
THE YEAR 2000: WHAT WILL IT BE? (2)



I want to answer the above question with three quotes on the question of time, one from the poet Khalil Gibran in his book *The Prophet*, and the other two from Pope John Paul II.

TODAY AND TOMORROW

You are familiar with the small book about the Master who ponders aloud different aspects of the world. *And an astronomer said: "Master, speak to us of Time." And he answered: "You would like to measure time, the infinite, and the immeasurable. You would like to adjust your behaviour and even guide the course of your mind according to the hours and the seasons. From time you would make a river along the banks of which you would sit to observe its course. However, the intemporal in you is aware of the intemporality of life. And know that today is but yesterday's memory and tomorrow is today's dream. And what in you sings and contemplates is still attached to the edges of the first moment which scattered the stars across the sky. Who among you feels that his power to love is limitless? And yet, who does not feel this same heart, however limitless, enclosed at the centre of his being, going from one loving thought to another loving thought, from one loving gesture to another loving gesture? And is not time like unto love, indivisible and immovable? But if in your mind you must measure time and seasons, let each season enclose all others, and let today encompass the past with recollection and the future with yearning."*

CATHEDRALS OF LOVE

It is illuminating to recall these lines: our time is so parcelled, so broken up; we parcel it out so much that we risk, to say the least, to forget that time and love are so closely linked that my episcopal motto says it all: *His love is from age to age*. The love of God is present at every moment of our lives; it will remain present at the dawn of the year 2000 and throughout the new millennium. The time of cathedrals is not "damned ended:" we have built cathedrals not of mortar and stone, but of love and kindness where the name of all our brothers and sisters is inscribed. A quote from Pope John Paul II can reveal to us what the year 2000 will be.

BEGINNING AND DISTANCING

"Time is of fundamental importance, in Christianity. The world was created within its dimension, the history of salvation unfolds within it, culminating in the 'fullness of time' in the Incarnation and reaching its end in the glorious return of the Son of God at the end of time. In Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word time becomes a dimension of the Godhead, of God who in himself is eternal. The last hour, the last days have started with the coming of Christ, and with this last hour begins the time of the Church which will last until the Second Coming." And in his Holy Thursday message to the priests, the Pope has deep thoughts on the great dimensions of time: *"If time is always a distancing from the beginning, we could say that it is simultaneously a return to the beginning. And this is of vital importance; as a matter of fact, if time is only a distancing from the beginning and if its final direction, a return to the beginning, is unclear, our whole existence within time would be denied a final direction. It would be deprived of meaning. Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the One who is, who was, and who is to come, has given direction and meaning to the*

passing of man in time. Speaking of himself, He said: 'I have come from the Father into the world. Now I leave the world and return to the Father.' These words are rich in meaning, but they place the year 2000 within proper perspective, regarding time, love, and the Incarnation."

JUBILEE YEAR

What would the year 2000 be like if we made it a truly memorable jubilee year? In point of fact, the year 2000 will be what we make of it, with the grace of God. In the Jewish jubilee tradition, there were three recurring elements, every fifty years: slaves were set free, debts were remitted, and the soil was left fallow. It is up to us to make of the year 2000 a true Jubilee Year, to ensure the most freedom possible to those around us, to secure the remittance of debts for the poor, and to let the earth have its rest. Canada has manifested a certain leadership among the G-7 countries by suggesting that industrialised countries remit the debt of third-world countries as long as the amount owed is used for education and health care. The Development and Peace summer campaign is working in that direction also, and I thank all the organisers and those who signed petitions to that effect. What is being done is more than having just another petition: it is a new way of life that is being inaugurated, new human relations being established between countries and people, and a new partnership developed.

YEAR OF GRACE

If you read the fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel you will read about Jesus announcing his mission: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (4:18-19) This year of grace will continue throughout his life - and it will cost him his life - he will set free those he meets and cancel debts incurred; he will forgive sins, and in his prayer teach others to forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. He shows extreme care for the earth he walks, the work of his hands.

HOLY YEAR

Each day is a holy day, each week is a holy week, and each year can be holy if we remain connected to Jesus Christ and to our brothers and sisters. What of tomorrow? What will the year 2000 be? In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: *"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Do not worry about tomorrow - not even the year 2000 - for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."* (6:25, 32-34) And if the year 2000 were to be the year we really strive for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness... wouldn't it be terrific? We could then sing with Edith Butler: *"One day, one day perhaps the entire world will be a country; I can already see the celebration, on the side of life; hope at our windows, hope that one day perhaps the sun will be able to rise on the side of freedom."* On that day we shall be able to proclaim and sing: Here is a new world, new heavens, behold the Lord is making all things new!

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