

Religion of Cajun People and Lent

In this recording you will hear a conversation between two people, Clothilde and Carla, about the religion of Cajun people and how they celebrate Lent. Cajun people were originally French people who lived in today's Canadian provinces Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and moved to Louisiana after 1755. Clothilde, who is Cajun, tells Carla in this conversation about the religion of Cajun people and about their celebration of Lent.

Clothilde: One tradition I haven't explained yet is that South Louisiana has deep roots in the Catholic tradition. The Catholic culture is very much alive in south Louisiana. Mardi Gras is a big party before Lent begins, but I must tell you that the Lenten tradition of not eating meat on Friday is not very hard for Cajuns.

Carla: Yeah, you told, you are all by the river and there is a lot of fish in the river, so I suppose you eat a lot of fresh water and sea food. Could we stop a little on the Catholic culture. I remember you said in the beginning that the Acadians or Cajuns had religious freedom to remain Catholic in South Louisiana. Was there later conflict between the Protestants and the Catholics in Louisiana?

Clothilde: No, really not. Ever, you know, the people live in harmony. You might have heard, when you look at the news or read news on the internet, you might have heard of the Bible belt. It is a region in the southern part of the United States and it is in fact an area where Evangelical Protestantism does have a lot of social and cultural influence. In my opinion, the Bible belt spreads throughout the South; the one area that is not part of the Bible belt is south Louisiana, because of its Catholic heritage.

Carla: Yes, because the Cajun people kept the tradition. And that takes us back to lent again. We already talked about it, there is a tradition in Europe meals and celebrations just before lent starts. Norway and Sweden have their fastelavnsbolle – a bun with whipped cream on the top.

Clothilde: It's delicious.

Carla: You tried it?

Clothilde: I have.

Carla: Cool. In Sweden it's even filled with marzipan. That's really delicious. The Cajun people kept their traditions of Mardi Gras that they centuries back brought from Europe and celebrate Mardi Gras even today. Do you also keep the tradition of not eating meat throughout lent?

Clothilde: I love having a reason to eat a shrimp or oyster poboy, they are both delicious sandwiches, on Friday during Lent. My husband and I will say: “Oh, it’s lent, it’s Friday, let’s go eat a shrimp poboy.” I have to tell you, all of this talk of Cajun food makes me hungry. I think it’s time for lunch, don’t you? So let me ask you:” What do you have in your matpakke?” Someone special packed my matpakke and I’m hoping he put in a sweet treat as lagniappe inside my matpakke. Thanks, sha, for taking the time to ask me about my Cajun culture. I may live far away from bayou country, but I will always be a Cajun girl who loves to dance the two-step, who savors a good chicken and sausage gumbo, and who, I hope, will always embrace the Cajun joie de vivre. Merci.

Carla: Thank you for talking to me about Cajun culture.

Clothilde: Absolutely, sha.

Carla: It was a pleasure, Clothilde, sha.