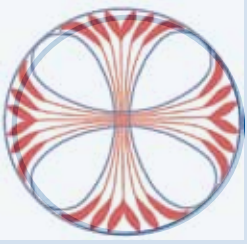


VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2
SUMMER 2014



OUR JOURNEY

SAINT ANDREW ABBEY · BENEDICTINE ORDER OF CLEVELAND



Be not afraid! – St. John Paul II

***Be not afraid to respond, be not afraid to encourage,
be not afraid to pray for yourself and others,
be not afraid to say, Yes!***

From the Administrator

By Rev. Gary A. Hoover, O.S.B.



In order for today's article to truly make a difference in your life, I ask you to take the challenge at the very beginning seriously.

Listen! Really! Listen! Take the time to listen for a few minutes in a quiet place. Before you go on, find a quiet place and go there. Once you're there then clear everything from your mind and settle your heart, block everything out and go deep within. Spend some quality time truly listening within your heart. However long it takes to quiet your mind and your heart, do it! Then spend some time in the silence of your heart! Once you have been there for quite some time, come back to this article and finish reading it.

I have done this exercise many times with people during my homilies at Mass, whether at the parish or during theology class Mass. For many it becomes a challenge just to settle down and get to the point where they're in total silence. Some have to practice it more than one time to reach this level. Let's face it, we're just used to so many things going on in our lives with having instant communications available through the Internet, cell phone, TV, etc. We can easily become overwhelmed with outside voices that make it difficult for us just to focus in silence and listen to voice of God within us.

One of my favorite stories illustrating this point is about the college girl who decided that she wanted to put herself into the presence of God. So she decided to go to the college chapel every day at the same time for about 15 minutes to half an hour.

At first it became very difficult for her to try and settle down because she was thinking about everything going on in her life. However, knowing that she was in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, she decided that she was going to remain committed to this time period and continued this practice of silence. Many times she wanted to quit because she was overwhelmed

with so many things going on. However, she asked God for the grace to help her and she remained loyal. Eventually she found that she could enter the chapel and leave everything at the doors as she came in to sit and talk with God, hearing God speak to her within her heart. The more she put herself in the presence of God, the greater was the peace she experienced in her life and the closer she came to God. This time with God helped her to find out what God wanted her to do with her life and how to deal with the many daily situations she encountered.

Over the years I have had many responses from people sharing their experiences of being alone with God and listening with their hearts. Some have said they heard God tell them He loves them. While others share that they had difficulty being silent, let alone hear anything from God. Still others shared many other powerful experiences of God's presence in their lives - speaking to them and guiding them.

What did you hear, what did you experience within your heart during this quiet silence? What was God calling out to you at this time? What was He saying personally? What was His message solely for you?

Whatever experience you had with hearing God speaking in your heart, or perhaps not hearing, keep faithful to taking the time so that you eventually you'll hear the call of God, a call to follow Christ daily in your lives. Whether you are at Church, home, work, school, with friends, or enjoying some peaceful quiet time on the beach, in the mountains, or in your own prayer space, God is always reaching out to you, calling you to serve Him and to serve others. This service is through many occupations and jobs as well as through one's own life commitment to Him through your unique calling/vocation.

Many experience the road through married life while others respond through the single lifestyle. Still others are called

to the priesthood or the diaconate. However, this volume of *Our Journey* is focusing on the religious lifestyle, especially a call to the monastic life as lived by the Benedictine monks.

As you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord within your life, perhaps the Lord is calling you or someone you know to the monastic lifestyle.

As you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord within your life, perhaps the Lord is calling you or someone you know to the monastic lifestyle. As his Holiness, St. John Paul

II said, "Be not afraid!" Be not afraid to respond, be not afraid to encourage, be not afraid to pray for yourself and others, be not afraid to say, "Yes!"

Even if you if you're not called to the monastic life, you can still share in our life by being an Oblate. An Oblate is a person who brings the Gospel message with the spirituality of St. Benedict to others in his/her family, community and the world.

