

## **A Shrove Tuesday Skit**

*This skit was written by Pamela Grenfell Smith in 2000 when she chaired the Worship Committee at Saint John's Episcopal Church in Lafayette, Indiana and William Jon Gray was Music Director. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. This means that you are free to use and adapt it, so long as (1) you attribute authorship and copyright to Pamela Grenfell Smith, (2) your use is non-commercial, and (3) you may not copyright your adaptation of this work under a more restrictive copyright.*

*Pamela:*

Bill, thanks for making time to meet with me - as I explained over the phone, Father Ed has invited the Worship Committee to create a special Vespers for Shrove Tuesday, and time is getting short, so I thought we'd better put our heads together and make some plans.

*Bill:*

Yes, Pamela, and I'm so glad. Shrove Tuesday is a beautiful old holiday, and I want to see it move into the liturgical life of the church again.

*Pamela:*

Oh, was Shroving part of your Baptist childhood?

*Bill:*

Well, only in its simplest form. We'd hunt shroves - with the paper bags and the flashlights - but we didn't make any liturgical use of shroves.

*Pamela:*

You know I was brought up in the Methodist Church, and we always had a special service on Shrove Tuesday. We had a traditional song - maybe you know it - *[sings]*

Bringing in the shroves,

*Together:*

Bringing in the shroves, We will come rejoicing, bringing in the shroves!

*Bill:*

And did you march in with the shroves?

*Pamela:*

No, but we decorated the church with shroves - we had to use plastic ones, of course. There are no wild shroves in New England any more and the cultivated shroves are really expensive at that time of year.

*Bill:*

You know, at the Church of the Advent in Boston they actually do process with the shroves.

*Pamela:*  
No kidding!

*Bill:*  
Yes, it's very visually engaging. The crucifer and torches first, of course, and then the choir, and then all the clergy in red vestments, each one bearing a shrove over his head [*extensive hand gestures*] - and at the altar, they'd bow with their shroves.

*Pamela:*  
But they didn't wave the shroves?

*Bill:*  
I don't remember that they wove the shroves...

*Pamela:*  
I hear some high-church parishes do shrove waving, but I've never seen it done. What was the music like?

*Bill:*  
Oh, very traditional High-Church Anglican. [*sings*]

All the Church is 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!  
Bag your Shrove, you can't go wrong  
A-A-A-A-A-le-i-loo-oo-yah!

*Pamela:*  
Then what?

*Bill:*  
Well, the acolytes would collect the shroves in paper bags and put them all in a large brass basin -- called the Shrovarium -- and the shroves would be ritually burned.

*Pamela:*  
Burned? And they didn't do a Laying on of Shroves?

*Bill:*  
No.

*Pamela:*

They didn't even asperge the shroves?

*Bill:*

Pamela, even just with lifting and the burning, there were always whispers about Shrovolatry. You know, once Tallulah Bankhead was at Saint Patrick's Cathedral for the Shrove Tuesday service and as the Deacon went by with the flaming Shrovarium she leaned out from her pew and whispered, "Nice dress, Father, but your lunch is on fire!"

*Pamela:*

Everybody's a critic. And you see where that kind of negativity gets us - the kind of cheap, commercial, secular Shrove Tuesdays we have everywhere today. It's just an excuse for drinking and sordid sex.

*Bill:*

It's a travesty. I couldn't agree more. You know, in Bloomington, they have a New Age Shrove cult. It's called the Temple of the Shrove Within.

*Pamela:*

Please! That is so sick. I suppose soon we'll be hearing about workshops to get in touch with your Inner Shrove. And did you know that John Gray is writing a new book, 'Men Are from Shrove Tuesday, Women Are from Groundhog Day?' I've seen cars out at the mall, and hanging from their rearview mirrors - dried shroves. And in front of Target, they had battery-operated shroves running around on the floor.

*Bill:*

Many churches have completely abandoned the Shroving tradition. It's not scriptural, of course.

*Pamela:*

Well, excuse me. I hope they don't have Christmas trees, they're not scriptural either. Bill, when the Church refuses to engage the culture, the culture eats away at our capacity to enact and experience meaning. I've even seriously considered organizing something for Shrove Tuesday on the Courthouse lawn.

*Bill:*

*[Dubiously]* Mmm-hmmm. Don't go there, Pamela! *[Changing the subject.]* So do you think we can get hold of some shroves?

*Pamela:*

I think it's too late to order them and I don't have the heart to gather them in the wild. Shrove populations are way, way down. You'll find shroves on the endangered species list any year now, and I don't want Saint John's to have contributed to that.

*Bill:*

Well, maybe just a simple service of thanksgiving for the shrove, as representative of all the created order? With a few readings and the traditional shrove carol.

*Together: [singing, Dix, As with gladness, sort of]*

Shrive the shriven shrewish shroves

Shave the shaven shortish shroves

Cleave the cloven Clovis shroves

A-ll in a paper bag.

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