

# A History of the Slovak Catholic Federation 1911-2010

**Daniel F. Tanzone, K.H.S.**

The Slovak immigrant community in the United States was nearing the peak of its existence in 1911. Parishes were still being organized and adjustments to the American experience of Church were adapted. The need for parochial schools in Slovak parishes became apparent. Slovak Americans longed for religious communities of men and women who would evangelize in the best traditions of our Cyrilo-Methodian heritage of faith. While the primary concern was the needs of the Slovak Catholics in the United States, a unifying organization was necessary to promote works which would assist the Church in Slovakia.

By 1911, the major Slovak Catholic fraternal societies had already been established and over three hundred Roman Catholic parishes were flourishing in the United States. The need to unify on behalf of pastoral service was uppermost in the minds of the clergy and laity alike. Their pioneering efforts gave birth to a wonderful organization which was unique in that clergy and laity collaborated in promoting the work of the Church. Such cooperation and harmony had always been a trait of Slovaks prefiguring the Second Vatican Council model of the Church.

On February 22, 1911, thirty-eight Slovak priests and more than two hundred of the laity under the direction of the Reverend Jozef Murgaš gathered in Sacred Heart Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to organize the Slovak Catholic Federation, which would serve as a unifying bond among Slovak Catholics and their institutions here in America. Also present at the founding were two members of American hierarchy, namely the Most Reverend Michael J. Hoban, bishop of Scranton, and the Most Reverend Jozef M. Koudelka, then auxiliary bishop of Cleveland, Ohio who was later named bishop of Superior, Wisconsin. Bishop Koudelka, a Czech, had been active in pastoral ministry among the Slovaks in the United States. The Reverend John Porubský, a prolific writer and pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in Binghamton, New York, was elected the first president. The Federation was incorporated on December 30, 1912 when His Honor, Judge S.J. Strauss of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County in Pennsylvania approved the Charter.

Among the first projects of the Federation was to give support to the recently established Congregation of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and to promote activities for youth. It also advanced the work of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity and the School Sisters of Saint Francis who had recently arrived in the United States to begin their educational apostolate among Slovak immigrants.

When the "Pittsburgh Agreement" was signed on May 30, 1918, to guarantee the rights of the Slovaks in the newly proposed Czecho-Slovak Republic, the president of the Federation, the Reverend John J. Kubášek of Yonkers, New York, was invited to sign the document on behalf of the Slovak Catholics in America. Father Kubášek organized a meeting of priests with

General Milan R. Štefánik in New York City to discuss the position of the Church in the newly proposed common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks. The Federation's concerns were addressed to the new government of the Czecho-Slovakia in 1919 after Prague began an anti-clerical campaign.

Following World War I, the Federation established its own official publication, ***Dobrý Pastier (The Good Shepherd)*** whose first editor was the Reverend Monsignor Steven J. Krasula, P.A. of New York City. Over the years it continued to be a monthly, and more recently, an annual publication.

The delegates of the 1921 convention met in Chicago, Illinois and the Constitution and By-Laws of the Federation were adopted. They were formally approved on July 4, 1921 by His Eminence, George W. Cardinal Mundelein on behalf of the American bishops. On July 7 of that year, the Most Reverend Joseph Schrembs, Archbishop of Cleveland, Ohio approved the Federation's affiliation with the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the forerunner of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In affiliating with the NCWC, the Federation launched various drives to raise funds for refugees following both the First and Second World Wars.

In the 1920's other fund-raising activities were initiated under the title **Matička Školská** (educational fund drives). Monies donated enabled the Federation to sponsor the Franciscan Friars in their establishment of a monastery in the United States. Financial support was also given to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Andrew Svorad in Cleveland, Ohio, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, in Danville, Pennsylvania and the School Sisters of Saint Francis in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to establish institutions of higher education.

During the Holy Year of 1925, the Federation organized a pilgrimage to Rome. It was the first pilgrimage of American Slovaks to the Eternal City.

The work of the organization continued to flower and chapters were established in many Slovak parishes with districts or regions serving to coordinate their work on a regional basis. The Eastern Region promoted love for Cyrilo-Methodian faith traditions by hosting an annual pilgrimage around the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Religious books and pamphlets were published to aid the spiritual needs of Slovak Catholics. The Cleveland Region and Western Region of the Federation sponsored other religious programs to encourage interest in the work of the organization.

Following the Second World War, the Slovak Catholic Federation raised more than \$300,000 for Slovak refugees. The Reverend Monsignor Joseph A. Kushner of Donora, Pennsylvania became the president of the Federation at the thirty-second convention in 1949.

During the Holy Year of 1950, the leaders of the Federation again sponsored a pilgrimage to Rome. When they discovered that the grave of Saint Cyril in the Basilica of Saint Clement needed to be repaired, the Federation raised funds to restore the altar over Saint Cyril's tomb in the basilica. On June 5, 1952 the new altar, with the Latin inscription translated: "Built by the sons and daughters of the Slovak nation", was solemnly blessed and dedicated.

In the 1950's, the Federation faced its greatest challenge when the communist government of Czecho-Slovakia began its persecution of the Church. Funds were raised to support the work of the Pontifical Nepomucene College in Rome. The need for a Slovak seminary in Rome was evident and such a project depended upon the strong support of the Slovak Catholic community in the United States because communist domination in Slovakia hampered the faithful in Slovakia to promote this noble endeavor.

The Reverend Monsignor Clement M. Mlynarovič of Valparaiso, Indiana, a prolific writer and author, served as president of the Federation during the challenging years in the 1950's and early 1960's. Providence would have it that the episcopal ordination of the Most Reverend Andrew G. Grutka in 1957 as Bishop of Gary, Indiana would open a new chapter in the life of the Slovak Catholic Federation.

The fortieth national convention of the Slovak Catholic Federation was held in Gary, Indiana, May 13-14, 1959. It was the first convention held in the see-city of the first American ordinary of Slovak ancestry, the Most Reverend Andrew G. Grutka. This was Bishop Grutka's first participation at a convention of the Slovak Catholic Federation since his episcopal ordination. At this convention, Bishop Grutka was named Protector of the Slovak Catholic Federation. Upon his recommendation, the convention delegates established a drive to erect statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius on the facade of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. which was nearing completion and would be the nation's largest Catholic church. The drive, spearheaded by the Federation's Eastern Region, raised sufficient funds for these statues and the brother saints, who are the Apostles of the Slavs were placed on the facade of the left transept of the shrine in time for its dedication on November 20, 1959.

