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DCO Intern Experiences New Orleans Mardi Gras

By Steven Namanny, contributing writer

In recent weeks, headlines of evidence flooded the New Orleans news: evidence that the city might return to normal. This evidence was founded in trash, literally.

The arrival of Mardi Gras has shocked the pulse of the city. People's hope for the revival of New Orleans has been strengthened by the high participation.

The evidence that the city is on pace to come back was in the garbage because the amount of trash there was to pick up was equal to that of pre-Katrina celebrations. People have taken this as a telling sign that the city is coming back to life.

I was there to witness the vast amounts of trash, along with the joyful celebrating of the locals. Participating in the Mardi Gras celebration was unlike anything I have ever experienced. It turned out to be one enormous party of people camping for three days before parades to stake out the perfect viewing spots, eating lots of great food, and catching beads!

Walking around New Orleans, I could see the excitement on all the faces there. People were happy to be partying in their city again.

The people who went through hurricane Katrina had their lives drastically changed. They have experienced something that we can only imagine. For New Orleanians, being able to come to Mardi Gras was being able to come to something they knew, something normal to them.

It was obvious on their faces that this was their way of saying, "I live here. No storm can take away my home, my city, my culture. My roots run deep here, and this is where I'm going to stay."

As the festivities went on, tour-

ists flew in from across the country. Camp Restore, the disaster relief camp where I live and work, was visited by LCMS Synodical President Gerry Kieschnick and his wife Terry. They came to see Camp Restore and to join in for the final day of carnival, Fat Tuesday.

On this day of celebration, the city is on holiday. Nobody goes to work and everybody comes out in costume to walk the streets. Families pick certain



Members of the Krewe of Mondo Kayo parade down St. Charles Avenue while celebrating Mardi Gras Day in New Orleans February 5, 2008.

Photo courtesy of Reuters.com

themes, others dress in extravagant wardrobes, and all one can do is admire and laugh at the peculiar creativity that is revealed on this day. There are people running around as groups of crayons, individuals dressed as Hugh Hefner, inflated cows, inflated ballerinas, and to top it off, fake Mardi Gras weddings including Mardi Gras vows and a vicar on stilts.

Mardi Gras is a time of fun. It is a time steeped in culture. It is a time of expression. It is a time for people to be creative in random fun. And it is a day for people to be involved in community.

If you ever have the opportunity to come to Mardi Gras, do so! Bring a camera, catch lots of beads, and experience the culture. But don't forget to, as they say in New Orleans, 'laissez les bon temp rouler!'