St. Benedict tells us to "listen with the ears of our heart." How is God calling you to respond to the Benedictine lifestyle?

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Gary A. Hoover, O.S.B." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Father Gary O.S.B.

Our Journey is published four times per year by the **Benedictine Order of Cleveland, St. Andrew Abbey**, for our friends, oblates, and sponsors.

Publisher

Rev. Gary A. Hoover, O.S.B.

Directors of Abbey Stewardship

Robert J. Allen

Mary Kay Swenson

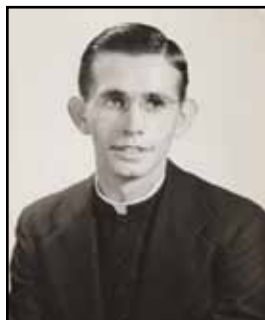
Public Relations & Design

Susan Garrison

If you have questions or comments about this publication, please address them to:

St. Andrew Abbey
10510 Buckeye Road
Cleveland, OH 44104
(216) 721-5300
www.standrewabbey.org

Fr. Placid Celebrates 75 years in vows



Professing his vows as a Benedictine monk on the 11th of July, 1939, Fr. Placid Pientek, OSB will celebrate with the community his 75th anniversary of vowed life

this year. This is truly a celebration for him and for the community, since he is the first monk in our history to mark this milestone. Fr. Placid is also the oldest monk in the history of our community: he will turn 96 on the 26th of July. He also holds the distinction of the longest ordained monk in our history as well, this September 23rd he will celebrate the 70th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. In fact, Fr. Placid is currently the senior ordained monk in the American Cassinese Federation of monasteries in the United States of which St. Andrew Abbey is a member.

But Fr. Placid's history with our community begins even further back. Born and raised in Manhattan, New York City, Francis Pientek grew up in a family proud of their Slovak heritage and their Catholic faith, with parents Ignatius and Helen and siblings Stephen, Joseph and Helen. His home parish was St. John Nepomucene on E. 66th Street and 1st Avenue in Manhattan, still a thriving Slovak parish staffed by priests from Slovakia in the New York Archdiocese. He was influenced by his pastor to consider religious life and assisted by him to attend high school at the new community of Slovak Benedictines in Cleveland. Thus, Francis traveled all the way to Cleveland as a boarding student at Benedictine High School. This event would chart the rest of his life in career and service. He excelled in his studies, but was also a star athlete in football, basketball and baseball.

Graduating from Benedictine in 1936, he next studied for two years at St.



Procopius College in Lisle, Illinois (Now Benedictine University). He joined the monastery in 1938, being given the name of Frater Placid and made his novitiate at St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas. He professed his first vows in 1939 and completed his studies at St. Benedict's, earning a bachelor's degree in Latin in 1941. Frater Placid returned to the monastery in Cleveland and there studied for the priesthood, being ordained in 1944 by Bishop Edward F. Hoban.

After ordination, Father Placid joined the faculty of Benedictine High School teaching Latin and Religion classes. He was very involved in the athletic department, first as a tennis and basketball coach and later as athletic director from 1944-1950.

He studied at the pontifical college of St. Anselm in Rome from 1950-1952 in preparation for becoming master of novices with the care of directing new monks in their formation. In the early 1960s, he successfully directed a campaign to raise over \$700,000 for the construction of a modern gymnasium and the remodeling of the former gymnasium into a modern library and cafeteria. He then served the school as treasurer beginning in 1964 and was then appointed as prior of the community under Abbot Jerome Koval, OSB in 1966. Completing his term as prior in 1969, Father Placid returned to positions of financial responsibility for the community both in the high school and the monastery. He remained active in these positions until retiring in 1989.