At a public audience at Castel Gandolfo in 1958 His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, acknowledged the work of the Federation in assisting Slovak seminarians. Both His Eminence, Joseph Cardinal Pizzard and His Eminence, Eugene Cardinal Tisserant requested that the Federation continue to assist Slovak seminarians at the Nepomucene College and to promote the construction of the proposed Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome. The Federation, under the leadership of Bishop Grutka, who became its episcopal moderator, inaugurated a drive to raise funds for the new Slovak Institute which would include a seminary and publishing house.

Under Monsignor Mlynarovič's capable leadership, the Federation responded with its full support for the Slovak Institute project. With Bishop Grutka as chairperson of the fund-raising drive, American Catholics responded with traditional generosity and concern for the spiritual needs of Slovaks in their ancestral homeland. The Benedictine Abbey of Saint Andrew Svorad in Cleveland, Ohio contributed \$50,000 for this project. Its superior Abbot Theodore G. Kojis, OSB, and his successors, Abbot Jerome M. Koval and Abbot Roger W. Gries have given strong support over the years to the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation. The Slovak fraternal societies, affiliated with the Federation, followed suit and raised the initial funds needed for the project. The First Catholic Slovak Union of the USA and Canada was the first to respond with a contribution of \$100,000 followed by the Slovak Catholic Sokol's contribution of \$50,000, the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association contributed \$100,000; and finally, the Ladies

Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union's contribution of \$50,000. The various regions of the Federation initiated pilgrimages and raised funds for the new Slovak Institute.

During these years, two Slovak priests traveled from Rome to promote the need for the Slovak Institute among our parishes and organizations. The late Reverend Monsignor Štefan Nahálka, who was to become the first rector of the Slovak Institute, and the Reverend Monsignor Jozef Tomko began their association with the Federation and made frequent visits to the United States to solicit support for the project.

On September 15, 1963, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, patroness of Slovakia, the Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius became a reality when it was solemnly blessed and dedicated by His Eminence, Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of the College of Cardinals, in the presence of a large delegation of Slovak Catholics from America. It was a fitting event to conclude the observance of the eleventh centenary year of the evangelization of Saints Cyril and Methodius among the Slovaks. During a special papal audience with the group led by the Most Reverend Andrew G. Grutka and the Reverend Monsignor Mlynarovič, His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, lauded the work of the Slovak Catholics in America under the banner of the Slovak Catholic Federation and prayed that the new Slovak Institute would be the spiritual center of the Slovak nation in the Eternal City, Rome.

Through the continuous, generous support of the Federation, the work of the Slovak Institute blossomed and flowered providing much needed religious books for the faithful in Slovakia. Over the years, more than three million religious books would be published by the Slovak Institute and distributed to Slovaks both in Slovakia and in other parts of the world.

Following the dedication of the Slovak Institute in Rome, Monsignor Mlynarovič resigned the presidency of the Federation and the Reverend Monsignor Joseph S. Altany of Munhall, Pennsylvania, became its president on November 1, 1963. During Monsignor Altany's presidency, various programs were inaugurated to interest the youth of Slovak ancestry. Youth conferences were held in conjunction with the Federation's conventions and a national youth conference was held in Washington, D.C. in 1970.

In Toronto and Ontario, Canada, in May 1973, at the Federation's first convention outside the United States, it was decided to promote its work among Canadian Catholics of Slovak ancestry as well. It was at this convention that the delegates elected the Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, chancellor of the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan as the Federation's next president. During Father Adamec's presidency, programs to strengthen the role of the Federation among Slovak Catholics were inaugurated. The annual Slovak Catholic Federation Appeal was established and promoted. A collection of funds was taken up around the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Slovak parishes and earmarked to support the Slovak Institute in Rome.

Mother M. Valeria Romanchek, SS.C.M. the eighth Superior General of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius was the founder of the Conference of Slovak Religious which was established as a component of the Slovak Catholic Federation. It was comprised of ten communities of men and women in the United States and Canada with Slovak roots. The presidents, secretaries, and chaplains of the affiliated Slovak Catholic fraternal societies were

included as members of the Federation's Executive Board. Pastoral conferences were hosted by several of the Federation's regions during these years. The Slovak Catholic Federation took an active part in the American Bicentennial celebrations in Detroit, Michigan and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Through the efforts of the Federation's activists in 1976 a picture of Saints Cyril and Methodius was used on the cover of the January, J.S. Paluch missalette. The Federation played an important part in promoting Slovak Catholic participation in the International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and sent delegates to the first Call to Action convention in Detroit, Michigan.

A noteworthy event took place on September 15, 1979, as a revered friend of the Federation, the Reverend Monsignor Jozef Tomko, who had been closely affiliated with the work of the Slovak Institute, received episcopal ordination from Pope John Paul II, in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican. Archbishop Tomko had been named secretary of the Synod of Bishops, a new ecclesiastical institution established by Pope Paul VI in 1965. The Federation sponsored a pilgrimage to Rome for the historic event.

In April 1985, the Federation celebrated its fifty-first convention in Allentown, Pennsylvania. A special highlight of the event was the presence of His Excellency, Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio. It was the first time that the Holy Father's personal representative in the United States participated in a convention of the Federation. The Pro-Nuncio was honored at a dinner hosted by the Federation. He later served as the principal celebrant of a special pan-Slavic liturgy commemorating the eleventh centenary of the death of Saint Methodius at Saint Catherine of Siena Cathedral in Allentown.

A history-making event also highlighted the convention. On the morning of April 24, 1985 Bishop Grutka received a call from Rome indicating that Pope John Paul II had elevated Archbishop Tomko to the College of Cardinals and appointed him Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The long-standing desire of Slovaks to have their own cardinal finally became a reality. The fact that the new cardinal was a close friend of the Federation added to the joy of the appointment. Cardinal Tomko was the first Slovak cardinal created in the twentieth century. The Federation led a pilgrimage to Rome for the Consistory of Cardinals held on May 25, 1985. Cardinal Tomko's many Federation friends and collaborators over the years rejoiced with him as he received "the red hat" and began his new ministry as prefect of the missionary arm of the Church. The "red pope," as the prefect of this congregation is traditionally known, appealed to his Slovak friends in America to assist him in his new role. The Federation responded appropriately as it organized the Cardinal Tomko Mission Fund to raise monies to build churches in mission lands. The Slovak fraternal societies likewise supported Cardinal Tomko's plea and continue to support the work of evangelization in the best traditions of the Cyrilo-Methodian heritage of faith.

