

## Reflection on **Mi-Carême**

Ash Wednesday of my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday year happened to fall just shy of a year after my father's death. I was still feeling a deep sense of loss. Lent, and specifically the month of March always brings the anniversaries of the deaths of 3 of my 4 grandparents, and that year it would also bring back this new loss. To celebrate my 60<sup>th</sup>, I returned to New Orleans, a city I've long loved, for the first time since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, just after Mardis Gras.

As it happened, my writers' group was planning a reading at Emmanuel Benedictine monastery in Baltimore that coincided with Laetare Sunday. Since the four of us grew up Catholic we gave ourselves the assignment of writing a poem connected to an obscure liturgical feast or its resonance. Thus, this linking of images and fragments of experience I'd been collecting at the gates of Lent, 2012: reflections of my own grief, intimations of mortality, the resilience of New Orleans, and its people who *know* suffering, and still *dance*, in fact party, in the face of death – all combined to help me break open the impetus for an old liturgical practice of breaking fast, rejoicing in the face of sorrow, in a season of penitence – pink vestments in the season of purple.