



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

Mardi Gras – 02/20/2007

***Mardi Gras* parades have been staged in New Orleans since 1857.**

HOW DID THE TERM “*MARDI GRAS*” ORIGINATE?

Definition [Encarta]: “Also known as Shrove Tuesday or Carnival, annual festival marking the final day before the Christian fast of Lent, a 40-day period of self-denial and abstinence from merrymaking. *Mardi Gras* is the last opportunity for revelry and indulgence in food and drink before the temperance of Lent.”

Online Etymology: “1699, from French, literally “fat Tuesday,” from *mardi* “Tuesday” (from Latin *Martis diem* “day of the planet Mars”) + *gras* “fat,” from Latin *crassus*, “thick.”

Some scholars have noted similarities between modern “*Mardi Gras*” celebrations and “Lupercalia,” a fertility festival held each February in ancient Rome. While “*Mardi Gras*” most certainly has pagan, pre-Christian origins, the Roman Catholic Church legitimized the festival as a brief celebration before the penitential season of Lent.

New Orleans: Baubles have been tossed off floats since at least 1871, when a masker costumed as Santa Claus aboard float No. 24 in the Twelfth Night Revelers parade dispensed gifts to the crowd.

C. Wisdom: *Mardi Gras* = The culmination of Carnival Season

M of Zen: *Mardi Gras* and Lent; truly, the haves and have nots.