

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

this year we celebrate the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of the equal-to-apostles saints Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia.

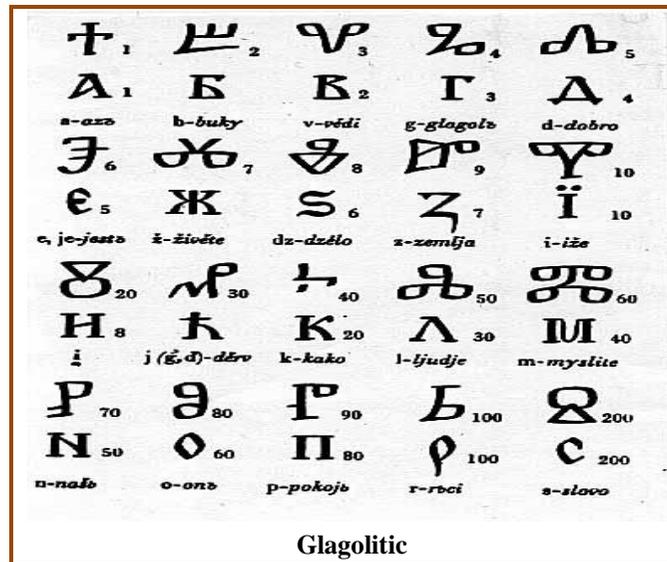
The brothers Constantine and Methodius from Constantinople arrived in the year 863 in response to the request of the Grand Duke Rostislav of Great Moravia. They had been sent by the Byzantine Emperor Michael and by Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, the teacher of St Constantine. Their mission was outstanding because it connected with the people in an understandable language: Slavonic. In addition to this St. Constantine also developed a script, the Glagolitic alphabet. The creation of a written language was a milestone toward the greater spread of Christianity among the Slavic peoples.

The holy brothers created the foundation for a self-governed Moravian Church, independent of the bishops of the Franconian (German) Empire, who supported the power aspirations of the Franconian Kings. Constantine and Methodius founded seminaries where future priests were educated in Rostislav's Principality. They expended great efforts on the translation of both Holy Scriptures and Liturgical books and Canons into Slavonic.

In the year 867 they undertook to travel to Constantinople, where their students were to be ordained to become priests. However, due to the political upheavals there, they were unable to reach Constantinople but instead accepted an invitation to Rome by the Pope. After the long journey and the exhaustion of endless theological arguments and untiring work, St Constantine

became ill and foreknowing his near departure he let himself be ordained a monk, taking on the name Cyril. He was buried with great honour in the Church of St Clement and his grave is there to this day.

In the year 869, the Pope made Methodius Archbishop of Moravia, Pannonia and Illyria (the present-day Hungary and the former Yugoslavia) and consented to the celebration of the Liturgy in Slavonic. Shortly after his arrival in Moravia, during a coup by Svatopluk, the pro-Franconian nephew of Rostislav, Methodius was captured and was handed over to the Franconian Bishops, who unlawfully charged him and imprisoned him in a monastery until the year 873 when he was released thanks to the direct intervention by Pope John VIII.



St Methodius then became the head of the Moravian church. He baptised the Czech Duke Bořivoj and his wife Ludmila, but was repeatedly

entangled in legal disputes with Franconian clergy, who accused him of heresy and of non-subordination under the Pope and who were most disturbed by the Slavonic language Liturgy. By cunning means they managed to cause Methodius to be called to Rome, where in the year 879 he was vindicated. The celebration of the Slavonic Liturgy was acknowledged as rightful and well reasoned. In the year 885 St Methodius followed an invitation to Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor with the aim of discussing canonical law queries as relating to the mission church of Great Moravia and of clarifying the relationship between Constantinople and Rome.

The next attack by the Franconian clergy took place after the death of St Methodius, who had died on April 6 in the year 885. He had suggested his Moravian pupil Gorazd as his successor who, even though elected, did not get ordained to take up office. The biggest fiend of St Methodius, Bishop Wiching of Nitra, succeeded in obtaining a ban of the Slavonic Liturgy from the Pope, the disregard of which resulted in expulsion from the land. Practically all pupils of St Methodius were therefore expelled from the area of Great Moravia. The majority of them found refuge in Bulgaria where under the guidance of Saints Clement and Naum respectively they established a Slavonic seminary in the cities of Ohrid and of Preslav. From these locations Eastern Christianity spread not only to the Balkan regions but one hundred years later also to Russia. A proportion of St Methodius' pupils went from Moravia to Bohemia, where the Slavonic Liturgy was preserved until the end of the 11th century. The Czech saints – the Duchess Ludmila, Duke Wenceslas, St Procopius of Sázava – also preferred the Slavonic Liturgy.



St Methodius in Bishop's Apparel holding the Gospels

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We must never forget that we are the descendants and spiritual heirs of the equal-to-the-apostles brothers Cyril and Methodius. This spiritual heritage will continue to be alive just as long as each one of us consciously follows this inheritance.

May the Lord give strength to all who are involved in the preparations in Mikulčice, the very location where the equal-to-the-apostles brothers prayed and served the Liturgy, and where this year a festival entitled “Meeting of Cultures” is planned.

On the 25th of May a Commemorative Holy Hierarchical Liturgy will be served under participation of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, a successor of Patriarch Photios, who had sent the holy missionaries to Moravia. Furthermore there will be international representatives of the individual regional Orthodox Churches present, who will travel a distance to honourably remember the equal-to-the-apostles Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Let us meet at this holy location to pray in love, harmony and unity, like truly loving children and thus also as heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ (Rom 8:17) heirs worthy of the missionary work which was undertaken for us by Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Link to the page of the upcoming feastday:

<http://www.mikulcice.pravoslavi.cz/>

“Meeting of Cultures”

Slavic settlement in Mikulčice

24-26 May 2013

For information regarding the Festival, please contact: ThDr. Jiří Jukl +420 608 569 397 and Fr. Mgr. Metoděj Kout mobile: +420 773 660 205, e-mail: svata.olga@seznam.cz

This information leaflet was put together in February of 2013 for the occasion of the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius for use by the Orthodox Church. Those responsible for its content are ThDr. Jiří Jukl and Fr. Mgr. Metoděj Kout. Translated into English by Johanna McBride.

The 1150th anniversary of the arrival of the holy brothers Saints Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia



St Cyril with a Slavonic script scroll of the Gospel