

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Innovation Needs Cooperation Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, February 14, 2014
8:15 AM 1 Kgs 11:29-32; 12:19; Mk 7:31-37 **Sts. Cyril, monk, and Methodius, bishop**
(We have to pray that renewal really starts on the local level and expands and involves both clergy and laity.)

Today we celebrate the memorial of **Saints Cyril and Methodius**, not St. Valentine—sorry. Valentine is more of a legendary character. Cyril and Methodius were real people. Valentine might have been real, but probably not a saint; we will go into that some other time.

The point about Cyril and Methodius, however, is that **they were way ahead of their time, wonderful missionaries. Cyril invented what is called the Cyrillic alphabet**, still used by Russians and Bulgarians. It captured the strange sounds of the Slavic languages in a way the Latin finds it hard to do so. That's why in Polish, which uses the Latin alphabet, there are so many consonants put together; that's to form a sound not in Latin and other western languages. Well, Cyril did it in a different way; **he just created new symbols**. Instead of putting many consonants together, he created a new symbol, and that's the Cyrillic alphabet.

Not only that, he invented a new language because he was speaking to people who didn't have a written language. They had sounds. They had words. They had stories, but **they didn't have any literature**. So he **invented a language so that they could write the liturgy**, and he did it in such a way that it was a regular language without exceptions, so in that way artificial and yet learnable. This is still used in some churches in the East—**Church Slavonic**. Originally the plan was for Church Slavonic **to be used in the Latin rite, but Latin rite priests didn't want to do it**. It was taken up by priests of the Byzantine rite and is still used in certain places in Slovakia, and perhaps elsewhere too.

There is a lesson here. Here are these two very forward thinking, in fact really brilliant and creative missionaries, but **their brother missionaries don't want to bother with their**

innovations, with the creativity, with all the wonderful advantages they developed. That was especially true of the Latin rite priests. Later on, after the Council of Trent, the Holy See gave permission to priests in Croatia to celebrate the Latin rite in Croatian, but very few bothered. The Holy See also gave permission for priests in China to celebrate the Latin rite in Mandarin Chinese. Very few priests bothered.

So we can see that **renewal in the Church is very difficult. It can't really come from on top.** The best ideas on top won't do any good if the people who are in the actual situation don't want to bother. So if we want to work for renewal of the church, **we have to pray that that renewal really start on the local level and expand and involve both clergy and laity** because both working together is the only way the Church can work. If there is only one group working, it won't work. It has to be the whole church in the grassroots working together for renewal. Cyril and Methodius are great patrons of that wonderful process. We can pray to them that we will make some advances in our own time.