



Shrovetide and Mardi Gras



Developed by Patricia Townsend, Columbia SC. Used with permission to NAECED.

Traditionally Christians have celebrated the last days before Ash Wednesday in a carnival spirit—a final fling before a time of great self-discipline and penance. The customs vary according to location and era. They are as different as the elaborate Mardi Gras parades and costume balls in the United States to a small town church contest in England, where housewives with frying pans run in a race from the town square to the church door flipping the pancakes they have made. Mardi Gras, when translated from the French, means Fat Tuesday. The religious part of Shrovetide (time to be “shriven” or set to penance) centers on the “taking leave” of costumes, masks, and papier-mâché figures. Families traditionally eat pancakes for Shrove Tuesday dinner. In the olden days of Lenten abstinence from meat, this was the last chance to use up scraps of meat and fat.

TABLE 1: FACE PAINING

In Austria you wear your scary mask at carnival time, just before Ash Wednesday. People in Austria say that scary animals and witches scare away the winter.

Have one of the EYC members paint a symbol on your face.

TABLE 2: THE CROSS

The cross is a symbol of the sacrifice of Jesus for each one of us. But, the good news is that the cross is also a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus and His victory over “everything that keeps us away” from God. The nails symbolize the nails used to crucify Christ.

Tie yarn around two flat nails to make a cross. Tie a length of yarn onto the cross so that it can be worn as a necklace.

TABLE 3: PLANTING NEW LIFE SEEDS

The word Lent comes from the word “Lenten”—which means to lengthen. It is symbolic of the new life that comes with spring and sunshine. Flowers remind us of the new birth that each person continues to go through in becoming a Christian. Christ is alive and lives in each of us.

Color the paper to represent “New Life” symbols. Pup paper between two clear plastic cups. Put potting soil in the cup and plant seeds. Be sure to water when you get home and watch the plants grow.

TABLE 4: TAKING LEAVE OF THE “ALLELUIA”

During Lent all “alleluias” are omitted in the worship services. Therefore, when “alleluia” returns on Easter, it is proclaimed with much conviction. Often an “alleluia” banner was rolled up and buried prior to Lent and then found and displayed on Easter.

Decorate the “alleluia” banner with the markers provided. It will be tied up with purple yarn and put away during Lent.

TABLE 5: LENTEN CALENDAR

A Lenten calendar gives you ideas for serving God in your life. Each of the forty days of Lent offers a suggestion.

The calendar is printed for each week of Lent. It has a prayer with the theme “Serving the Suffering” and activities for each day. Glue the pad on one side of the purple paper. On the other side glue “The Lenten Service for Home Use.” Decorate.

TABLE 6: MITE BOXES

During the season of Lent we try to deepen our relationship with Our Lord. Often we do this by taking on or giving up things. To take on might mean prayer, scripture, reading, additional worship services, and special projects. To give up might mean fasting, sacrificing, doing without, or abstaining from something. As you keep this Lenten discipline, money can be contributed as a symbol of your obedience, sacrifice or thanksgiving.

Make a mite box can out of a vegetable or juice can. Decorate white paper cut to fit the can. Glue the paper onto the can. Bring to the Church on or before Easter Sunday, April 19.