Scripture: Acts 1:8
Prayer
Hymn: 41 "Far and Near"

THE COMING OF THE SLAVS: As early as the 6th century the chroniclers note that new foreign tribes were approaching the boundaries of the empire in the wake of the earlier barbarian migrations. The Franks, Rome and Byzantium all had to deal with the Slavs. Charlemagne forced Slavs in his empire to accept Christianity. Pope Honorius I (625-638) at the request of Emperor Heraclius sent missionaries to the Croats. Porga, their prince, was baptized and his people followed his example. By 852 Slavs on the frontiers had an independent national hierarchy, keeping themselves independent of the Franks. Emperor Michael III and Patriarch Photius sent Constantine and Methodius as missionaries to the Khazars. They wanted Christian Khazars to serve as a buffer against Slavic tribes pressing toward Constantinople.

MORAVIA: In 845 Frankish missionaries led King Ratislav of Moravia to be baptized at Ratisbon. Ratislav asked Michael III to send missionaries to Moravia when Boris of Bulgaria requested Frankish missionaries. Michael III sent Constantine and Methodius, who developed a Slavic alphabet, translated the Bible and the liturgy into Slavic. The Frankish clergy so bitterly opposed Constantine and Methodius that they went to Rome where they were received by Pope Adrian II. The missionaries joined the Romans. Constantine became a monk and took the name Cyril. He died in Rome in 869 before he could return to the work in Moravia. Methodius returned to Moravia as papal legate and worked there fifteen years. He was appointed metropolitan bishop of Sirmium. Svatopluk had come to power in Moravia in the place of Ratislav. He surrounded himself with Frankish clergy and renounced his mother tongue. The Frankish clergy continued their harassment and Wiching, a suffragan bishop, was a spy for the Franks. They imprisoned Methodius for two and a half years, denouncing him to Rome for heresy. Pope John VIII secured the release of Methodius but ordered him to discontinue the use of Slavic in worship. Methodius finally gave up, worked for a time in Bulgaria, and returned to Constantinople where he died in 885. Pope Stephen V made Wiching bishop of Sirmium and ordered an end to the use of Slavic in the liturgy. The disciples of Methodius carried the Slavic liturgy to Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia. About 895 the Hungarians, a Mongolian and Tartar people related to the Huns, settled in Pannonia and took Moravia, all but exterminating its Roman Christianity.

BULGARIA: Invading Bulgarians treated Christians with a harshness typical of pagans. Their position moved Franks, Rome and the Byzantines to seek alliance with them as a buffer on the frontier. King Boris (852-901) realized paganism was a dying cause. He was baptized in Constantinople in 885. He gave Greek monks liberty to preach, but he had no intention of losing independence. Boris asked Photius for a patriarch for Bulgaria. Photius sent him learned exhortations but refused the request for a patriarch. Boris was a clever and skillful politician. He asked Pope Nicholas I for an archbishop but at the same time asked Louis the German to send missionaries to Bulgaria. Louis sent Bishop Ermenrich of Passau.
Nicholas sent two bishops, Formosus of Porto and Paul of Populonia, with a number of Roman clerics. Nicholas refused the archbishopric but let him know that compared with Rome Constantinople was a secondary patriarchate. Nicholas answered the childish questions of Boris, such as: "Is it a mortal sin to wear trousers?" "Is it a sin to bathe on Wednesdays and Saturdays?" He exhorted Boris to Christian behavior. Boris joined Byzantium. John VIII tried to win Boris but he remained faithful to Constantinople. Archdiara was made an archdiocese about 900. Disciples of Methodius used a Slavic liturgy but others in Bohemia worshipped in Greek. In 889 Boris entered the monastery of Panteleimon which he had founded and it became a center of culture and evangelism. His son, Vladimir, identified with the pagan opposition and sought to destroy Christianity. Boris came from the monastery and deposed his son and ended the rebellion. A younger son, Simeon, strengthened Christianity, united the Bulgarians, and even threatened to seize the emperorship in Constantinople. Boris died in his monastery in 901.