Fr. Placid has been known as the physical embodiment of his name: quiet and calm. He has been an example of stability and a peaceful soul, always showing the importance of prayer. When once asked about prayer and the spiritual life, Fr. Placid responded: "The Office creates the rhythm of life with the seasons, the psalms, and the readings. It grows on you over the years. Even the changes from Latin to English didn't upset me. It seemed a normal



growth. The Office is living. Some days we sing the Office rather than recite it--you're happy with the embellishment, for the Office never gets boring."

But Fr. Placid also has been an example of practical and dedicated work as well. He always knows how to get things done and has utilized many resources to accomplish his goals. For years, he organized a cadre of volunteers to assist the monastery with mailings and other public relations materials. Most were hard-working women whom Fr. Placid knew could get the job done. Many days they would work into the night and Fr. Placid would provide pizza for them, often asking the junior monks to make a "run" to DiBella's pizza place to help him out. Fr. Placid was always kind and gentle, inviting the junior monks to "join in" the eating as a reward for their help. Every year, the volunteers and their spouses would be treated to a "field trip" to a place of interest in the area. That evening, they would join the monks for supper in the refectory and then be entertained by a skit written and performed by the monks.

Declining health matters have moved Fr. Placid to residence at the Regina Center in Richfield, Ohio, but many monks visit and periodic visits back to the monastery keep him connected to the monastic community. He is an inspiration to all. We wish God's continued blessings on Fr. Placid and offer thanks to Almighty God for his life of prayer and service and for his witness to the vocation of monastic life here in Cleveland. *Ad Multos Annos!*

— By Fr. Michael Brunovsky, OSB

Shared Vocation in Life

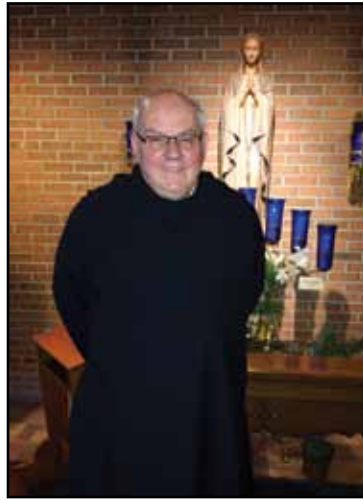
By Fr. Finbar Ramsak, OSB

Vocation comes from the Latin root for “to call.” While we may give general categories for vocations such as married, ordained/religious, and single, the reality is much deeper. The call is unique to each individual based on God’s will and our cooperation with His grace. All of us have gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses, and even virtues and even our temptations which we play a role in determining our vocations and recognizing God’s call. How are we best able to use all of these, cooperating with the gift of God’s grace, is known as discernment. Discernment is a process of recognition and understanding, in this case God’s call for us in our lives. When discernment is properly understood in one’s life it has to involve an openness and willingness to cooperate with those gifts and talents we have been given. For our call, gifts, and talents all have the same source and the same means of inspiration the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit after all is the one whom through our baptism and confirmation initiates us into the Church, and also through the outpouring of the Spirit grants us the ability to spread and defend the faith as we are united closer to Christ. All of us, due to our unique life and vocational call will defend and spread the faith in different ways, which is why the discernment process helps us to understand our call our strengths and talents in service to God, Church, and the faithful.

As we prepare to end the Easter Season with the celebration of Pentecost we might be able to see some of these ideas a little clearer if we were to look at the vocation stories of some of our monks. The three have different gifts and talents as well as ways and times that brought them to the abbey. Yet in these stories there is the same Spirit that guided them.

Br. Gabriel Bala-zovic was born and raised in Slovakia before moving to Toronto, Canada. As part of a Slovak group making a pilgrimage, Br. Gabriel first visited St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL, which is the abbey that sent monks to Cleveland for the founding of St. Andrew’s Abbey in 1922. Discussing with Msgr. Michael Shuba, the pastor at his

parish, how much he enjoyed the prayers at the abbey, Br. Gabriel found out about the Slovak Benedictines in Cleveland.



