch - and therefore a better event for all who want to witness it.

Nothing new, though. Guess who else has an official birthday? You probably think, because it's the rector asking, the answer ought to be Jesus. Well, you're right: it is. It's the biggest official birthday in the world, and it is also placed where it is to let us have the best chance of seeing it. Right at the darkest time of year is the best chance to notice a great celebration of light surrounding us.

Clergy sometimes talk about the lonely, poor, sad, etc, at this time of year. I am truly sorry if you are any of those at the moment. I promise to pray for you. However, we all have a chance at Christmas to get a glimpse of the pageantry celebrating God on parade as one of us. The music, the church services, the rejoicing. The majority of people will remember it's the season of good will. It's all accessible, so let's access it. God, too, is accessible. Even if we are heart-broken, or poor, or lonely, thank God that there is hope born of the memory of a little child born just over 2,000 years ago, just over 2,000 miles away.

Have a December full of light and a Christmas full of the joy of God's presence/presents. And may I propose the Loyal Toast for your celebration: "Emmanuel!" (Look it up.)