BOHEMIA: In 805 fourteen Bohemian chieftans received baptism at Ratisbon (Regensburg). The Czech princess, Ludmila, daughter of Svatopluk, became the wife of Borzhivoj, Duke of Bohemia, and championed the Christian cause. Her sons, Spytihněv and Vratislav, became Catholic Christians. Vratislav's wife, who was only nominally a Christian, became head of the pagan party and tried to destroy Christianity. Her son, Wenceslas, reversed his mother's policy and supported Christianity but with such excessive zeal that he displeased the nobles. His brother, Boleslav I (929-967) assassinated him, but later supported Christianity. Christianity continued to grow and spread under Boleslav II (ruled 967-999) and Prague was made a bishopric with Mainz as a suffragan see. Adalbert, the second bishop of Prague, gave great encouragement to missionary work. He played an important part in bringing Hungary into the Roman fold. Boleslav II of Bohemia became hostile and Adalbert and his adherents had to flee--most of his adherents fled to Hungary. Adalbert fled to Prussia where he was martyred in 997. Otto I was fearful and jealous of the Bohemian dioceses.

POLAND: Boleslav's (I) daughter, Dobruvka, married Mieszko (Mieszko) I of Poland who had organized the Polish state in 967. Christianity, which had been planted by German immigrants, began to prosper, Poznan which had been established by the Germans became an independent diocese in 968. The Polish church was more completely organized by Duke (later King) Boleslav I (ruled 992-1025). Gniezno became an archdiocese in 1000, authorized by Otto III and Pope Silvester II. Strong ties were established with Rome, the rulers presenting their country to the pope and paying tribute to him. In 1024 the pope presented a royal crown to Boleslav.

HUNGARY: New pagan invaders, the Magyars or Hungarians, a Mongolian and Tartar people related to the Huns, made deep inroads into German territory. Under their grand-duke Arpad they settled in Pannonia about 895. They threatened all central Europe. They ravaged Moravia and almost destroyed Christianity. Henry I defeated them in great battles in Thuringia and Saxony near the Elbe. Otto I defeated them at Lechfeld (955) and forced them to settle in Hungary. Adalbert, second bishop of Prague, took great interest in their conversion. He established friendly relations with Duke Geza. He arranged marriage between Stephen, son of Geza, and Gisela, daughter of the Duke of Bavaria. When Stephen became duke (997-1038) he had his country incorporated into the Holy Roman Empire of Pope Silvester and Otto III.
He was crowned king, gave allegiance to the pope, and put his country under the patronage of Peter. Stephen emphasized the observance of Sunday, decreed that every ten villages must build a common church, and tried to Christianize family life. Boleslav II of Bohemia became hostile to Adalbert's work and drove him into exile.

THE PRUSSIANS: A rude and pagan people in manner and custom who despised females, practised infanticide, left the aged to die, and sacrificed slaves. They had strong antagonism to Christianity because they feared the Christian Poles were a threat to their independence. They martyred Adalbert when he fled to Prussia from Boleslav II of Bohemia. Bruno of Querfurt with sixteen companions were martyred in 1009. The real apostle to the Prussians was a Cistercian monk, Christian of Olivia, who worked in Prussia from 1209 to 1245. He was made bishop in 1212. Honorius III ordered a crusade against the pagan Prussians in 1222 enabling Christian to make the town of Kulm his residence. The Prussian Order of Knighthood was established to aid Christian. Pagan opposition remained strong and well organized. The pagan Griwen (officials who functioned as priests, judges and magistrates) rallied the pagans at the national shrine at Remove with its sacred oak and idol. Christian called for help from the Teutonic Knights who in 1228 began a sixty-year struggle to Christianize the Prussians. In 1253 a hierarchy was established but the use of military force increased the pagan hatred of missionary work. The pagan Prussians defeated the Teutonic Knights in 1260. Eight captured Knights were sacrificed to the gods, Many priests, including twenty Franciscans, were put to death and many churches destroyed. Peace was finally established between pagans and Christians in 1283. Slowly the pagans assimilated the culture of the Christian colonists brought by the missionaries. Pagan groups held out in Prussia as late as the fifteenth century.

LITHUANIANS: The peoples of the Baltic held out longest against Christianity, with the Lithuanians the last to become Christians. Crusades, Orders of Knights, and missionaries tried to convert them. In 1366 the grand-duke Jagello married the Duchess Hedwig of Poland. She married him on condition he would become a Christian. Jagello toured his country calling on his people to be baptized. Crowds were driven to the rivers for baptism, pagan images destroyed, and sacred snakes and lizards were killed.