Another memorable outcome of the 1985 convention was the establishment of the Federation's newest chapter in the Allentown Diocese. The Jozef Cardinal Tomko Chapter was formally established with great enthusiasm in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania and has, since its inception, contributed much to the vitality of the Slovak Catholic Federation.

In November 1985, the Federation led another pilgrimage to Rome to commemorate the eleventh centenary of the death of Saint Methodius. As part of the celebrations, the Slovak Catholic Federation published a book titled, **Saints Cyril and Methodius Among the Slovaks.**

After the fifty-first convention, at the suggestion of the late Reverend John J Spitzkovsky of Chicago, Illinois, then spiritual director of the Federation, a new program was established to assist Slovak seminarians. Slovak American priests were asked to contribute one hundred dollars annually to support Slovak seminarians in Rome. This group called itself “The Conference of Slovak Clergy.” It provides mutual support among American priests and deacons of Slovak ancestry while promoting the work of the Federation. Two representatives of the Conference serve as members of the Federation’s Executive Board.

On April 20, 1986, the Federation observed its seventy-fifth anniversary with a gala celebration in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Heading the list of dignitaries was His Eminence, Jozef Cardinal Tomko, and a number of American bishops also participated in this great anniversary to honor the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation.

The president of the Federation, the Reverend Monsignor Joseph V. Adamec, received episcopal ordination from Jozef Cardinal Tomko and was installed as the seventh bishop of the Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania Diocese on May 20, 1987. It was the first time in the history of the Federation that its president had been named a bishop. Bishop Adamec continued his work as president until July of that year.

Following the resignation of the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec as president of the Slovak Catholic Federation, the first executive vice president, the Reverend Monsignor Edward M. Matash of Bayonne, New Jersey assumed the office of president.

In the fall of 1988, the Slovak Catholic Federation under the leadership of Monsignor Matash organized a pilgrimage to Rome to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius. It was the Slovak Catholic Federation which organized the drive to raise funds to erect the *Ustav* as it is known in Slovak in the late 1950s. Bishop Joseph V. Adamec was principal celebrant of the special liturgy in Slovak at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on September 29. Pope John Paul II received the participants in a special audience on October 1 and commended the American Slovak community for its loyal support given to the Slovak Institute from its inception. The Holy Father recalled his personal visit there in 1981. On Sunday, October 2, Jozef Cardinal Tomko was the principal celebrant and homilist at the outdoor liturgy celebrated on the grounds of the Slovak Institute.

With the fall of communism in 1989, a new chapter began in the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation. As in previous years, the Slovak Catholic community in the United States and Canada met the challenge of trying to assist the Church in Slovakia as it emerged after years of communist oppression. For more than four decades, the church in Slovakia suffered greatly. Many of the bishops were imprisoned and a number of Catholics died there. Most of the

seminaries were closed and religious communities of men and women were abolished. The Slovak Catholic press was almost non-existent.

During the ensuing years, the Federation continued its pastoral work promoting closer contact with the Church of Slovakia. The long-standing desire to host a pilgrimage to Slovakia finally came about when the communist government of Czecho-Slovakia gave permission to receive such a pilgrimage of the Slovak Catholic Federation in September of 1990. A total of one hundred sixty Slovak Catholics from America traveled with the leadership of the Slovak Catholic Federation visiting all the dioceses in Slovakia.

The Saint Adalbert Society (Spolok Svätého Vojtecha), which had close links with the Federation in the early years of this century, was now in need of support. The Federation's response was as determined as ever. The Slovak Church Fund was established by the Federation with an office in Danville, Pennsylvania. Funds from the annual appeal of the Federation were earmarked for support of the Church in Slovakia and were channeled to each bishop in Slovakia to support the most pressing needs of the Church. Seminaries were reestablished and monies were used to support religious communities of men and women as well.

On January 1, 1993, following the peaceful breakup of the former Czecho-Slovakia, Slovakia declared its independence. It was a long-awaited occasion which was welcomed with rejoicing for Slovaks both at home and throughout the world. The fifty-third national convention was held in Youngstown, Ohio and welcomed the president of the Bishops Conference of Slovakia, the Most Reverend Rudolf Baláž as its guest of honor. The fifty-third convention elected the Reverend Monsignor Thomas V. Banick, S.T.D., a priest of the Diocese of Scranton, as the new national president of the Slovak Catholic Federation. Monsignor Banick brought to the office of president exemplary priestly credentials which included serving as the vice rector of the North American College in Rome. It was at the fifty-third national convention that the new Youngstown Region was established, much to the joy of the American Slovak community residing in the Mahoning Valley of northeastern Ohio.

During Monsignor Banick's tenure as national president, the eighty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Slovak Catholic Federation was observed in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. On Sunday, October 13, 1996 a Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, where the Federation was founded in 1911 under the leadership of its pastor, the Reverend Joseph Murgaš. Three bishops came from Slovakia to help observe the historic occasion. Principal celebrant of the festive liturgy was the Most Reverend Ján Sokol, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bratislava-Trnava. Concelebrants included the Most Reverend Andrej Imrich, auxiliary bishop of Spiš and the Most Reverend Bernard Bober, auxiliary bishop of Košice. It was the first time since the fall of Communism in Slovakia that so many of its bishops were able to come to the United States. A festive banquet followed the liturgy at the Genetti Convention Center with more than six hundred guests in attendance. A highlight of the banquet program was the presentation of Papal honors by Monsignor Thomas V. Banick. Justine Wesnak of Allentown, Pennsylvania and Daniel F. Tanzone of Yonkers, New York, were awarded the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for the Church and the Pontiff) cross by Pope John Paul II. Each is known and respected for their dedication to the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation. Following the eighty-fifth anniversary celebration, Monsignor Banick had the

opportunity to escort the visiting Slovak bishops on a tour of several historic American sites located in the northeast.

