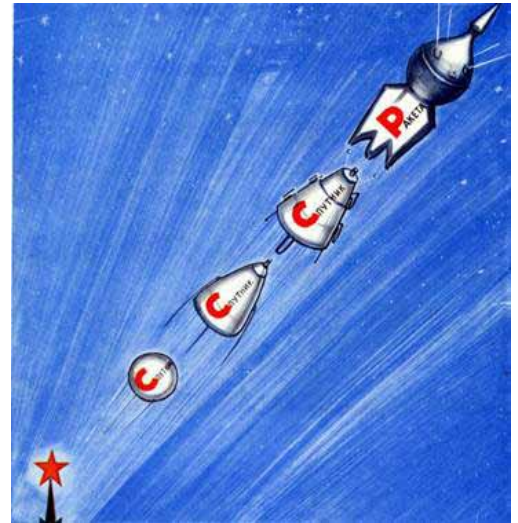


Weekly Musings ☩ February 7, 2011

Other than the holy octave of Ground Hog Day, the calendar this week is as bereft of saints as we are of nice weather. I will steal from next week which has an embarrassment of riches.

My father's cousin was a naval officer and Harvard-trained physician who was at one time in charge of our go-to-the-bottom-of-the-sea program. Decades ago the bottom-of-the-sea program and the space program were both before us (remember Sea Hunt with Lloyd Bridges? Yes, their father). The space program won out and Sputnik, a three foot across piece of tin that went "beep, beep" in outer space, changed everything. In those days when you saw soviet space satellites, they invariably had on them what looked like CCCP. Of course if you know Greek (Byzantine, not ancient) or Russian, you know it is SSSR, better known to us as USSR. What does this have to do with anything, you might ask? Well, Russian is based on the Cyrillic alphabet which was invented by Saint Cyril of Cyril and Methodius fame.



Both men were Greeks from Thessalonika and lived in the ninth century. The older, Methodius, was a provincial governor, the younger a professor of philosophy. They were sent on a diplomatic mission by the Byzantine emperor to the Khazars. Eventually they were appointed as missionaries to Moravia and taught and preached in the native Slavonic for which the younger, then called Constantine (Cyril was his eventual monastic name) invented an alphabet called Glagolitic thus making him the founder of Slavonic literature. Cyrillic, a somewhat different script, was named after St. Cyril. Being Greeks, of course, they used many Greek letters to give meaning to the Slavonic language which apparently had no written form.

Cyril and Methodius with Cyril holding the Glagolitic alphabet.

After a time they went to Rome where Cyril, after taking monastic vows, died. Methodius was made a bishop and returned but was imprisoned for two years because of German bishops who objected to him teaching and doing the liturgy in Slavonic. It is tempting to think of a period of Norman Rockwellesque tranquility in the church up until our present disagreements, but alas, it would be a fiction. Imagine people fighting over the language and form of the liturgy. We have come so far (Is that irony or sarcasm, you ask yourself).

The pope had Methodius released and caving into the German bishops, withdrew his permission to use Slavonic as the regular liturgical language. The written script continued, however. Most older icons used Old Church Slavonic. The icon above says, starting left to right and reading vertically, "o hagios" or "the holy or saint", "Methodius" and starting at the far right "o hagios" and then going left, "Kurlillius." Cyril holds his alphabet.

It is worth noting that these were educated men. The first uneducated men sent out as missionaries (or at least as leaders of same) were the Franciscans. During the thirteenth century when asked if they were heretics by already Christian Germans whose language they did not know, some Franciscans answered "ya" the only thing they knew. That was the wrong answer and they were killed. Education is important.

News from St. Luke's

I have used the Eucharistic prayer from Enriching Our Worship three times now—at our Wednesday noon Eucharist, the Saturday night Eucharist and the 10 am. Eucharist on Sunday. The comments have been overwhelmingly positive with comments like "beautiful" "fantastic" "makes you think" and "excellent Eucharistic Prayer for Lent—very humble and acknowledging of our sins." We will begin using it regularly (for Lent only) on March 13 and return to our normal prayers on Easter. It certainly makes me think and each time I use it, a bit more comes through to me. Incidentally, these comments were from people all over the age spectrum. We haven't used a different Eucharistic prayer at the 8 am. service for quite a few Lents, but we used to. Those of you who attend 8 am. might want to comment, not all of you come for Rite I. Some come for the early time and some come because it is a quiet, meditative service. Here is link to the prayer: <http://www.liturgy.co.nz/resources/epeow2.html>

The Rev. Canon Gary Waddingham • Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church • Regional Canon, Diocese of Montana