THE RUSSIANS: The great piece of mission work by the Byzantine Church was the conversion of the Russians. The ethничal situation was very complicated—a vast expanse with many tribes and languages. Goths, Avari, Huns, and Slavs invaded, brought much suffering to the natives, and settled for shorter or longer times. Constantinople did not preserve the names of its missionaries as well as Rome did. Unnamed missionary monks with the Bible of Methodius worked in Russia and made converts—repeated Russian invasions threatening Constantinople attracted the attention of these monks. In the ninth and tenth centuries when the Italian cities and Moslems boycotted Constantinople, the Byzantines turned to the Russians for trade which concentrated around the Black Sea. The Russians, having been defeated in their raids, found trade with Constantinople very profitable. Constantinople came to enjoy great prestige—the Russians came to admire its civilization. Norsemen invaded Russia in the ninth century and making Novgorod their center dominated the tribes between Novgorod and Constantinople. They encouraged the trade. By 860 the Scandavians had captured Kiev. The neighboring Finns called them "Ruotsi" which in their own language became "Rus". The Slavonic peoples united into one nation or people by the Ruotsi came to be
called "Russians." Serious efforts to convert the Russians probably started with Photius about 860. Rurik, a Norman, founded Novgorod in 862. His son, Igor, captured Kiev which already had a church. Princess Olga who became the wife of Igor learned of Christianity in Kiev. Igor ruled (913-945) as a pagan. Olga became regent on the death of her husband and opened the way for the conversion of the Russians. She went to Constantinople to learn more about this religion. Her faith was greatly strengthened and she took the name "Helena". Her son, Svyatoslav (964-972) proved a true Viking and, though he tolerated Christians, would have nothing to do with Christianity. Under Vladimir, the grandson of Olga, Russia threw off paganism and officially adopted Christianity. According to tradition he started his reign as a pagan, bloodthirsty and immoral. In his kingdom were Jews, Moslems and Christians—all tried to win him. A Christian of considerable philosophical ability got his attention. He appointed a commission to study each of the religions and to report to him the one best suited to the welfare of his people. He found Moslems too fanatical and Jews too proud and conceited. He found Romans arrogant and their worship unimpressive. His embassy was received with high honors at Constantinople. The emperor had instructed his ministers to let the Russians see the "glory of our God." They were greatly impressed with the beauty of Santa Sophia and its mosaics, by the multitude of lights, by deacons and sub-deacons with their torches, the choruses and priests in dazzling robes, and most of all by the "Trice Hagion"—the "Holy, Holy, Holy." The Russians told their king it was is if God and the angels came down into their very presence. The awe and majesty were such that they forgot where they were. After such an experience they could no longer abide in heathenism. The nobles urged Vladimir, "If the religion of the Greeks had not been good, your grandmother Olga, would not have embraced it." Vladimir determined to be baptized, but shrewd politician that he was, he demanded the hand of Anne, the sister of the emperor, Basil II, for his wife as the price of his conversion and peace. The emperor promised, but when he delayed, Vladimir, to remind him, captured the border city of Cherson. Anne was persuaded to marry him and he was baptized at Cherson (989). He called on his people to be baptized and to persuade them, ordered the huge wooden idol, Peroun, the most sacred object of their religion, tied to a horse's tail and dragged over the hills and thrown into the Dnieper. As the people saw the idol floating helpless down the river they were convinced that the great god was a cheat. To further encourage them Vladimir issued a proclamation that any who were not baptized by the next day would be counted his enemies. The people flocked to the river for baptism. Vladimir erected the church of St. Basil in Kiev and Michael became the first metropolitan. Vladimir was indefatigable in founding churches, supporting missionaries, and establishing schools. From his day Russia was reckoned a Christian nation. At Vladimir's death, during the wars of succession, Svyatopolk, was supported by his father-in-law, Boleslav of Poland (992-1025) and worked to spread Latin Christianity. Yaroslav, who supported Byzantine Christianity, gained the upper hand. He supported the use of the Slavic language and the translation of Greek works into Slavonic, laid the foundation for Russian music, and at a synod had Hilarion elected metropolitan. The metropolitan was moved to Moscow just before the Mongol invasion. During the long years of Mongol domination the church became the symbol of Russian unity and Russia became "Holy Russia." When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453 Moscow became the "Third Rome."