

SHROVE HUNTING

On the Tuesday before Lent the brethren and sistren of the Society of the Shrove gather to hunt shroves and to reverence them with all the respect they are due a grand procession takes place with full liturgical garb including copes and smoking incense. With syrup pitcher gleaming, the procession winds around the town (lesser ministers carry golden griddles). As they pass the IHOP, they bow with reverence and return to the church where a feast of pancakes awaits them. Bits of pancake are used to lure the shroves from their hiding places under pews, behind the altar and vestment drawers. If any are found they are placed on the head table, given tiny crowns and rule over the festivities. This is a wonderful family activity as the children are usually the only ones small enough to crawl into places where shroves live. Unfortunately those with less respect often engage in such barbaric behavior as dust mops, and the ultimate terror for shroves, using a vacuum cleaner to collect them. The guilty are known collectively as the Altar Guild.

However a number of Altar Guilds have taken exception to the idea that they would do anything smacking of cruelty to lovely shroves. Yes, they do use dust mops and vacuum cleaners, but while doing so they loudly proclaim their coming with the refrain, "Onward Christian shrovelings, marching as to war, with the mops behind thee, and shroves running before" thereby giving the shroves fair warning of their approach and time to avoid the equipment.

Hunting the mutant shrove takes strong men.

Hunting is often a time of flirting among the unmarried.

Only the young can find the truly tasteful shroves

Family groups enjoy the hunt.

Some people do protest over the abuse that has been heaped on the poor defenseless shrove-- freezing, boiling, tossing etc., etc.-- They beg that we allow them simply to be and they will bring us years of joy and delight with their antics. They are a special delight for children-- they are closer to the ground and can see them much more readily-- also the concern was raised about making sure we have an equal number of both sexes-- for those who are truly shrovers/shriven know full well that shroves are parthenogenetic-- (look it up). For in this way then shroves are closest to God of all creatures for in God there is no male or female.

Although most shroves are docile and non dangerous (even the wild varieties) there are some of a more unpredictable and harmful nature. These shroves are distinguishable from the more placid variety only by highly skilled Leprechaun Shrove masters.

Probably because of their diminutive size, many leprechaun youths seem to want to be Shrove masters. Alas, it is a rather difficult and dangerous job. Many who enter the apprenticeship never become masters, most being killed by the violent shroves when their back is turned.

That's right! The violent and dangerous shroves (indistinguishable from their gentle cousins to the untrained eye) are sneaky too. Yes, dangerous shroves delight in gaining the confidence of the unsuspecting would be shrove master and then doing away with him when his back is turned.

This is why you don't see many leprechauns, and even less Leprechaun Shrove masters. It is also why you don't see many shroves. I know that many ****claim**** to have shroves, or at least know people who have shroves in their possession. **BUT HAVE WE **SEEN** ANY EVIDENCE???**

The resounding response must be "No!" And why not? Because:

1. No one is really confident enough to try to catch a shrove.
2. No one is skilled enough to deal with a dangerous shrove if one happens to turn up.
3. You simply just don't see that many shroves these days.

But we can say- blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe!

Ritualis

We find the Shrove Ritual in many parts of the Christian World,. Here to with we offer a selection from several traditions for your consideration:

THE RITUAL OFFICIALIS

In the Anglican Tradition

I spent a little more time in researching this than I should have, but I ended up consulting an archival copy of Ritual Notes, Interim Edition, which is an unpublished edition that was compiled for specific London parishes' use during the Second World War. While RN/IE doesn't specifically mention the IHOP, it does treat of the subject in general terms:

Pancake Processions:

Encountering a Pancake Restaurant:

In certain neighborhoods, the solemn pancake procession will of necessity pass by a restaurant whose specialty is pancakes, flapjacks, or crepes. Extraordinary means are not to be taken to avoid this situation, unless a detour would add dignity and not unreasonable length to the route. Traditional ceremonies are to be observed while passing before such an establishment.

When the restaurant is sighted by the vergers, he shall signal to the acolyte, who shall ring the bell thrice. The procession shall continue, but the serving of pancakes shall cease until the restaurant has been passed by. On hearing the bell, the clergy and lay ministers in procession shall turn their heads so as to face the establishment directly whilst they continue forward. Upon a single stroke of the bell, all shall stop and turn to face the restaurant. The sacred ministers shall remove their birettas, taking care not to drop the syrup pitcher as they do so. The lay ministers shall take the birettas and pitcher. The sacred ministers shall then double-genuflect, first bringing the right knee to the ground and then the left knee to join the right one on the ground. All others shall bow low. The celebrant shall chant the collect for Shrove Tuesday. This completed, all shall rise, and the celebrant shall cover and resume the pitcher. A single stroke of the bell shall signal the resumption of the procession.