Br. Gabriel

After having an opportunity to visit Cleveland and experience firsthand the monastic life as part of a discernment period, Br. Gabriel returned to Cleveland questioning if this was right for him. Due to the encouragement of Fr. John Humensky, a priest friend from Cleveland who visited Toronto to encourage him to enter the abbey in Cleveland and the example of Sr. Michaellette Corej, who helped at the parish in Toronto, Br. Gabriel returned for a long weekend to discern a vocation. It was about two years after first pondering this life with the prayers at St. Procopius that Br. Gabriel began a new life as a postulant. The encouragement of friends, the example of those around him, and his experience on visits is what Br. Gabriel credits to his discernment process to find a monastic home in Cleveland.

The second monk was very familiar with Cleveland and the Benedictines through a different perspective as he attended Benedictine High School for all four years of high school. Fr. Timothy Buyansky en-



Fr. Timothy

tered the abbey out of high school. From the time he was in grade school he had considered a vocation to the priesthood, but it was not until he was finishing his senior year that the Benedictine Order was considered seriously. During his senior year then when fellow students were planning on where to go to college, it was this college decision that led to his family finding out he was entering the monastery. His mother asked him what he was doing with his plans for college. This is when he told them he was going to St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, MN where he could begin his college education and studies for the priesthood in preparing to enter the abbey after two years of school. The experience in high school and opportunity to see some of the monks involved in the school helped him over time to see that this was truly God’s will for him.

The third monk is currently the youngest monk in solemn vows in our community and is finishing his second year at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe,



Br. Thomas

PA. Br. Thomas Sanders, who grew up in Sheffield Lake, OH, also began considering a vocation in grade school while preparing for first communion. The sister who was involved in the preparation for receiving the sacrament struck him with her words and advice of hearing God’s call. Listening for this call would take time and a variety of experiences to help him determine the way that God was calling him to a religious vocation. The use of his gifts and talents through his love of prayer and work is what helped Br. Thomas appreciate not only what he has been given, but also how he is able to use these in God’s service. In conversation with friends and co-workers during his college years Br. Thomas once

Continued on page 5

Recognizing and Responding to the Call

By Fr. Michael Brunovsky, OSB

One of the deepest questions that some people express to the monks is the question, “how do I know if I have a vocation?” This is not necessarily easy to answer, since vocation is a call, as the Latin root tells us (*vocare*: to call). However, the fact that one is even asking such a question is a step in the right direction. Understanding one’s vocation in life is a journey. The fact that a person searches for a way to generously give of their life in service means that the person has a value placed on service as well as a need to discover the best way of serving with the talents that they have.

As Christians, we believe that the direction of one’s life should first and foremost be determined by the plan of God. But one does not just “pick up the phone” and find out what God has in store for them. “Finding out” is part of a journey of discovery that involves many soul-searching hours over a number of months or even years and a willingness to understand what gifts the Lord has placed within them.

Everyone in the religious life has a vocation story, a way in which God has moved their heart to the realization that they were called to render life in service to God. But this is also the case with other professions as well. It can involve trial and error, going down one path, only to have something else revealed that chang-



es the whole picture. In this day and age, many people experience “second careers” that actually move them toward a higher goal and really fulfill a deep need in the depths of their souls. Some may say that this may be their true vocation, but it does not mean that their first experience of a career was “bad” or a “mistake.”

The journey of vocational discovery involves discernment. Arguably, this is one of the most important, yet difficult aspects of our spiritual lives. Discernment, involves the capacity to listen, to listen attentively with “the ear of the heart” as St. Benedict describes it. In this listening, the open soul of a person can determine that which is the reality that surrounds it. Determining this reality is essential. Our world is filled with illusion. People, advertising, news programs, etc. are all telling us what is good for us, what we need, what we are to do to satisfy those inner desires that are a part of each of us. True discernment enables us to address these issues in the reality that surrounds us and enables us to have a clear vision of reality and the road that lies in front of us.

