

Shrove Tuesday Reflection and Prayer 2020



Figure 1 *The Fight between Carnival and Lent* by Pieter Bruegel 1559

A Reflection

Art has been a great source of information, reflection and contemplation. This piece here is a reflection on the meaning of Lent and the roles we play as Christians and members of a broader society. Read below to see what the artist was trying to convey

A battle enacted between the figures Carnival and Lent was an important event in community life, representing the transition between two different seasonal cuisines. As the period of Lent commenced, with its enforced abstinence in preparation for Easter, the butcher shops closed and the butchers traveled into the countryside to purchase cattle for the spring.

Bruegel's painting is rich in allegories and symbolisms that have been long studied. It is often read as the triumph of Lent, since the figure of Carnival seems to bid farewell with his left hand and his eyes lifted to the sky.

The painting may divide it into two sections: the popular and the religious. The scene is set in a town's market square (a traditional setting for the Carnival), with the figure of Carnival personified by a fat man who led a procession through the town and presided over a large feast.

In Bruegel's painting the figure is a large man riding a beer barrel with a pork chop attached to its front end. He is wearing a huge meat pie as a headdress. The pouch of knives at his belt indicates that he is a butcher. The man behind the barrel is dressed in yellow, which is connected with deceit.

Lent's half of the picture is dominated by abstinence and piety, with people drawing water from the well, giving alms to the poor and the sick, and going to church. Lady Lent in the foreground, dressed like a nun, is sitting on a cart drawn by a monk and a nun, and looks gaunt and thin.

The background is dominated by people working, primarily with food: women preparing Lenten fish, men carrying wine from the inn and a woman making waffles. At the very back of the picture, other festivities are going on with a bonfire, dancing figures and beggars spread across the whole scenery.

Something to Ponder

Shrove Tuesday is the day of preparation for Lent, that is, the day before Ash Wednesday. In England it also known as Pancake Day to use up the eggs and fat which were originally prohibited articles of diet during the forty days of Lent. The same prohibition is of course mainly responsible for the association of chocolate eggs with the Easter festival at the other end of Lent.



As we prepare for our Lenten journey, consider what the art of Shrove Tuesday looks like today...in years to come, what image will you bring to mind as you remember your Shrove Tuesdays from your youth?

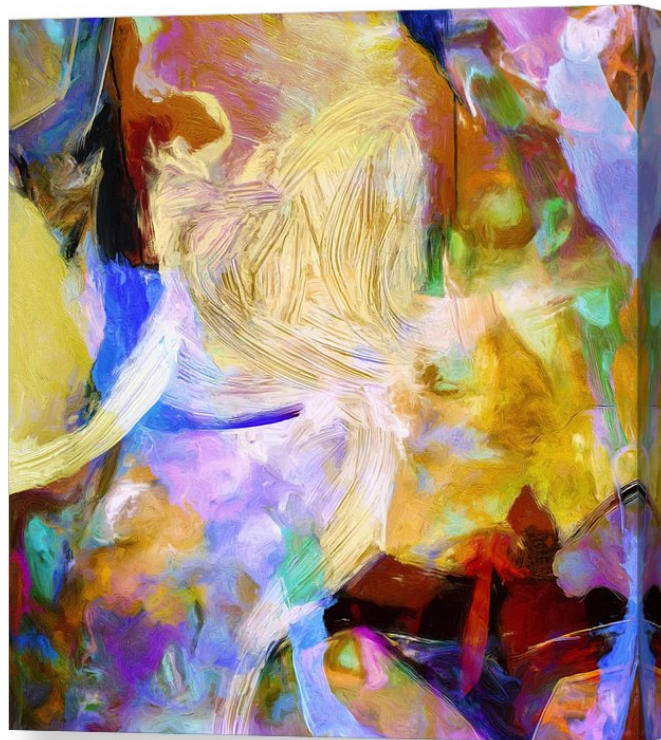


Figure 3 A Little Leven by [James B Jankneq](#) 2008

Figure 2 Carnival By [Dominic Piperata](#)



Figure 4 Pancak Day in a Farmer's House by [Nelius Flynn](#) (Ireland 19th Century)

To share

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

My Creator who embodies Love, fill me with the love that embraces and does not hold back. The love that accepts and not condemns. The love that forgives and not retaliates. The love that stretches out and does not stagnate. Make this Lent a positive time, a growing time but also a reflective time to see myself as You see me. I make this prayer with a willing mind and an open heart.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Resources

- [Caritas and Project compassion](#) – there are some great resources here in readiness for Lent and throughout the Lenten journey
- [Busted Halo](#) - Watch Lent in 3 minutes