

MORAVIAN MOMENT #61

Holy Week Tradition

The sixth Sunday of Lent is Palm Sunday, which begins Holy Week. Generally on Palm Sunday, members are encouraged to bring along a piece of Palm branch to wave during worship when the HOSANNA ANTHEM is being sung. The idea is to recapture the spirit of the first Palm Sunday when Jesus rode on a donkey and made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem to deliver his people from bondage. During Holy week, reading services are held each night. In these services, a sermon is not necessarily preached. The idea of the services is to read from the Gospels covering the last week of the earthly life of Jesus.

As early as 1770, it was customary to intersperse the reading at frequent intervals with congregational singing from suitable hymn stanzas. The accounts are read as close to the days of the week on which the events occurred, although since there is no account for Wednesday and the account of Tuesday is very long, adjustments have been made.

The evening of Holy Thursday is dedicated to the Lord's Supper, which was instituted by the Lord on the Thursday evening of the first Holy week. In earlier times the day was called Maundy Thursday. The word Maundy comes from the Latin words, Mandatum est, "It is commanded", in remembrance of the New Commandment given by Jesus on that evening (John 13:34). Moravians make every effort to attend this most holy communion service.

On Good Friday, the Saviour is followed in thought to Calvary and to the Tomb through the readings. A number of Moravian Churches hold their Good Friday service in the afternoon, ending at 3.00pm, the time of the Savior's death on the cross. According to Moravian Custom, at the end of the service no music is played, but rather the worshippers exit the Sanctuary in utter silence. For indeed this service does not conclude here, but on Easter morn, the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ It is felt that the Good Friday service is one of the most powerful and emotional services.

As we begin another Holy Week, let us not just go through the motion. Let us make this a very meaningful experience for all of us. Let us renew our commitment to Jesus Christ and allow our lights to shine so that others might come to a saving knowledge of him. Let us walk good in the light of the Lord.

16 March, 2008