The fifty-fourth convention of the Federation was convened at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in 1996 in conjunction with the eighty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Federation. Among the guests present for the national convention were the Most Reverend Ján Sokol, archbishop of Bratislava-Trnava, the Most Reverend Bernard Bober, auxiliary bishop of Košice, the Most Reverend Andrej Imrich, auxiliary bishop of Spiš, and the Reverend Monsignor Štefan Vrabec, rector of the College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome. The cardinal of the diocese of Nitra and the Eastern rite bishop of Prešov also sent priest representatives. It was a convention with an historical moment to have a number of distinguished clergy from the Slovak Republic, in addition to the rector of the Slovak Institute in Rome. The delegates elected the Reverend Peter M. Polando of Youngstown, Ohio as president of the Slovak Catholic Federation for the next four years.

With Slovakia declaring its independence and grappling with western concepts and ideologies, new challenges faced the Church of Slovakia. With seminaries renovated or erected, religious houses and local churches had to be built or restored. The Church in Slovakia encountered an influx of vocations to the religious life and the need for the laity to renew their role within the life of the Church became apparent.

The Slovak Church Fund continued to receive generous donations and the Federation was able to assist in establishing a new Discalced Carmelite monastery in Košice, help in the repairs and building of the children's home in Ružomberok sponsored by the School Sisters of Saint Francis, and revitalize the library at Saint Francis Xavier Seminary in Banská Bystrica. In addition, monies were made available to the Spolok Svateho Vojtecha for the printing of the Church's new catechism in Slovak and toward construction of a new church structure in Tajov, Slovakia, the birthplace of the Federation's founder, the Reverend Jozef Murgaš. In 1999, the Executive Board of the Federation voted that fifteen percent of the annual appeal which was supported by two hundred thirty-three Slovak ethnic parishes around the United States and Canada be given to the seven religious communities represented on the Board to their respective orders in the Slovak Republic.

The Slovak Catholic Federation's tradition of being a prayerful federating body for Catholics of Slovak descent in the United States remains an integral force in its existence. Responding to Pope John Paul's II call for spiritual preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, the Federation sponsored pilgrimages to significant places which are held close to member's hearts: Rome and the Pontifical College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1998; Danville, Pennsylvania and the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1999; and Washington, D.C., and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in the Jubilee Year 2000. At the request of the Conference of Slovak Religious, holy cards depicting the images of Saints Cyril and Methodius with a prayer for a renewed evangelization were printed both in English and in Slovak and distributed in the United States and the Slovak Republic.

The endeared friend of the Federation, His Eminence, Jozef Cardinal Tomko, celebrated his fiftieth anniversary of ordination to the priesthood in 1999. Festivities commemorating this

event were held both in the Eternal City, Rome and in his home archdiocese of Košice, Slovakia. A delegation of priests, headed by the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, traveled to Rome to congratulate the Cardinal, to celebrate Holy Mass with him, and to convey, on behalf of the members of the Federation, their affection for and joy with him.

The fifty-fifth National Convention of the Slovak Catholic Federation was held in Yonkers, New York, during the Great Jubilee Year of 2000. The convention sessions were held October 28-31, 2000. The highlight of the convention was the concelebrated Pontifical Liturgy in Most Holy Trinity Church. The Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania and the Episcopal Moderator for the Federation was the principal celebrant. Also participating in the liturgy were The Most Reverend František Tondra, bishop of Spiš and president of the Bishop's Conference of Slovakia, Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Basil Losten of Stamford, Connecticut, Abbot Roger W. Gries, O.S.B. of Cleveland, Ohio and The Reverend Monsignor František Novajovský, rector of the Pontifical Slovak College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome. Reverend Andrew S. Hvozdic, the National Chaplain of the Federation, delivered the homily for the liturgy. In addition to the representation of distinguished clergy, more than twenty-five priests of Slovak ancestry from across the country concelebrated the liturgy. Afterward, more than three hundred delegates and guests enjoyed a festive banquet at the Polish Community Center. During this convention, the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla of Scranton, Pennsylvania, was elected as the Federation's national president with Dolores M. Evanko, of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, elected to serve as national secretary-treasurer.

2001 was an important year in the life of the Slovak Catholic Federation. Joy resounded throughout the organization when it was announced that His Holiness, John Paul II, had elevated Abbot Roger W. Gries, O.S.B., of Cleveland, Ohio, a long-time activist within the Federation, to the office of bishop. Following his episcopal ordination on June 7, 2001 in Saint John's Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio, Bishop Gries was named the Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland as well as Titular Bishop of Praesidium.

With the new appointment and accompanying duties of Bishop Gries, the monks of Saint Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio found themselves needing to elect a new superior. On June 8, 2001, The Reverend Clement L. Zeleznik, O.S.B. was elected the fifth Abbot of the abbey. The abbatial blessing took place on September 8, 2001 and was presided over by The Most Reverend Roger, W. Gries, O.S.B., Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland, Ohio. With this transition, Saint Andrew Svorad Abbey's long association with the Slovak Catholic Federation continued with the enthusiastic support of Abbot Clement.

On September 30, 2001, the Slovak Catholic Federation commemorated its ninetieth anniversary with a celebratory religious and social program. A concelebrated Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving was held in Saint John the Baptist Church in Taylor, Pennsylvania, whose pastor was The Reverend Philip A. Altavilla, also the national president of the Federation. The Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, bishop of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania was the principal celebrant and homilist at this special liturgy. In addition to Bishop Adamec, the celebration was blessed by the presence of Abbot Clement L. Zeleznik, O.S.B. of the Saint Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey, and twenty-one invited priests of Slovak ancestry.

Following the celebration of the Eucharist, a festive banquet, attended by more than two hundred fifty guests, was held at the Clarion Hotel in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The program at the dinner consisted of authentic Slovak dancing and singing and an address given by The Reverend Charles P. Connor, Ph.D., a noted Catholic historian and priest of the Diocese of Scranton. Along with a historical perspective on our faith and its traditions, the evening included an opportunity to honor four individuals for their efforts within the American Slovak Catholic community. Those being recognized for their contributions were: The Reverend Monsignor Francis J. Beeda, S.T. L., pastor of the oldest Slovak church in the United States, Saint Joseph's Parish in Hazleton, Pennsylvania; Gertrude V. "Trudy" Check-Tuhy of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, a highly esteemed musician, vocalist and Slovak cultural activist; The Reverend Monsignor Peter M. Polando of Youngstown, Ohio, the immediate past president of the Federation; and Bernadette J. Demechko, also of Youngstown, Ohio, the past national secretary-treasurer of the Federation.

