

Dear Listeners,

Yesterday was Valentine's Day... but don't worry if you don't have a Valentine, I will propose to you instead... I propose to you St Cyril and St Methodius, co-patrons of Europe and whose feast we keep on the 14th February!

Appropriately for the real stars of Valentine's Day, St Cyril and St Methodius have a real place on my heart, in large part, because for three years I lived at the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome, where St Cyril was initially buried and where a relic of him is still kept. These brothers from Greece both became monks, priests and then missionaries, and are often known as the Apostles to the Slavs. On one of their many missionary journeys to Moravia (part of the present-day Czech Republic) they began to devise an alphabet for the Slavic-speaking peoples and eventually translated the Gospels and liturgical books into Slavonic. The alphabet now widespread across Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia is, in fact, named Cyrillic in honour of St Cyril.

One of the joys of living at San Clemente was the large number of Slavonic speaking peoples who would come on pilgrimage to the Basilica to pray before the relic of St Cyril and to give thanks for these two brothers who brought the Word of God to their lands. It can be helpful for us in England to remember that long before the Reformation the Catholic Church was in the business of translating the Scriptures into the vernacular to give people greater access to the word of God. It's sometimes used as propaganda against the Catholic Church to recall that the Bible would sometimes be kept on a chain in the church as if somehow the Church objected to the Scriptures being read at home. It did not. It did object to the Bible being stolen though (by those in their zeal for the Word of God, forgetting his instruction not to steal!) and no longer being available to the whole Church in any particular parish.

For many decades, centuries even, after the Reformation, books tended to be chained in libraries or kept in chests, as sometimes the love of learning overcame the love of the commands of God in the most zealous or jealous of scholars. The Church has never tried to keep the Word of God from the laity, whilst at the same time, it has always promoted the coming together in a church building of the Church to hear the Scriptures. It is better to hear the Scriptures proclaimed in a church than to only read them in private... but it is even better to do both!

St Cyril and St Methodius are not alone as translator saints, with perhaps St Jerome being the most famous of all, the latter saying 'ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'. CS Lewis, who regular listeners might have heard me mention many times of late, considered himself as a translator, but not just a translator from one language to another, but a translator of ideas. In his series of talks broadcast on BBC radio during the Blitz, now widely read as the book *Mere Christianity*, he described his work as being that of a translator. His aim was to put dogmas and other theological ideas into concepts that the everyday person could understand so that dogma was not dry and abstract, but could be recognised as something alive and to be lived.

That's my great hope for this Radio too. I want it to be a place where you receive the teachings of Christ, unadulterated, but accessibly. I want you to listen to Radio Maria and to not only learn more yourselves, but to learn more in a language that you can share with

Website: <https://radiomariaengland.uk/>

Radio Maria England, Lincoln House, The Paddocks Business Centre
Cherry Hinton Road, CAMBRIDGE, CB1 8DH

Radio Maria England is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the Charity Commission for England and Wales,
Registered Charity Number 1183783.

others. I want you, the listeners of this station, to become apostles to all those around you, and to share in the work of those great saints and patrons of Europe, Cyril and Methodius.

God bless,

Fr Toby Lees OP