

October 7 **Henry Melchior Muhlenberg** Lutheran Pastor in North America, 1787

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg is regarded as the patriarch of Lutheranism in North America. Muhlenberg, born near Hannover, Germany, in 1711, received his education in Göttingen and Halle before immigrating to the American colonies in 1742. Lutherans came to the colonies from a variety of regional and ethnic backgrounds and tended to build churches wherever they settled, sometimes with Lutherans of different origins settling in closer proximity to each other. There was little organization among these disparate groups until the arrival of Muhlenberg. Upon his arrival, Muhlenberg visited Lutherans in coastal Carolina and Georgia before making his way to Philadelphia. With enormous energy and unflagging patience, Muhlenberg began to call together the Lutherans, first the Germans, then the Swedes, until the formation of the first Lutheran synod in America in 1748, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. At the inaugural synod, Muhlenberg offered a common liturgy for use among Lutherans. The liturgy was adopted and became the essential element in unifying the Lutherans in America for several generations. Muhlenberg's axiom, "one book, one church," has been a benchmark for liturgical revision among North American Lutherans to the present day. Muhlenberg also recognized the pastoral challenges of organizing a new church in the New World. In the old countries, the church was closely allied with the state. Taxes to support the churches were collected by the state, and Christian education was part of the curriculum in every school. In the New World, the churches were to be voluntary, self-supporting associations, and education in matters of Christian faith was to be the concern of church and home. Muhlenberg's family played prominent roles in the birth of the new nation. One of his sons served as a brigadier general in the Revolution, while another was a member of the Continental Congress and later the first speaker of the House of Representatives. His great-grandson, William Augustus Muhlenberg, was a priest who shaped The Episcopal Church in the mid-nineteenth century (see April 8). Henry Melchior Muhlenberg died on October 7, 1787.

### **Collect**

Loving God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for the ministry of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who left his native land to minister where called; make us mindful of our own vocation to serve where you call us; in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Lessons**

Isaiah 60:1–5

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your

sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

### **Psalm 111**

1 Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, \*in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the Lord! \*they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, \*and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; \*the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; \*he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works \*in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; \*all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, \*because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant for ever; \*holy and awesome is his Name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; \*those who act accordingly have a good understanding; his praise endures for ever.

### **Matthew 18:15–20**

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”