

MORAVIAN MOMENT #91

What is the significance of All Saints Day?

In the Moravian Church, All Saint's Day is on the first Sunday in November. **All Saints Day** falls on November 01, followed by All Soul's Day on November 02. **It is held to remember all those of the faith community that have passed away from the local church congregation.** The origin of the festival of All Saints as celebrated in the West, dates to May 13, 609 or 610, when Pope Boniface IV consecrated the Pantheon at Rome to the Blessed Virgin and all the martyrs; the feast of the *dedicatio Sanctae Mariae ad Martyres* has been celebrated ever since. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, **All Saints Day** follows the ancient tradition of commemorating on the first Sunday after Pentecost or Whit Sunday.

In the Early Church, Christians would celebrate the anniversary of a martyr's death for Christ (known as the saint's "birth day") by serving an All-Night Vigil, and then celebrating in a worship service over their tomb or the monument at their place of martyrdom. In the fourth century, neighbouring churches began to transfer relics, and to celebrate the feast days of specific martyrs in common. Frequently, a number of Christians would suffer martyrdom on the same day, which naturally led to a joint commemoration. In the persecution of Emperor Diocletian, the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all.

In terms of Christian theology, All Saint's Day commemorates all those who have lived their lives for Jesus and died defending or in defense of their Faith, while the next day, All Soul's Day, commemorates the departed faithful who have not yet been purified.

The Litany for All Saints in our Moravian Hymnal indicates that it should be used on the Sunday nearest July 06, the Memorial Day of the Martyrdom of John Hus and on the Sunday nearest November 01. The Litany itself is quite pointed as we reflect and remember those who went through great tribulation because of their faith; however it gives hope of a brighter day coming in Jesus. A portion of the Litany highlighted below, emphasizes the importance of All Saints Day, **"Behold, a great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; And they cry with a great voice, saying: Salvation unto our God, Who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.**(Rev.7:9-10).**These are they of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they were burned at the stake. They were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.**

These are those who came out of great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple." (Rev. 7: 14-15). Walk, so that you will be numbered among the Saints.

October 26, 2008