RITUAL NOTES, Interim Edition, Morehouse-Barlow, 1941

Often the older participants prefer to ride.

Midwestern Lutherans

Among High Liturgical Lutherans in the Midwest USA, however, Shrove Tuesday is still treated with reverence. On February 24 next, we will gather in the court yards of our parish churches, and after the bidding prayer will sing

Bringing in the Shrove
Binging in the Shroves,

We shall go rejoicing,
Bringing in the Shroves.

We will then form a solemn procession behind the thurifer, crucifer and torch bearers and enter the church, waving our Shroves triumphantly over our heads and singing

Brightest and best of the Shroves of the morning,
Shrove on our darkness and lend us thine aid:
Shrove of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our Shroves will lead to thine aid.

Once in the sanctuary, we place all of our Shroves in a large metal basin. When we have shriven ourselves of all of our Shroves, the torchbearers ignite the collected Shrovarim (as they are technically called in the rubrics) as we sing

We solemnly leave All God's Children are shriven toda-ay
A-A-A-A-A-le-i-loo-oo-yah!
No more Shroves for days and da-ays
A-A-A-A-A-le-i-loo-oo-yah!
Forty days is not so long
A-A-A-A-A-le-i-loo-oo-yah!
Burn your Shroves, you can't go wrong
A-A-A-A-A-le-i-loo-oo-yah!

After the last Shrove is consumed by fire, and return the next day when ashes from the burned Shroves are imposed on our foreheads in what is know as the Grand Imposition.

It should be pointed out that there have been some attempts, even among Midwestern Lutherans, to introduce secular elements in to our ritual. Each parish appoints a Sergeant-At-Arms to monitor and squelch such activity. The technical liturgical term for the office is Sergeant Shriver. (This will make sense, if at all, only to Americans of a certain age.)

From the Brethren and Sistren in Australia

... singing

Brightest and best of the Shroves of the morning,
Shrove on our darkness and lend us thine aid:

(Can you not see the danger of shrovolatry in this practice?)

... when ashes from the burned Shroves are imposed on our foreheads in what is know as the Grand Imposition.

(Not to mention cruelty to shroves!)

It is a beautiful and meaningful part of the ritual life of the Church. I can hardly contain my tears as I write about it, and I am sorry that our antipodal friends have chosen to ignore the rich religious meaning behind the day and have made of it a secular travesty.

After much prayer, meditation and the laying on of shrews, the Combined Churches of Australia, while recognizing the 'rich religious meaning' of the original 'shrove hunt' (here of course it is the marsupial shrove), the waving of shroves and the Grand Imposition (in Australia the Beaut Benediction), concluded that the ceremony had little Christian meaning left for the surfies, cockies, wrinklies, yuppies, New Australians etc. who make up the majority of the population. New Age Shrovest sects were springing up, including the now notorious Temple of the Shrove Within, at Nimbin, NSW. People were hanging dried shroves from their car mirrors as good-luck

charms. Manufacturers were making millions selling plastic shroves to children and teenagers, after the cartoon series "Teenage Lenten Shrovesons" and the successful advertising campaign: "Get a life. Get a shrove". In the bush, the by now highly profitable practice of commercial shrove hunting was becoming a massacre.

The churches dissociated themselves forthwith from all manifestations of shrovisism and shrovolatry, choosing on Shrove Tuesday to replace the old ceremony with a simple service of thanks for the shrove as representative of all God's creatures. They successfully campaigned to have the marsupial shrove declared a protected animal. The secular shrove hunt, which had always existed along with the religious ceremony, survived: pure harmless fun, involving the release of a clockwork shrove within a car, in the dark. The dubious practices which sprang out of the original Christian Ceremony are now, I'm glad to say, dying out.

From the Land of Michigan

The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Procession is a unique East Lansing tradition that dates back to the late 19th century, when Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University) was growing, causing the settlement of faculty, staff, and students in the new town of Collegeville, adjacent to the north end of the university grounds.

The procession is now based at All Saints Episcopal Church in the historic Bailey neighbourhood seven blocks north of the student union. Following the Shrove Tuesday Solemn Evensong, the solemn procession forms at the head of the aisle, and the sacred ministers are supplied with their birettas. The celebrant also receives a large platter of steaming-hot buttermilk pancakes; the deacon and subdeacon take up large pitchers of Michigan maple syrup. Acolytes with large forks and spatulas attend the sacred ministers. Following the deacon's versicle and the people's response, the thurifer leads the procession through the nave and narthex and down the steps to the undercroft, where a station is made at the kitchen.

