

SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS: Apostles to the Slavs

The Mission to the Slavic Nations

Prince Rastislav of Greater Moravia asks Emperor Michael III for a Bishop and teacher to be sent “to explain to them the true Christian faith in their own language”

Cyril and Methodius are sent

- 863 - Arrive in Greater Moravia
- Various Slav peoples there
- Take texts of Sacred Scripture with them
- For use in Sacred Liturgy
- Had translated them into Old Slavonic
- Written in a new alphabet

866 – travel to Rome

- Pass through Venice and come under fire for innovating
- Pope Hadrian II approves Slavonic liturgical books
- Places them solemnly on the altar in
- Saint Mary Major

Feb. 14, 869 – Cyril dies shortly after taking religious vows and putting on the monastic habit

- Buried in Basilica of Saint Clement in Rome

Points that Pope John Paul II stresses in *Slavorum Apostoli*

How Sts. Cyril and Methodius went about their work:

- With energy, prudence, zeal, and charity in their activities
- Show what is good, offer concrete help to attain
- Become similar to those they evangelized
- To be a part of that people
- To share their lot
- Became involved
- Needed to make themselves understood
- Needed to translate the message of the Gospel into a very different cultural context
- Cyril and Methodius did not try to impose Greek language or Byzantine culture, or customs or way of life
- Adapted to Slavonic the texts of the Byzantine liturgy
- Adapted to the mentality and customs of the people Greco-Roman law
- Respectful of the obligations of their mission

They “set themselves to understanding and penetrating the language, customs, and traditions of the Slav peoples, faithfully interpreting the aspirations and human values which were present and expressed therein.”

(*Slavorum Apostoli*, §10)

Catholic Sense of the Church

“Indeed all the cultures of the Slav nations owe their ‘beginning’ or development to the work of the Brothers from Salonika. ...the Brothers made a fundamental contribution to the culture and literature of all the Slav nations.”
(SA, §21)

Church also catholic because she “is able to present in every human context the revealed truth . . . in such a way as to bring it into contact with the lofty thoughts and just expectations of every individual and every people.” (SA, §18)

“All individuals, all nations, cultures, and civilizations have their own part to play and their own place in God’s mysterious plan and in the universal history of salvation.” (SA, §19)

Does not lead to impoverishment or extinction of what goodness, truth, and beauty a culture brings to the world

- Assimilates and develops these values
- Lives them with magnanimity and joy
- Perfects them by the light of Revelation
- Always strives to win each person for God
 - To unite them with each other and with Him in His truth and love

The Church “foster[s] and take[s] to herself, insofar as they are good, the abilities, resources, and customs of each people. Taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens, and enobles them... In virtue of this catholicity each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Thus through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of its parts receive increase.” (SA, §16, quoting from *Lumen Gentium*, § 13.)

Catechetical and Pastoral Method

- Acting among those who:
- Had not heard the Sacred Mysteries celebrated in their native language
 - Had not heard the word of God proclaimed in a way that completely fitted their own mentality and respected the actual conditions of their own life