The year following the anniversary liturgy, on September 15, 2002, on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, patroness of the Slovak people, the Federation hosted a pilgrimage to Villa Sacred Heart, the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania. This journey of faith afforded the pilgrims an opportunity to take part in special devotions and various presentations. The highlight of the event was the celebration of the Pontifical Liturgy in the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius with The Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania as the principal celebrant and homilist.

On February 22, 2003, the people of Slovak heritage were once again blessed with the episcopal ordination of The Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer, the sixth American bishop of Slovak ancestry and formerly a priest in the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania. With his installation in the Cathedral of Christ the King in Lexington, Kentucky, Bishop Gainer now became the second bishop of the Diocese of Lexington.

Also in February of 2003, the twenty-fifth Slovak Catholic Federation Saints Cyril and Methodius Appeal was taken up in parishes of Slovak heritage. This particular year marked a quarter of a century that this appeal has been taking place to support the ministry of the Pontifical Slovak College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome as well as the religious communities of men and women in Slovakia.

On September 6, 2003, the Slovak Catholic Federation hosted a pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. More than seven hundred fifty pilgrims from various parts of the United States journeyed to our nation's capital to participate in the pilgrimage in honor of Our Mother of Sorrows, patroness of Slovakia. The Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec was principal celebrant of the pilgrimage liturgy and blessed the newly restored Chapel of Our Mother of Sorrows, patroness of Slovakia. The chapel was a gift of the First Catholic Slovak Union in 1965. Addressing the pilgrims was the Archbishop of Washington, Theodore Cardinal W. McCarrick and Slovakia's Ambassador to the United States, Rastislav Káčer. Also participating in the liturgy were Bishop David A. Zubik of Green Bay, Wisconsin, Bishop John R. Gaydos of Jefferson City, Missouri and Abbot Clement L. Zeleznik, O.S. B. of Cleveland, Ohio.

Pioneer anthropologist, scholar and author, the Reverend Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D., died of heart failure on March 22, 2005 in Techny, Illinois. He was eighty six years of age. He was an internationally known scholar in the field of missiological anthropology, which applies anthropology to Christian mission, and was an innovative exponent of priestly ministry in the post Vatican II Church. He served as the founding executive director of CARA, the Washington-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Born of Slovak immigrant parents in Joliet, Illinois, he was raised in Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish there.

Historic Saint Joseph's Parish in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, hosted the fifty-sixth National Convention, April 17-20, 2005. Established in 1882, Saint Joseph's Church is the oldest Slovak parish in the United States. It is considered the mother church of nearly three hundred Slovak Roman Catholic parishes founded in the United States.

The highlight of the convention was the pontifical concelebrated liturgy celebrated in Saint Joseph's Church on Sunday, April 17, 2005. The pastor of Saint Joseph's parish, the Reverend Monsignor Francis J. Beeda, S.T.L., a long-time promoter of the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation, welcomed the delegates and guests in attendance. The Principal celebrant of the liturgy was the Episcopal Moderator of the Slovak Catholic Federation, the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Concelebrants included the Most Reverend John M. Dougherty, Auxiliary Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania, the Right Reverend Clement Zeleznik, O.S.B., Abbot of St. Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio and twenty priests. The homilist was the national chaplain, the Reverend Thomas Derzack.

The convention banquet followed at Genetti's Best Western Hotel in Hazleton, Pennsylvania with more than three hundred people in attendance. Honored at the banquet were the Reverend John L. Fabian, a retired priest of the Scranton Diocese; Sister M. Mercedes Voytko, SS.C.M., director of Jankola Library and Slovak Archives in Danville, Pennsylvania along with her sister, Catherine Voytko, her faithful collaborator; and Joseph and Anna Biros. A posthumous award was granted to Rita M. Simalchik, the former president of the Ladies Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union.

During the fifty-sixth convention, the delegates had the opportunity to view an exhibit in King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania commemorating the accomplishments of Reverend Joseph Murgaš, the founder of the Slovak Catholic Federation. The evening festivities began with Evening Prayer led by Bishop Joseph V. Adamec in the Chapel of Christ the King in the College and the dietary staff at King's College provided a delicious meal for the delegates. The convention delegates reelected the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla as national president and Dolores M. Evanko as national secretary-treasurer.

On July 9, 2005, the Slovak Catholic Sokol observed its centennial with an elaborate religious and cultural celebration in Passaic, New Jersey, the city of its birth. Guest of honor at the celebration was His Eminence, Jozef Cardinal Tomko, retired Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome. The jubilee began with a memorial service presided over by Cardinal Tomko at Saint Mary's Cemetery in Saddle Brook, New Jersey, where the founders of the Slovak Catholic Sokol are buried. Later that afternoon, Cardinal Tomko was

principal celebrant and homilist during the Pontifical concelebrated liturgy in Saint Mary of the Assumption Church in Passaic, New Jersey where the Slovak Catholic Sokol was founded in 1905. Bishop Joseph V. Adamec along with Bishop Arthur J. Serrateli of Paterson, New Jersey, and Bishop Frank J. Rodimer, retired bishop of Paterson as well as twenty priests concelebrated the centennial anniversary liturgy. Following the liturgy, Cardinal Tomko blessed and unveiled a special plaque at the Sokol home office where an open house was held in observance of the organization's centennial. The evening concluded with a gala banquet at the Marriott Hotel in Saddle Brook, New Jersey. The Slovak Catholic Sokol has enjoyed continuous membership in the Slovak Catholic Federation for nearly nine decades.

The Milwaukee area Slovak community hosted its ninetieth annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians at Holy Hill in Hubertus, Wisconsin, on Labor Day, September 5, 2005. The annual tradition of pilgrimage to the monastery of the Discalced Carmelites began in 1915 by the faithful people of Saint Stephen the Martyr Parish in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

On September 24, 2005, Daniel F. Tanzone of Yonkers, New York, a Slovak Catholic Federation activist and editor of the Slovak Catholic Sokol, was solemnly invested as a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem by His Eminence, Edward M. Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York, during a liturgy celebrated at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

On October 2, 2005, the annual Slovak Pastoral Seminar was held at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Casimir in Chicago, Illinois. The annual seminar, sponsored by the Midwest Region of the Slovak Catholic Federation, has been a Chicago land tradition since 1990.

