

A CATHOLIC DEFENSE ... OF LAUGHTER

An Apologia for Mardi Gras by Fr Kevin

I hardly need remind you that Lent starts on Wednesday. But none of us ought to forget about Shrove Tuesday: *Mardi Gras*, *Carnaval*, *Faschen*. Here are some deep thoughts about demons, freedom, and laughter from our Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI:

“It seems incongruous to speak of Mardi Gras in a theological meditation, because it is at best only indirectly a time in the Church year. But are we not somewhat schizophrenic in this regard? On the one hand, we are only too ready to say that it is precisely in Catholic countries that Mardi Gras is most at home; on the other hand, we nevertheless ignore it both spiritually and theologically. Is it, then, one of those things that as Christians we cannot condone, but as humans we cannot deny? In that case we should ask: Just how human is Christianity? Granted, Mardi Gras is heathen in origin: fertility cult and exorcism merge in it. But it was the Church that had to step in and speak the exorcism that banned the demons who do violence to people and destroy their happiness. Then, after the exorcism, something unexpected, something new, appeared - a merrymaking that is wholly exorcised. Mardi Gras is to Ash Wednesday a time of laughter before the time of penance, a time of lighthearted self-irony, whose laughter speaks a truth that may well be closely akin to that of the Lenten preacher. Thus Mardi Gras, when it has been exorcised, reminds us of the words of the Old Testament preacher: “...a time to weep, and a time to laugh” (Qo 3:4). For Christians, too, it is not always a time for penance. There is likewise a time for laughter. Yes, Christian exorcism has routed the masked demons and replaced them by the laughter that has been exorcised. All of us know how far removed from this ideal our present Mardi Gras often is; how frequently it is mammon and its henchmen that reign there. This is why we Christians do combat, not against, but in favor of, laughter. To struggle against demons and to laugh with those who laugh - these are inseparably united. The Christian has no need to be schizophrenic: Christian Faith is truly human.” (*Co-Workers of the Truth*, 27)

So, dare to laugh truly. See you Tuesday evening at 8:00 PM in the Fisher Room for pancakes and good cheer of the finest sort!



FISHER HOUSE NEWSLETTER

Sunday 2 March - Eighth Sunday
in Ordinary Time

Sunday 2	EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 8.00 Extraordinary Form (Tridentine) 9.00 Sung Latin Mass 11.00 Sung English Mass
Monday 3	12.30 Mass
Tuesday 4	1.05 Mass
Wednesday 5	ASH WEDNESDAY <i>Fasting and Abstinence</i> Mass with imposition of Ashes at 8.00, 1.05, 6.00
Thursday 6	1.05 Mass
Friday 7	11.00 Funeral: Howard Erskine Hill 12.30 Stations of the Cross 1.05 Mass <i>Sts Felicity and Perpetua</i> 7.30 Mass
Saturday 8	1.05 Mass <i>St John of God</i> 4.30 Confessions 6.00 Vigil Mass of Sunday
Sunday 9	FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT 8.00 Extraordinary Form (Tridentine) 9.00 Sung Latin Mass 11.00 Sung English Mass

OXFORD CHAPLAINCY

Today, members of the Oxford Chaplaincy will join us for the 11.00 Mass and lunch afterward in the Fisher Room. But then pleasures are set aside as the football match takes place this afternoon.

MARTYRS' PILGRIMAGE

On Saturday 15 March, a day pilgrimage to London, visiting the cell of St John Fisher in the Tower of London, and the London Charterhouse, home of St John Houghton. Space extremely limited—cost £30. Please see poster.

CRUMBS ON FRIDAY

After the 7.30pm Mass, a 4-minute explanation of things we do, but don't know why we do them. This week: Fr Mark on *What is diocesan priesthood?*

PREACHER NEXT WEEKEND

Fr John Hemer, from Allen Hall seminary, will preach next weekend.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

Please pray for Professor Howard-Erskine Hill, of Pembroke College, a loyal member of Fisher House, who has died. His Requiem will be held on Friday at 11.00am. Also pray for Terence Patrick Waldron, Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson, whose funeral arrangements will be announced.

GRADUATE SOCIETY

Professor Philip Booth, Programme Director at the Institute of Economic affairs, will speak to the society at 6.00pm on Thursday.

APOLOGETICS GROUP

Fr Kevin will speak on *Love, Responsibility and John Paul II*. Monday 3 March, 5.15pm in the Fisher Room.

FISHER DINNER

The annual Dinner of the Fisher Society takes place on 12 June; £32 non-drinking ticket, £39.50 for drinking. Please give names to Michael Loy this weekend, or sign up on the list in the vestibule.

RETREAT TO WORTH

The annual retreat to Worth takes place 21—23 March, cost £60 unwaged, £100 waged. There is a sign-up list outside the chapel. Contact Anna Webb (aew64).

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

An evening of poetry, on the theme of the Stations, on Sunday 9 March. If you would like to contribute, contact Michael Loy on mpal2.

CATHOLICISM FOR THE CURIOUS

Fr Mark will lead a discussion at 1.15pm on Monday in the Fisher Room, on *Lent*.

SHROVE TUESDAY PARTY

Your last chance to let your hair down before Lent! Tuesday 4 March, 8.00pm onwards, pancakes galore, in the Fisher Room.

SAINTS AND SCONES

Sr Ann leads a discussion on saints, over cream tea, on Sunday at 4.30pm in her study. This week: *Catherine de Ricci*—with added marzipan!

LAPSED CATHOLIC? DULCE DOMINICANA?

Do you want a *General Absolution*? Can you take a *St Januarius*? Submissions to the Catholic Cocktail book are growing—but please keep them coming. See Fr Mark.

TRINITY HALL MASS

College Mass on Tuesday 4 March, 6.45pm. Reception afterwards in the Master's Lodge. You will be back in time for pancakes!

STUDENT CROSS PILGRIMAGE

Join a week-long pilgrimage to Walsingham during Holy Week, walking c.15 miles each day. Details from Helen Oxenham ho238

KOLB TRUST

This fund gives grants to Catholic women students. Please see the poster outside the chapel for conditions and details.

SENIOR MEMBERS'

LENTEN GROUP

A discussion group on *Evangelii Gaudium* will meet during Lent at Fisher House, beginning on 11 March 5.00pm. The session will last about an hour.

VOCATIONS GROUP

If you are considering priesthood or religious life, a small group will meet informally in the Great Chamber, next Saturday 8 March, at 3.00pm, for tea, prayer and conversation.

CAMBRIDGE FOOD BANK

There will be a collection in Lent for the bank which provides food for local people in crisis. Please donate something from the list in the vestibule. The SVP will take the foodstuffs to the bank.

POETRY, FORM AND FAITH

On Tuesday at 6.00pm in the Library, Sr Anna Mary OP will lead a weekly discussion on poetry and literature. All welcome.

FISHER HOUSE CHOIRS

To sing in the 9.00am Latin choir contact Matthew Swanson (mjswanson2@gmail.com); for the English Mass choir at 11.00 contact Dominic Wong (dhtw2).

COLLECTION LAST WEEK

£430.20