

June 24, 2025

# Daily Reflections



## SACRED PLACES

By Julie Mussché

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### A Quote

*“Sacred place ... seems to have an unaccountable identity distinct and separate from those who move in and through it.... We form significant locales out of our memories, our relationships with others, a whole network of associations sacred and profane.”*

**BELDEN C. LANE. LANDSCAPES OF THE SACRED: GEOGRAPHY AND NARRATIVE IN AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY. (24)**

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### Reflection

A number of years back, a group of my friends and I, including a four-pound long-haired Chihuahua, met up in New Orleans to visit the city and then drive west toward home. During the flight to begin our reconnoiter, I sat next to a woman who was going to visit her family during Mardi Gras. She shared that she had moved as far west and to as dry a place as possible after surviving

Hurricane Katrina. She had relocated to Palm Desert and I didn't have the heart to let her know she had moved to one of the most seismically active parts of California. Her story lingered with me and paved the way for other sacred tales rising from our stay in the "Big Easy."

We landed uneventfully, our friends greeted us at the airport, and we made our way to our VRBO in the Carrollton neighborhood in Uptown New Orleans. As we rolled toward our rental, I noticed the quaintness of the tree-lined area, but also several lots that were vacant or the remaining houses were boarded up and damaged. It took me a while to realize that even over a decade after Katrina, the scars of the disaster still tangibly lingered.

This became more evident the longer we stayed and the more extensively we explored the geography of the city. Several things stood out, in particular the trees that had been "scalped" of leaves and bark from the fierce Category 5 winds that devastated the area. In some of the trees were shrines to the victims of Katrina, for example a miniature house resting on a tree limb. Nothing could have prepared me, however, for an accidental turn into the Ninth Ward neighborhood, one of the most impacted areas of New Orleans. The catastrophic destruction of the unprecedented flooding lent a war-time aura to the location with rebuilding efforts slowed no doubt by the extent of the devastation, a recession, and overwhelming construction cost. It was evident that continued rebuilding would take considerable time and investment.

And while the remnants of the trauma from the significant cataclysm remained, visibly and invisibly, Mardi Gras went on. How fitting: a reflection of life and spirit, a recognition of "feast and fasting," revelry and sorrow, the city's annual celebration seemed to reflect the soul of the people. Curiously, our traveling party had not realized that Mardi Gras is not a singular event but instead goes on for weeks. Traditionally, it starts with the Feast of the Epiphany and runs up to Ash Wednesday. We discovered this one evening while on our way to dinner when we bumped right into a parade. Basically, we were unable to make it to our dinner location but got a glimpse of a parade.

As it was, the day before we left, our group -- including the dog adorned with a brightly colored bandana (she was a hit with the crowd, by the way) -- was able to be a part of the festivities and watched the Krewe of Pontchartrain Parade. With a view of the "old Muddy" and Algiers, we joined in the joyous moment, reveling in the promise that hope and community offer. People of all varieties brought together in celebration -- certainly a moment of sacred unity. *Laissez les bons temps rouler* (let the good times roll).

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People Watching Musicians Playing at a Street Festivity in New Orleans, USA  
Photo by Kelly

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## For Pondering

- Where or when have you experienced or witnessed resilience in the face of disaster or tragedy?
- How were you able to glimpse the Sacred in that moment or experience?
- What are the ensuing Graces imprinted on your heart and soul?

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## For Prayer

*Dear God,*

*May my heart  
become my only perceiver  
and my eyes be full of light....*

*With every moment's flight  
may something beautiful  
be revealed to me,  
and become a part  
of who I am.*

*Amen.*

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON. *ILLUMINATED PRAYERS*. (64-65)

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