On November 1, 2005, the Slovak Heritage Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania published a new book on Slovak culture and heritage titled **Folk Customs and Traditions of Slovakia**.

On March 6, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI awarded the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" (for the Church and the Pontiff) medal to the National President of the Slovak Catholic Federation, the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla. Bishop Joseph V. Adamec presented the Papal honor to Father Altavilla during a dinner of the Executive Board of the Slovak Catholic Federation held at Saint Matthias Parish in Youngstown, Ohio.

On June 1, 2006, Archbishop Dominick Hrušovský celebrated his eightieth birthday in Rome, Italy. Archbishop Hrušovský served as the rector of the Pontifical Slovak College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome from 1975 until 1992. Pope John Paul II named him a bishop to serve Slovaks residing outside Slovakia and personally ordained him to the episcopacy on January 6, 1983, in St. Peter's Basilica. In 1996, he was given the personal title of Archbishop and named Papal Nuncio to Belarus. Archbishop Hrušovský has enjoyed a close association with the Slovak Catholic Federation. He retired in 2001.

On June 6, 2006, the Reverend Monsignor Michael A. Komar, retired pastor of Holy Family Parish in Linden, New Jersey, celebrated the seventieth anniversary of his priestly ordination.

On June 11, 2006, the Reverend Monsignor Edward M. Matash, pastor of Saint Joseph's Parish in Bayonne, New Jersey, observed the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination. Monsignor Matash, pastor of the oldest Slovak parish in the state of New Jersey, served as national president of the Slovak Catholic Federation from July 1987 to 1989.

On September 20, 2006, a special plaque honoring the Reverend Joseph Murgaš, founder of the Slovak Catholic Federation and pioneer in wireless telegraphy, was unveiled at the main Post Office in Bratislava, Slovakia. Monsignor Francis J. Beeda, S.T.L., a member of the Executive Board of the Slovak Catholic Federation of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, who spearheaded the drive for funds for the plaque, spoke during the dedication. Monsignor Beeda was a successor of Father Murgaš, serving as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, from 1974 to 1985.

On September 30, 2006, Thomas M. Hricik, president of the First Catholic Slovak Union of the United States and Canada, and his wife, Geraldine Hricik of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, were solemnly invested as Knight and Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem by the Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell, Archbishop of Hartford, Connecticut during a liturgy at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Thomas and Geraldine Hricik, who have been active in the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation for many years, were recommended for the honors by the Most Reverend Lawrence M. Brandt, Bishop of Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

On November 1, 2006, the president of the Slovak Catholic Federation, the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla announced the appointment of Sister Bernadette Marie Ondus, SS.C.M., as the new editor of *Dobrý Pastier (The Good Shepherd)*, the organization's annual publication. She succeeded Sister M. Anne Kremenik, V.S.C., who served as editor for the previous fifteen years. The publication had its origins in 1919 when its first editor was the Reverend Stephen J. Krasula of New York City.

The new year of 2007 brought joyous news for the newly established Benedictine presence in Slovakia. Benedictine monasteries flourished in what today is Slovakia as early as the ninth century. Among the great Benedictines of the period, there was Saint Andrew Svorad. However, following the Turkish invasions and the Protestant Reformation, by the seventeenth century Benedictines had disappeared from the territory. When the Slovak Benedictines established their community in Cleveland in 1922, they chose Saint Andrew Svorad as their patron. It was always their dream of one day helping to re-establish a Benedictine presence in Slovakia. Following the fall of communism in Slovakia, a group of young men established a Benedictine monastery in Bacurov, a village in central Slovakia. Through the generosity of Saint Andrew Svorad Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio Abbot Clement Zeleznik, O.S.B., traveled to Bacurov to visit the new foundation and present funds which they raised for this mission. Abbot Clement also gave the Slovak Catholic Federation's very generous monetary gift to the new Slovak Benedictine's foundation.

Our long-time friend of the Slovak Catholic Federation, Jozef Cardinal Tomko recently authored an outstanding book **On Missionary Roads** in which he describes his first hand experience of missionary work as it takes place today all over the world. The text, originally written in Slovak and translated into other languages, had finally been translated into English in March 2007. Published by Ignatius Press, it was now available in the United States for the first time. In his book, Cardinal Tomko shares his account of the many missionary journeys he made from 1985 until his retirement in 2001 as head of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome, the congregation which oversees the missionary activity of the Church.

On April 9, 2007, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Papal Nuncio in the United States, announced that Pope Benedict XVI named Monsignor Peter A. Libasci, 55, as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York. One of the largest dioceses in the United States, the Rockville Centre Diocese covers all of Long Island. Bishop Libasci's maternal grandparents were natives of a village outside of Košice in eastern Slovakia. He was ordained a bishop at the Cathedral of Saint Agnes in Rockville Centre on June 1, 2007.

On May 20, 2007, the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Episcopal Moderator of the Slovak Catholic Federation, marked the twentieth anniversary of his episcopal ordination with a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Before Bishop Adamec was elevated to the episcopacy by Pope John Paul II and appointed the seventh Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in March 1987, he served a total of fourteen years as national president of the Slovak Catholic Federation.

On June 11, 2007, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Papal Nuncio to the United States, announced that Pope Benedict XVI had appointed the Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Bishop of Knoxville, Tennessee, as the fourth Archbishop of Louisville, Kentucky. Archbishop Kurtz, 60, a native of Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, where he was raised in the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Slovak parish, became the first American Archbishop of Slovak ancestry. His paternal grandparents were natives of a village outside Košice in eastern Slovakia.

On July 5, 2007, Bishop Joseph V. Adamec was invited to be the principal celebrant and homilist at the national celebration honoring Saints Cyril and Methodius in Nitra, Slovakia. The outdoor liturgy in front of the Cathedral-Basilica of Saint Emeram was attended by thousands of the faithful. Concelebrating with Bishop Joseph were Slovakia's two cardinals and most of its bishops. It was the first time that an American bishop of Slovak ancestry was invited to preside at the national observance honoring Saints Cyril and Methodius. In Slovakia, the feast of the brother saints, who are the Apostles of the Slavs, is observed on July 5th. Bishop Joseph was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Nitra in 1960. Nitra established in 880 A.D., is not only the oldest diocese in Slovakia, but the oldest on the territory of the western Slavs.