But discernment must be fed by two other important ingredients in the voca-

tional understanding. The first is prayer. In discovering what God wants of us, we must give ourselves over to the Lord and listen to his voice in our lives. This must be done by an honest and intense cultivation of interior prayer. We

must ask the Lord for guidance and listen to his promptings in our heart. We must meditate on the Sacred Scriptures and the Lives of the Saints, seeking to understand the way men and women have followed the path of the Lord in the past. This will certainly enlighten, encourage, and challenge us, for the example of the Saints and holy ones of the past express the longings of our own hearts to fulfill the work of the Lord in salvation history. The second is having serious conversation with others who can help us in the discernment process. This could be a spiritual director, members of the religious order or vocation we are attracted to, people we can trust through our experience with them and who can give us objective spiritual advice on the subject. This “move outside ourselves” can help us put the pieces of our discernment together and provide insights we would not have discovered on our own.

With prayer, listening to the heart, reflection with others and direction, we are well on the way to understanding our vocation in life. What is the Lord calling you to do? Who is the Lord calling you to be? These are important questions for us and for the world. May the Lord assist all who are searching for God’s will in their lives. May those who are inspired to give their lives to the monastic life, the religious life, to the priesthood, or in service to the Church at large, have the courage to respond with a generous heart. St. Benedict in the prologue to his *Rule* urges us to “do now what will profit us for eternity” (Prol. 44). May the longings of hearts be satisfied by the discernment of his call and may the courage to answer be inspired by the Blessed Virgin Mary and to all Saints throughout the ages who have responded: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word” (Lk. 1,38).

Shared Vocation in Life — Continued from page 4

again realized the importance of an active spiritual life and during this period began looking at Franciscan spirituality. After college and working in his field there was a longing for working with others and more interaction rather than in a research lab. Hearing of the Living with Benedict weekend Br. Thomas signed up for the retreat which would have a great impact on him. For following the retreat and then the next retreat as well Br. Thomas through other visits and conversations entered the monastic life in 2008.

When God calls us and when we are ready to answer is going to be different for each one of us as we can see in these brief examples of discernment. In the many ways that we are called to serve, we do so utilizing our gifts and talents cooperating with the One that has entrusted them to us. Through this magazine we have invited you on our journey with these brief glimpses it is my hope that you will see and appreciate the individual journeys that have brought us together. May God bless you as you listen to His voice and seek the road as we all do that leads us to our Heavenly home.

How Do Monks Benefit the World?

By Robert J. Allen

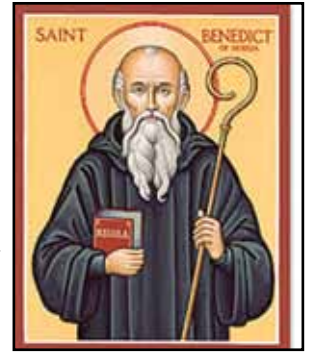
In a society that eats fast food, drives fast cars, flies faster than sound, is surrounded by sound, communicates by phone, fax and email, is outlawing prayer in school and legalizes murder by abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia all in the name of man's rights, it is comforting to know there are Benedictine Monks. They pray, work and provide hospitality to all that come to the Abbey.

Why make these vows: Poverty, Chastity, Stability? Why get up to pray: then stop working and pray again four more times each day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year? The answer is: to provide you and I with a "witness of humble and tenacious fidelity to the Word of God" says Saint John Paul II.

For over 1500 years Benedictine monasteries have been established. St. Andrew Abby founded in 1922 carries on the tradition of prayer and work. It looks to the next millennium to be a "center of spirituality for Cleveland", for you. What a great gift to the Diocese and people of Cleveland to have the monastic presence in its midst. Welcoming guests, offering retreats, tours of the grotto and inviting you in this aura and to be an extension of hospitality and prayer and ministry to others.

