
THE YEAR 2000: WHAT WILL IT BE? (1)



I am neither prophet nor seer, I am no Nostradamus or Malachy, I do not use crystal balls or cards, I am just a simple bishop who has absolute trust in the Lord: therefore, your chances are rather slim at knowing more about the year 2000 from me, after reading the following *The Year 2000: What Will It Be?* Any answer given to this question would be a reflection of the type of person we are.

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

I could say, "The year 2000 shall be whatever we want it to be." In saying this I would indicate that we are the ones responsible for our immediate future. If I were not too much of an interventionist or meddler, I could say: "Chances are that the year 2000 will bear a strong resemblance to what we have just been living." And as observers of the national scene we could say, "If present trends continue, the poor will become poorer and the rich richer, with the middle class disappearing more and more, the result being that the gap will widen between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. But we could also say and do better: we could work at making the year 2000 a truly holy one, a jubilee year.

IF I HAD BEEN TOLD

In Jean Harang's book, *D'un coeur émerveillé*, ["A Heart Filled with Wonder"] I read this challenging passage: *"I can't help thinking that my life could have been altogether different, my faith more fervent, my hope more joyous, and my love greater if I had been clearly told that life was not a stone that wears out little by little but shapeless marble which the divine sculptor works at day after day until the precise moment when the completed masterpiece breaks out in splendid perfection; that life is not a spring that loses its tension but a person that is created daily; that life is not a long process of decomposition but one of constant improvement, that each day can bring new light, greater understanding, a broader experience, a purer love, a more quieter joy, that life is not a kind of shading off from white to black, a going from crib netting to funeral pall."*

"If I had been told that life is not a day ending but rather dawn arising, that one is not walking towards the night but rather from light to light towards the dazzling and endless Light, that since the Resurrection time has ceased to be and each new day is given us to become aware of eternity already begun; that each passing day is not time lost but eternity secured; that life is not a dead-end, a blind alley, but Easter Day, an endless road; that life is not wretched but an appreciable sharing in the divine being, that it is a wonderful gift, a limitless gift like everything which is of God, that each hour is a fragment of eternity, that Christ has already raised us up in him, that he abides in us and we in him, that we are with him forever."

And after having written many other paragraphs, Harang concludes: *"Oh! If they had yelled this at me, if they had cried this from the rooftops, I too would have cried, 'Today is the first day of the world!' and I would have better understood that the rising sun is each day the first sun of a new world."* To experience the year 2000 in such a spirit would be like sprouting wings to experience the precious moments that are given us, it would be seeing as God sees, loving as God loves, being filled with wonder as God is filled with wonder.

NOTRE-DAME-DE-PARIS

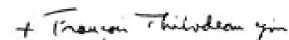
In the more-than-popular musical *Notre-Dame-de-Paris*, in the very first song there is mention of the coming new millennium, and this is done in various ways. If the first verses sing that "The time of cathedrals has come; the world has entered a new millennium, we have tried to reach the stars and write our stories in glass and stone", the last verses declare that "The time of cathedrals is damned ended, the barbarians are at the city's gates, let these pagans in, these vandals, the end of this world is forecast for the year 2000." And throughout the songs there is a special concern for the homeless, those with no papers, the bohemians, the beggars, the exiles, the unloved who are trying to make sense of it all, who beg for the crumbs of love, for witnesses of love. There is even a pagan "Ave Maria" thrown into all that singing. This opera which is beating all records can perhaps inspire our own reflection.

A FULL SCHEDULE

For my part, my schedule for the year 2000 is filling fast with several events and activities: weekly day off, vacation, golfing! All interesting things. The intensive pastoral visitation of the Edmundston Deanery, retreats, scheduled meetings and dates reserved for weddings and confirmations. With the grace of God and the help of my doctor I shall be able to do all this! But one thing I know: that the future is not mine, that even the year 2000 is a gift of God. I do not believe that the end of the world is coming in 2000, I have too much faith in the springtime of the Church, in the springtime of the world, as Pope John Paul II says, to believe that all will come crashing down around us a few months from now. And don't anyone come serve me any dose of the Book of Revelation or private prophecies to frighten me or our people! The Book of Revelation is too much a book of hope in the victory of the Risen One to be read as a horror story.

THE FATHER ALONE

As a matter of fact, if we believe in Jesus, it is the Father alone who knows when the return of Christ will happen, when Scripture will be fulfilled. I would be insane not to be watchful in the night since I know neither the day nor the time of the visitation of the Son of Man. I must do everything as if the world ended today and everything as if it continued tomorrow. It is not mine to determine when the end will be; I am only a steward of the goods given over to my care, and one of these goods is time itself. I hope you prepare well for the year 2000!



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