The choir accompany the procession with appropriate antiphons, responsories, and plainsong hymns, such as the Corpus Christi introit, Cibavit eos: "He fed them also with the finest wheat flour, and with honey from the rock." Naturally, in the early days of the procession's history, these words were taken quite literally, and the pancakes were made of whole wheat and served with pure Michigan honey. Tastes these days being what they are, adjustments have been made, but the symbolism still remains.

After the station at the kitchen door, the procession moves back upstairs to the Grove Street entrance and turns left, encircling the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, next door, as a gesture of hospitality and ecumenism. Traditionally, the UU minister joins the procession dressed in a simple cassock-alb and bearing a large bowl of flower petals gathered by

UU parishioners; these are added to the pancake plates as a lovely garnish and a reminder of the oneness of creation with Creator. (A secondary but salutary effect of the procession in the early years was the reconciliation of the neighboring Episcopal and UU churches following the previous year's Trinity Sunday outdoor solemn procession, which had encircled the UU church three times to the increasing outrage of the UU minister and congregation. The Trinity procession route was subsequently changed to encircle the historic Beaumont Tower on the university campus, during which the university carillonneur traditionally performs Anglican hymns in 3/8 or 3/4 meter, ending with three sets of three tolls on the three largest bells).

The procession moves south from the UU church down Grove Street past the rectory, where a station is made and the antiphon *Sacerdotes Domini* chanted, and then past the first block of fraternity houses, where students have been lining the streets to depths of four and five persons since before noon. By now the pancake plates and syrup pitchers have been replenished by the vergers from supplies driven ahead of the procession by the sextons. The students wear no particular traditional garb when they are served the pancakes, except that shirts and shoes are required in addition to the usual shorts or jeans. Hats are expected to be removed while the pancake platter is in one's block of residence.

The procession then makes a one-block turn to the west and then heads south on Abbott Road, the main street into the university and the location of City Hall and further blocks of fraternities and sororities. The culmination of the procession is the arrival at the West Circle Halls of Residence, a lovely group of three-story Tudor-style halls, each with a large dining-room. On this night alone out of all the nights of the year, the dining-rooms are closed in observance of the solemn pancake procession. The waiting students are served efficiently as the procession reaches the university test kitchen at Williams Hall, where nutritionists receive samples of the pancakes for chemical analysis and testing and the eventual assignment of a rating for that year's batch. Finally, having given up the pancake-serving utensils, the sacred ministers, vergers, acolytes, and servers proceed to the Alumni Memorial Chapel not on foot, but on the Sigma Chi homecoming float flatbed, its permanently installed Liberty Bell replica ringing all the way, and all enter the chapel for the Solemn *Te Deum* and Benediction.

As cantor, I look forward every year to intoning the various antiphons and hymns along the way. I feel as though I am part of something utterly unique and steeped in history, mystery, and civic goodwill. The event has contributed greatly to the growth of our parish and that of the Episcopal Ministry at MSU, and I am proud to have had a part in carrying on this tradition.

A blessed Shrove Tuesday to all, and do make it a point to process with us here in East Lansing at least once in your lives. It is well worth a visit, and you will be warmly welcomed.

Unattributed Ritual

There are those who argue that the Pancake Procession must take place before, and only before, the feast itself. The liturgical argument here is that just as the solemn procession comes before the sacred meal in Eucharist, so it should on Shrove Tuesday. There is also the pragmatic argument that no one is in any shape to process after consuming great quantities of pancakes, butter and syrup. Others argue, just as vehemently, that the procession must take place after, and only after the feast. The arguments here are a bit difficult to follow, and one suspects that it really comes down to a fear that the Pancakes will get cold if carried about in procession rather than plunked right on the table for immediate consumption. We do not wish to become embroiled in debate over this sensitive issue. Suffice it to say that all known liturgical materials (from the Roman Sacramentary to the Book of How Things 'Sposed To Be of the Agabeg Occult Church of the Overcoming of the Holy Spirit) agree on the order of the procession, the materials to be carried, and by whom, and the route of the procession.

A thurifer leads the procession. Two bacon strips are draped over the thurible. At the beginning of the procession, the celebrant places the two bacon strips over the thurible saying, "Blessed is He in whose humor you are to be burnt." Following the thurifer is the forkifer bearing the giant likeness of a fork, and flanked by two light bearers. Following the forkifer and light bearers (logic would dictate that they be called "lucifers") are the various ranks of lay ministers, up to but not including the subdeacon. The verger follows the forkifer and lucifers, but slightly to the side so as to be on the lookout for pancake establishments (see Knitter's notes below). The two senior acolytes are the last in the procession of lay ministers and carry the pancakes upon a platter. The celebrant, flanked by the deacon and subdeacon, carries the pitcher, which should be of sufficient size and decoration as befits the dignity of the occasion. The procession walks the precincts of the parish.

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