



Boston Catholic Journal



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SHROVE TUESDAY

Jesus said: "For judgment I am come into this world; that they who see not, may see; and they who see, may become blind."

(St. John 9.39)

The Acceptable Sacrifice

Shrove Tuesday is the day preceding the beginning of the Holy Season of Lent.

We do not hear much about Shrove Tuesday here in the America — or, for that matter, elsewhere. We do not know what "shrove" means, nor do we understand its significance any longer. It has effectively left the lexicon of the Post Vatican II Church, together with the Sacrament of Penance which fell into disrepute when the notion of sin was very practically abolished.

It really is a word we wish to avoid because we wish to avoid our

acknowledgement of sin. "The word *shrove* is the past tense of the English verb shrive, which means to obtain absolution for one's sins by way of confession and doing penance." 1

For many it is *Mardi Gras*, literally, "Fat Tuesday", the day in which to indulge every imaginable excess in preparation for the lean days of Lent, as though being surfeit with sensuality will somehow indemnify us against the ravages of moderation. It is a queer notion.

The entire purpose of Lent is discipline — and we prepare for it by abandoning all discipline before its inauguration. We reason that we will be the better prepared to engage in moderation by practicing immoderation, to acquire discipline by first abandoning it.

Most of us will "give up" unnecessary or frivolous things to which we have no inordinate attachment to begin with.

.. and in three days' time revert to them. It is not unlike our New Year

Resolutions, only less ... well ... resolute. Today we will prepare to amend our lives tomorrow,

and we will do the former with greater vigor than the latter.

If there is a single metaphor for our attitude toward sanctity and death, it is *Shrove Tuesday*.

Playing in the shadows, we close our eyes and mock the night. And when we open them, we do not know if we have become blind or blundered into darkness. We

have done all three: pretended blindness, mocked the night, and fallen into darkness.

“Tomorrow ... yes, tomorrow I will pretend I am blind to the darkness of this world, but today I will not feign blindness, but will pretend to see ... as a preparation for pretending to be blind ...”

Even as the shadows lengthen, we do not understand this prelude to final things.

Fast from sin this Lent ... not from reason. It is an acceptable sacrifice.

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1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrove_Tuesday



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