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There are many traditions and aspects concerning Polish culture. While not all are remembered in the United States, a good number of them are remembered and practiced by the Polish people. A huge part of Polish culture, the creation of palms by Polish families for Palm Sunday is a tradition that has lasted throughout the ages. It is both a fun and religious occasion, and one that I myself loved as a child.

While the biggest participators in the “Palm Competition” are indubitably the families with young children, almost everybody participates in some small way. Although this tradition is rather small compared to its counterpart in Poland, (Palms in Poland have been recorded to reach as much as thirty feet high in the air!) Poles living in America would never completely forget this tradition. Not only is it a highly religious occasion, Palm Sunday being one of the biggest holidays of the year, it is also strangely yet incredibly fun. I myself, when I was much younger, was the most excited kid when the time came to create our palms. My mom would make little flowers out of pieces of special paper, and tack them onto a long stick. My dad, since he was the tallest, would stick some ribbons and flowers on the top of the palm, and I would run around being more of a hindrance than a help. But nonetheless, we were all happy making the palm.

After we finished the palm, we couldn’t wait to take it to church on Palm Sunday and show off (at least, I wanted to show it off). One year our palm was so big that I could barely hold it upright. I was so proud! However, making the palms is only half the story, for as I said before, Palm Sunday is also a highly religious occasion. As Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, the people there greeted him with palms. The Polish people emulated this act, but as they didn’t have any real palm trees to make their palms with, they started to make ones from what limited resources they had. Dry flowers and herbs, branches of willow and evergreen, longer branches for the “base” of the palm, and sometimes even whole trees were used to create palms for Jesus, and thus the tradition was born. This tradition is said to have originated in the middle ages, and us Poles use it as a day to honor Jesus Christ, just as the people of Jerusalem honored Jesus Christ on that day.

However, the tradition doesn't end there. The palms are burned the day before Easter, on Good Saturday, and the ash garnered from the burned palms are used as the ash for Ash Wednesday. This was always bittersweet for me, as I'm sure it is for most people. Our whole family used so much nice paper and ribbons to create the palm, and even though my parents said we had to burn the palms, I always hated to see my amazing palm go to waste. Even though in our church, in Maryland, the palms were always burned, many people just bring their palms home. They are supposed to bring happiness, health, and God's Blessing upon the house and the family

I remember one year we had made a particularly big and beautiful palm, and I asked my mom and dad if we could keep it instead of burning it. They told me that we couldn't, because the palms are burnt as a gift to Jesus, a little something to show our eternal thanks for his death on the cross. Easter is on everyone's mind, and burning the palms seems the perfect gift to Jesus right after he sacrificed himself for all of us.

In conclusion, the creation of palms for Palm Sunday is a tradition that is still widely practiced in the United States. It is both a very fun, and very religious occasion, and can be dated back to the middle ages in Polish culture. I myself experienced this tradition firsthand, and can say that it is indeed one of the aspects of Polish culture that achieves both being fun and religious. Truly, the creation of palms for Palm Sunday is a huge part of Polish culture and tradition.

Works Cited

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