

# What is Shrove Tuesday?

We have all heard of Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday"); Shrove Tuesday is the Anglican (Episcopal) Church's equivalent. On this day before Ash Wednesday, for centuries, Church of England parishioners held feasts of pancakes to use up the supplies of fat, butter and eggs... foods that were forbidden during austere Lent.

"Shriving" is the confession and absolution of the faithful on the day before Lent, hence "Shrove Tuesday." Over 1000 years ago a monk wrote in the *Anglo-Saxon Ecclesiastical Institutes*:

In the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him.

In England there are several celebrations on this day but perhaps the best known one is the Pancake Day Race at Olney in Buckinghamshire, which has been held since 1445. The race came about when a woman cooking pancakes heard the shriving bell summoning her to confession. She ran to church wearing her apron and still holding her frying pan, and thus without knowing it, started a tradition that has lasted for over five hundred years.

According to the current rules, only women wearing a dress, no slacks or jeans, an apron and a hat or scarf, may take part in the race. Each contestant has a frying pan containing a hot, cooking pancake. She must toss it three times during the race that starts at the market square at 11:55 am. The first woman to complete the winding 375 metre course (the record is 63 seconds set in 1967) and arrive at the church, serve her pancake to the bellringer and be kissed by him, is the winner.

She also receives a prayer book from the vicar.

Since 1950 Olney has competed with Liberal in Kansas, which holds an identical race, to see which town can produce the fastest competitor. See



<http://www.pancakeday.net/the-story>

## Prayers for Shrove Tuesday

On this Shrove Tuesday, Lord help us to enjoy and give thanks to you for the bounty you provide for us and remind us to share your gifts with others. And as Lent begins tomorrow, give us receptive hearts and minds to learn and do your will, that, when Easter arrives, we will be transformed more into your likeness. Amen

### **A feasting prayer for Shrove Tuesday**

This day is for feasting:  
for eating, not wasting,  
for chewing and tasting  
all that God makes!

This day is for singing:  
our ears will be ringing,  
with songs we are bringing  
to God – full of praise!

(Sing a song of praise!)

Bring eggs for the baking  
add flour to the making  
and stir up the cake in  
a bowl nice and big!

Add milk to the bowl  
then stir with your soul,  
and cook 'til it's whole -  
and eat all you can!

(Eat!)

Tomorrow's for praying,  
for silently saying  
to God that you're laying  
your life down in love.

To wait on God's giving  
God's food for your living,  
God's grace, all forgiving,  
as Easter comes near ...

(Pause for silent prayer)

God's blessing for sharing,  
for hoping, for caring.  
God's life we are bearing  
for us and the world!

Prayer taken from a URC [Lent resource](#). Inspired by an article on the Surefish website by Dawn Marchpane.