On July 10, 2007, the Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino, Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania appointed the president of the Slovak Catholic Federation, the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla as Episcopal Vicar of the Northern Pastoral Region of the Scranton Diocese. Father Philip served as one of four Episcopal Vicars in the diocese.

On July 17, 2007, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Papal Nuncio in the United States, announced that Pope Benedict XVI appointed the Most Reverend David A. Zubik, Bishop of Green Bay, Wisconsin, as the twelfth Bishop of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A native of Sewickly, a borough outside of Ambridge, Pennsylvania, Bishop David's maternal grandparents were natives of eastern Slovakia. Bishop David, 58, was named to head one of the largest and most important American dioceses which is home to a large community of Slovak ancestry. In 1894, Saint Elizabeth's in the flats section of Pittsburgh became the first Slovak parish to be established in the diocese. There were thirty-five additional Slovak parishes founded in the Pittsburgh diocese.

On August 15, 2007, Edward M. Cardinal Egan of the Archdiocese of New York presided at a liturgy in the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Tappan, New York, officially establishing the New York Congregation Oratory of Saint Philip Neri. The Oratory is headed by the Very Reverend George J. Torok, C.O., and includes three priests from the Archdiocese of Košice in Slovakia. The Oratory priests minister to the spiritual needs of the people speaking Slovak who live in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area.

On September 22, 2007, the Slovak Catholic Federation hosted its traditional pilgrimage and spiritual conference at Villa Sacred Heart, the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania. Bishop Joseph V. Adamec was principal celebrant of the pilgrimage liturgy celebrated in the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

On September 30, 2007, The Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino, Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving in Saint Joseph's Church in Hazleton, Pennsylvania in observance of the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the parish which was the first Slovak parish in the United States established in 1882. Reverend Monsignor Francis J. Beeda, S.T.L., had served as its pastor.

History was made in the American Slovak community on November 9, 2007 when Vincent Obsitnik of Peachtree, Georgia, was sworn in at ceremonies held at the United States Department of State in Washington, D.C., as the new United States Ambassador to Slovakia. A native of Morovany in eastern Slovakia, Ambassador Obsitnik is the first American Slovak to serve as a United States Ambassador.

In February 2008, the Reverend Andrew S. Hvozovic, Slovak Catholic Federation National First Vice President, announced the annual Saints Cyril and Methodius Appeal which marked its thirtieth anniversary. Father Hvozovic, Appeal Director, announced that funds raised in the appeal had exceeded the two million dollar mark. Monies raised in the appeal held in parishes of Slovak heritage in the United States and Canada are earmarked for the support of the Pontifical Slovak College of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome, as well as religious communities of women and men in Slovakia, which share a counterpart with United States communities affiliated with the Conference of Slovak Religious and the Slovak Catholic Federation in the United States.

On February 12, 2008, the Most Reverend Edward P. Cullen, Bishop of Allentown, Pennsylvania announced that Pope Benedict XVI honored, as a Chaplain of His Holiness with the title of Monsignor, the Reverend Thomas A. Derzack, who is the national chaplain of the Slovak Catholic Federation and pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Whitehall, Pennsylvania.

In July 2008, the Jankola Library and Slovak Museum marked its fortieth anniversary in Danville, Pennsylvania. Established by the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1968 as a depository and center of Slovak literature and the arts, it was named for the congregation's founder, the Reverend Matthew Jankola. Sister M. Martina Tybor, SS.C.M., was its first director and served until 1992. Sister M. Mercedes Voytko, SS.C.M., succeeded her and served until 2007. In 2008, Sister M. John Vianney Vranak, SS.C.M., was appointed Jankola Library and Slovak Museum's third director.

On August 29, 2008, the Abbatial Blessing of the Right Reverend Christopher R. Schwartz, O.S.B., took place in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Broadview Heights, Ohio. Abbot Christopher was elected to serve as the sixth superior of St. Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio.

In September 2008, the Ladies Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union marked its one hundred tenth anniversary. Founded in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in 1898, the organization received its charter in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1900 under the title "The Women's Pennsylvania Slovak Roman and Greek Catholic Union." In 1948, the name of the organization was changed to the Ladies Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union. With headquarters in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the organization was among the founders of the Slovak Catholic Federation and has enjoyed continuous membership ever since.

On September 14, 2008, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius inaugurated their centennial year observance with a Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving in the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania, with the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania as principal celebrant. The Reverend Philip A. Altavilla, president of the Slovak Catholic Federation, offered the homily. Founded by the Reverend Matthew Jankola to serve the needs of the children of Slovak immigrants, the congregation received papal approbation on September 11, 1909.

The Youngstown Ohio Chapter of the Slovak Catholic Federation hosted its fifteenth annual Pilgrimage in honor of Our Mother of Sorrows at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, Ohio, on September 14, 2008. The faithful of Slovak ancestry from across northeastern Ohio participated in the annual pilgrimage.

History was made in the American Slovak community on September 17, 2008, when a Mass was celebrated in Slovak for the first time in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Bishop Joseph V. Adamec concelebrated the liturgy with four other American bishops of Slovak ancestry. Joining him at the liturgy were Bishop David A. Zubik of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Bishop Ronald W. Gainer of Lexington, Kentucky; Bishop David R. Choby of Nashville, Tennessee; and Auxiliary Bishop Peter A. Libasci of Rockville Centre, New York. The liturgy was held in conjunction with the biennial meeting of the Conference of Slovak Clergy.

On October 19, 2008, the Slovak community of greater New York gathered in Saint John Nepomucene Church in New York City to participate in a concert dedicated to the musical genius of Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský, one of the most prolific composers of Slovak church music. The concert, hosted by the Slovak American Cultural Center of New York, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death.

