

Saints Cyril and Methodius Day

THE DAY OF BULGARIAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE, AND SLAVONIC LITERATURE

Following 11 May when the Bulgarian Orthodox church pays homage to the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, on the 24 May the Bulgarians celebrate the great heritage of the First Teachers marking the Day of the Slavonic Alphabet, of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture.

During the 5 centuries of Ottoman yoke that day was called the Bulgarian Holiday which signifies its paramount importance for the survival of the Bulgarian nation.

In 9 c. the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius created the Slavonic alphabet. St. Cyril, nicknamed the Philosopher, made the first translations of the liturgical books from Greek to Old Bulgarian. The new alphabet coined by Constantine-Cyril matched precisely the phonetic structure of Old Bulgarian, which was definitely different from other dialects of the Old Slavonic language. The date of the great invention is not known, but sources point out that in the early 860s the holy brothers taught the new alphabet to the Bulgarians living near the River Bregalnitsa, today in Macedonia. In the year 863 Byzantine Emperor Mikhail III sent Cyril and Methodius on a mission to Great Moravia where for three years they preached Christianity in the Slavonic language and trained disciples for future enlightenment missions. This happened on the insistence of Prince Rostislav who controlled the Slav-populated territories now in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary. The Moravia mission met with the bitter resistance of the German clergy who fought to counter the spreading influence of Byzantium. That is why in 867 Sts. Cyril and Methodius headed to Rome to fight back the attacks of the patrons of the Trilingual Dogma. There Constantine-Cyril met with Pope Adrian II and successfully defended his argument that as an ecclesiastical language Old Slavonic was as adequate as Greek, Latin and Hebrew. This thesis represented a revolutionary act in 9 c. Europe. It is hardly surprising then that in 1980 Pope John Paul II declared Sts. Cyril and Methodius co-patrons of



May 24th

Europe, side by side with the Irish Saint Benedict who reclaimed the positions of Christianity in the aftermath of the Barbarian invasion.

The life and work of the holy brothers yielded its most important results in 9-c. Bulgaria that had recently been converted to Christianity. In 886 the most talented and devoted disciples of Cyril and Methodius later also canonized by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, were received with honors and generous support by the Bulgarian Prince Boris I – the Christian Converter of Bulgaria. Three of them – Kliment, Naum and Angelarii trained thousands of priests and penned a bulk of liturgical books. The Bulgarian disciples of Sts. Cyril and Methodius took over as leaders of the Bulgarian church and culture. They set up two renowned literary schools – the Ohrid and Preslav ones. In 9-10 c. the two schools produced a bulk of translations from Greek. In this way they provided the backbone of Slavonic literature. Original works were also written. In his celebrated poem Alphabetic Prayer Constantine Preslavski extolled the Slavonic alphabet as a symbol of enlightenment and progress. The Preslav school prospered during the reign of Tsar Simeon the Great in 10 c. His reign brought the triumph of Old Bulgarian and the Bulgarian liturgy in our lands. In the centuries that followed Bulgarian spiritual influence spread to Serbia, Croatia, Kiev Russia, Lithuania, Walachia and Moldova.

GREECE

The Day of the Aghio Pneuma (Holy Spirit)

The feast takes place 40-50 days after Easter

This day, always on a Monday, marks the **descent of the Holy Spirit to the gathered disciples**, fifty days after Pascha (Greek Easter). Aghio is the neuter form of the word that denotes



holiness/saintedness which precedes the name of the sainted person, and is used in this case with the word for spirit, which is neuter. Some chapels bears this name, where this day is duly celebrated.