Your donation has no value unless it is a gift that helps you better understand how God is working through you to be an extension of the Benedictine life of prayer and work to help others better understand the "Word", the Gospel message that calls us to share.

"Whenever you give in my name to others, you will be rewarded tenfold". Your gift is an instrument of spiritual life to others and allows the monks to be the conduits for your money to help those who seek to hear His Word. Money is important, not because we possess it, but because we are free to use it and understand we are the caretakers – the wise stewards. So listen to your heart and you will realize how much the world needs the straightforward witness of these monks.



St. Andrew Abbey Charitable Gift Annuity Did you know?



A Charitable Gift Annuity from St. Andrew Abbey is a **GUARANTEED** income for you and a second person for life. Charitable Gift Annuities are among the oldest and most simple ways of making a gift to a charitable organization while providing an income for life.

It's a gift that keeps giving back!

For a personal analysis, mail this coupon to: _____
St. Andrew Abbey, 10510 Buckeye Road, Cleveland, OH 44104

Your name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ \$10,000 or _____

Birthday _____ Birthday of the 2nd person _____

E-mail address _____



Please consider us when making or revising your will.

Our legal name is
 Benedictine Order
 of Cleveland, Inc.

Our federal ID# is
 34-0714321.

To our Friends and Benefactors:

It is our concern to protect your name and to assure you of this, **OUR POLICY**, to never rent, sell or lend your name to any other organization.

Thank you!

We are so very grateful to our benefactors who donated to our Green Up and Auto appeals. These pictures speak 1000 words in how your donation has turned into meaningful equipment to allow us to keep up the monastic grounds and to provide transportation to our parish ministries. Your gift is far greater than any dollar value because you are helping care for God's people and His creation. THANK YOU!



– The Monks
of Saint Andrew Abbey



Retreats and Events at Loyola: June - July

Call 330-896-2315 for more information

25th Annual Faith & Light Retreat – “The Breath of God” – June 13-15, 2014 – Facilitated by Kirt Bromley, Becki Haller and Sara Lanzola – This retreat concentrates on the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their parents or caregivers. Siblings are invited to attend. Time will be given for separate sessions for parents/caregivers, as well as an opportunity for meditation, private and shared prayer, and recreation. There will be qualified volunteers present to assist the participants with handicaps on a one-to-one basis, if necessary. Accommodations include meals, and towels and linens; two rooms per family will be made available. Cost is \$100 per person; \$250.00 family of four; \$50.00 deposit due with registration. There are a limited number of scholarships available for those who require financial

assistance. For a registration form, please call Becki Haller at Loyola Retreat House at 330-896-2315, Ext. 202, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Weekend Retreat for Women in AA – “Women Celebrating Recovery” - JULY 18-20, 2014 - Sponsored by the Women of The Turning Point. The main goal of the weekend will be to focus on the gifts sobriety has given us and the rewards we continue to receive through God's grace and practicing the AA principles. Cost: \$160 p/p; \$60 deposit due with registration. To register, visit our website at www.loyolaretreathouse.com to download a registration form or call the Retreat House at 330-896-2315.

*Introduction of Slavonic Liturgy
in Great Moravia:
To Praise the Lord in Our Native Tongue*

(from the cycle *The Slavonic Epic*), 1912,
Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939),

National Gallery's Veletrzní Palace, Prague, Czech Republic.

Reprinted with permission from *Magnificat* Vol. 15, No. 12

In the spring of 1939, Nazi forces invaded Czechoslovakia. One of the first citizens to be arrested in Prague and interrogated by the Gestapo was the celebrated artist Alfons Mucha, who popularized the style known as *Art Nouveau*. Held suspect for his staunch nationalism and for a series of monumental canvases that proudly depicted the history of the Slavic people, Mucha developed pneumonia while in custody. As a result of his maltreatment, he died shortly after his release on July 14, 1939.