On November 15, 2008, the community of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity of Pittsburgh officially merged into the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in Kentucky. The first Vincentian Sisters of Charity arrived in Braddock, Pennsylvania, in 1902 to minister to the educational needs of the children of Slovak immigrants. Over the years, this congregation of religious women played an important role in the educational and religious life of the American Slovak community, especially in western Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The centennial of the birth of Bishop Andrew G. Grutka was observed on November 17, 2008. Born of immigrant Slovak parents in Joliet, Illinois, he was ordained a priest in Rome on December 5, 1933. When Pope Pius XII established a new diocese covering four northwest counties in Indiana, Monsignor Grutka was named its first bishop. He was consecrated and installed as first Bishop of Gary, Indiana on February 25, 1957. He was the first American bishop of Slovak ancestry to be named an ordinary of a diocese. He was active in the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation as its Episcopal Moderator and helped to establish the Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome, where he served as its first Protector. He died on November 11, 1993, just a few days shy of his eighty-fifth birthday.

The fifty-seventh national convention was held in the Lehigh Valley of southeastern Pennsylvania, April 26-28, 2009. Guest of honor at the convention was an esteemed friend of the Slovak Catholic Federation, His Eminence, Jozef Cardinal Tomko, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Cardinal Tomko has been associated with the work of the Federation for more than a half century. Cardinal Tomko was principal celebrant and homilist at the opening convention liturgy celebrated on April 26, 2009 at St. John the Baptist Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Monsignor Robert F. Kozel, pastor of the parish, served as the gracious convention host. A warm welcome was extended by the local ordinary, the Most Reverend. Edward P. Cullen, Bishop of Allentown, Pennsylvania. Also, among the concelebrants were the Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania and the new Abbot of Saint Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio the Right Reverend Christopher Schwartz, O.S.B.

Following the festive liturgy during which Cardinal Tomko bestowed the Apostolic Blessing of Pope Benedict XVI, more than two hundred fifty delegates and guests enjoyed a gala reception and dinner at the Best Western Hotel & Conference Center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. A highlight of the banquet program came as the Reverend Philip A. Altavilla, V.E., national president of the Slovak Catholic Federation announced the bestowal of Papal Honors. Pope Benedict XVI bestowed the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for the Church and the Pontiff) Cross on John and Margaret Ferri of Bethlehem, Pa. This remarkable couple is known and admired throughout the American Slovak community for their promotion of works of charity and benevolence. Father Altavilla was reelected to serve as the national president along with Dolores M. Evanko of Hazleton, Pennsylvania was reelected as national secretary-treasurer.

On June 28, 2009, Jozef Cardinal Tomko served as the Papal envoy of Pope Benedict XVI at the close of the Pauline Year. Cardinal Tomko was one of seven cardinals delegated to represent the Pope at sites associated with the life and mission of Saint Paul. Cardinal Tomko presided over ceremonies in Thessalonica, Greece. Coincidentally, Thessalonica was the birthplace of the Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavs.

The Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius concluded their centennial year observance on September 12, 2009. The Most Reverend. Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was the principal celebrant and homilist at a Mass of Thanksgiving in the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania. This congregation has been associated with the work and ministry of the Slovak Catholic Federation from their earliest years.

Joseph T. Senko who serves as the Slovak Honorary Consul in Pennsylvania and is a well known Catholic layman in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, was named a Knight in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. He was solemnly invested in the robes of the Papal Order at New York's Saint Patrick's Cathedral on September 26, 2009 by His Eminence, Edward M. Cardinal Egan, Grand Prior of the Eastern Lieutenancy of the order and Archbishop-emeritus of New York.

On September 29, 2009, we recalled the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of the Right Reverend Theodore G. Kojis, O.S.B., the second abbot of Saint Andrew Svorad Benedictine Abbey in Cleveland, Ohio. He was born a century ago outside Košice in eastern Slovakia. He came with his parents to the United States and was ordained a Benedictine priest in 1936. He served as abbot of the Cleveland Benedictines from 1946 until 1966. For many years, he was closely associated with the work of the Slovak Catholic Federation.

In the Scranton Diocese of Pennsylvania, following the reorganization of its parishes, Justin Cardinal Rigali, Apostolic Administrator of the see officially named the merged Slovak churches of Saint Joseph and Holy Trinity in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, as the new parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius effective January 3, 2010. The new parish was a result of the merger of the parish of Saint Joseph which is the first Slovak parish established in the United States in 1882 and the Slovak parish of the Holy Trinity founded in 1907. The new name was a tribute to the faith legacy of the Slovaks in the Scranton Diocese as well as an honor recalling the centennial of the ministry of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius which was founded a century ago in the Scranton Diocese. It was the first time an American bishop designated a parish for the Apostles of the Slavs following a diocesan reorganization of churches. The Reverend Richard Cirba had served as pastor of the newly established parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

Numbers of dedicated laity, religious and clergy have labored diligently on behalf of the Slovak Catholic Federation. The Federation has a glorious history which is a source of pride to all American Catholics who cherish their Slovak heritage. As we look forward to celebrating the Centennial of the Slovak Catholic Federation on May 15, 2011 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, we must continue to give witness to our Cyrilo-Methodian heritage of faith.

The situation of Slovak Catholics in America today is far different than that of 1911. Our pioneer Slovak forebears met the challenges of the period. They built numerous churches, schools, and other religious institutions in various parts of the United States and beyond. These parishes bore rich fruit in having preserved the faith of our ancestors and gave the American Church many vocations. The Slovak parishes were a bridge between the old world and the new, nurturing and sustaining the traditions and faith of our ancestors. Our situation in 2010 is very different. Many of our Slovak parishes have been closed or merged. The challenge for today's Catholics of Slovak ancestry is to give witness to our Cyrilo-Methodian heritage of faith wherever we live and in whatever faith community we find ourselves. It is the work of the present generation to promote the purpose of the Federation with the same vigor and vitality which inspired its members during the past ninety years. In this new situation, the Slovak Catholic Federation will continue to address the pastoral needs of American Catholics of Slovak ancestry on the road to the next 100 years.

*(Daniel F. Tanzone of Yonkers, New York, serves as editor of the **Slovak Catholic Falcon** the official publication of the Slovak Catholic Sokol of Passaic, New Jersey. He serves as a Consultor of the Slovak Catholic Federation.)*

**Removed from bottom of page 2; need a clearer historical context**

**When the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was built in Washington, D.C., the Federation's Eastern Region raised funds to erect statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius there.**