

March 4, 2025

Daily Reflections



MARDI GRAS

By Sister Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

Appear not before the Lord empty-handed, for all that you offer is in fulfillment of the precepts. The just one's offering enriches the altar and rises as a sweet odor before the Most High. The just one's sacrifice is most pleasing, nor will it ever be forgotten. In a generous spirit pay homage to the LORD, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means.

SIRACH 35:6-12

Reflection

The first reading is once again from the Book of Sirach and offers us wisdom to ponder. As I read the words “do not appear before the Lord empty-handed,” I paused and considered: how do I come to the Lord in prayer? What’s my

attitude? Is prayer one more item to be checked off my “to do” list? I hope not, though at times it can feel this way because my inner disposition tells me this!

I have to remind myself that prayer is foundational to my relationship with God. It simply is not one more item I must do. What I notice is that when I feel this way before prayer, an internal shift happens to me during prayer and when I’m finished, I’m so grateful I took the time to simply be with my Beloved.

Further along in the reading the words “in a generous spirit” are written and it’s as if there is a large drumroll preceding them. Why? Because don’t we all want to come before the Lord with hearts full and open to give of ourselves from the plenty we have received from God? I want to give abundantly from all that God has given to me. This giving can take so many forms – the gift of time to others, prayer, the use of my talents and abilities, and simply my presence.

Quickly following this part of the passage, we hear the words “with each contribution show a cheerful countenance and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy.” What powerful words for us to take in on the cusp of Ash Wednesday. Lent is not a time to take on the persona of doom and gloom; on the contrary, it is a time of settling into a rhythm of prayer, fasting, almsgiving. It calls forth a heart willing and ready to enrich the lives of those we touch through generosity and a sense of hope.

Spirit of Joy

O God who continually gives us what we need each day, may we not hunger for what is not ours to receive. May we live each day with a spirit of joy, knowing that you have created us in your image and likeness.

O spirit of joy, fill our hearts this day! May our presence be one of light and hope, joy and peace, and love and generosity. Let us lift our voices to the One who fills us with love overflowing.

O Light of Light, may we enter into this Season of Lent with expectation and joy in knowing you continue to guide our way upon this earth. Let us seek the depth and breadth of your Word both within and around us.



Mardi Gras Mask

Photo by Polina

For Pondering

- Mardi Gras is an invitation to reflect on our lives, seek peace and forgiveness, and prepare ourselves for our journey of Lent. What steps are you taking to embark on this sacred and spiritual path of Lent?
 - What stanza in the prayer “Spirit of Joy” (above) speaks to you as you celebrate Mardi Gras today?
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For Prayer

*O God,
as the joy and celebrations of Mardi Gras unfold this day,
let us remember the most important part of the Season of Lent
is to seek repentance, forgiveness, and a renewed spirit
as we continue our walk of faith.
Amen.*

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