Slavic Brotherhood

Cyril and the Methodius were brothers. Their father was an officer stationed in Thessalonica, Greece, where many Macedonian Slavs settled. Cyril was particularly well educated, and he served as a professor of philosophy in the Imperial University. Later he joined Methodius, who had become a monk at a monastery on Mount Olympus in Bithynia. In 862, Ratislav law, the ruler of Moravia, sought the delegation that would ensure political and ecclesiastical autonomy for his Slavic subjects through education in their own tongue. Cyril and Methodius were chosen to achieve this end. Between them, the brothers devised an alphabet and worked on the translation of the Psalms, the Gospels, the letters of St. Paul, and other liturgical texts, which led to the creation of a Slavonic liturgy.

Thereupon the full force of German opposition was directed against the brothers. The Bavarian clergy who were living in Moravia denounced Cyril and Methodius as wicked innovators. Cyril in turn criticized the Germans for their blind fidelity to Pontius Pilot, in allowing only the three languages of Pilot's condemnation of Jesus – written in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, and nailed onto the cross – as worthy of consideration for the



Mucha's second painting in his epic series.

“sacred” languages of the liturgy. The brothers and their supporters then made their way to Rome to seek papal approbation for their cause. It helped that they carried with them the relics of Pope St. Clement I, whose martyred remains had been discovered by an expedition led by Cyril in the Crimea just a few years before. The newly elected Pope Adrian II received them and the relics joyfully. He approved the Slavonic liturgy, and Mass was celebrated in their native tongue in Saint Peter's Basilica.

Mucha's canvas, the second one he painted in his epic series of twenty, measures twenty feet high by twenty-six feet wide. And intensely spiritual man, Mucha credited the actions taken by Saints Cyril and Methodius as the essential cornerstone of the emergence of the Slavic nation. Throughout the painting, historical and allegorical figures of the living and the dead re-create the positive and negative forces that colored this great moment in Slavic history.

Before the expedition left Rome to return to Moravia, Cyril died suddenly, and his body was buried in the Basilica of San Clemente. Pope Adrian resurrected the ancient archiepiscopal See of Sirmium, which he carved out of Bavarian control, for Methodius. But before he could assume his new position, Methodius had to suffer new attacks from the king of Bavaria, Louis the German, and his bishops, causing him to go into exile for several years while he defended his orthodoxy and the new liturgy.

The birth of a nation

In Mucha's painting, the hooded spirit of Cyril is depicted floating in the sky above the curtained apse of a Romanesque church exterior. In a protective gesture, with outstretched arms he shields the cowering Slavs who are being oppressed by the heavily vested and contentious Frankish clergy enthroned above them. Beneath the ethereal figure of Cyril stands his bare-headed brother Methodius with a long white beard. He is supported by two of his kneeling disciples as the papal legate reads a proclamation to the court of the newly crowned Prince of Moravia, Svatopluk, declaring Methodius as the Archbishop of Moravia, with permission to practice the Slavonic liturgy. When Methodius died in 885, conflict with the Germans broke out again, and many Slavs fled to Russia and Bulgaria. The rulers of those kingdoms of exile are depicted in the air, standing over the assembled court of Moravia's new prince. This moment, which marked the trial and birth of the Slavonic nation, was to be a short-lived victory. In the early tenth century, the Magyars overran Moravia. The nation was divided among Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, and the Holy Roman Empire.

A recurring figure appears in Mucha's epic series: the bare chested young man with clenched fist, symbolizing strength and resolve, who holds in his other hand a circle, representing unity and concord. He faces the viewer as a personification of youth, embodying the nation's dreams and its hope for self-determination. After Mucha's death, his countrymen suffered the ravages of Nazism and Communism. But in 1980, with the collapse of the Iron Curtain, Pope John Paul II, himself a Slav, declared Saints Cyril and Methodius the co-patrons of Europe along with St. Benedict. It would seem that after 1,000 years of painful struggle, those hopes for recognition have at last been fulfilled.