

# THE HOLY ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF BOSTON

His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston  
His Grace, Bishop Moses of Roslindale

## ON THE NEW MILLENNIUM

An Encyclical to the Faithful

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

Now that we have entered the third millennium after the incarnation of the eternal Word of God, the Only-begotten of the Unbegotten Father, it is an appropriate time for all of us to reflect seriously on the millennium that has passed and on what awaits us in the years to come, if God so wills that our world continue to exist for a time.

In the millennium that passed, two of the world's greatest Christian empires fell — that of Byzantium in 1453, and the Russian empire in 1917. It may be said that the fall of Russia signaled the end of the Christian era and ushered in the post-Christian era; but with the end of the century that has just passed, we observe that there has already been ushered in an openly *anti*-Christian era in full force, and the beginning of apocalyptic times.

Just a little over one hundred years ago, the final decade of the nineteenth century became known as the "gay 90's." (How different was the connotation of the adjective "gay" in those times!) It was a period where everything looked optimistic, hopeful, bright, reassuring. At the beginning of the twentieth century, everyone foresaw an era of great expectations, a new dawning, another renaissance, because of the great strides in technology, medicine and the sciences. It certainly seemed that by the end of the twentieth century, a paradisaical state would prevail throughout the entire world. Illness, poverty, social inequality would all be overcome, wars would be a thing of the evil past.

For sober Christians at the time, however, there were forebodings of an impending doom, an unprecedented destruction and disaster if society did not stop its headlong rush into unbelief and secularism, but in repentance turn again to Christ our Redeemer, Who alone could provide mankind with lasting joy and well-being. Saint Cosmas of Aitolia, Saint Seraphim of Sarov, Saint John of Kronstadt, and many other Orthodox Saints prophesied and described the events of the twentieth century. Their prophecies and warnings — incomprehensible to the world — went unheeded.

In the non-Christian world, there was only one dissenting voice heard amidst the rising expressions of optimism and euphoria: this one voice was that of a raving madman who died in an insane asylum in 1900. He predicted that by the end of the twentieth century, there would be the total destruction of all values, ethical standards, morals, indeed, of civilization itself — and this by violent means. This, said he, was necessary, for only by means of this destruction, only out of these ruins of civilization could there appear a superman, or a super-human race that could rule mankind. The name of this man was Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

In the euphoria of the time, few — except for a handful of intellectuals — took notice of this German philosopher. Everyone thought his utterances were the ravings of a sick mind. Yet, by the end of the twentieth century, virtually all of his predictions have come to pass, except for one: the appearance of the superman. But now, with the appearance of genetic manipulation and cloning, is it unlikely that even this monster might appear? And that which Hitler and Soviet society failed to achieve might indeed be witnessed by the present generation.

It is true that no one can gainsay the great strides that have been made in the twentieth century in science, medicine, technology, communications and travel. But what was not foreseen in the "gay 90's" of the nineteenth century — and indeed, by all the centuries before — were the strides that would also be made in the means of mass destruction, along with — as we now witness — the complete collapse of all moral and ethical standards. So, at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, what we see is not a paradise, but what has become a virtual hell for untold millions of people. We bring to mind our Saviour's words:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places .... and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake (Matthew 24:6-7, 9).

And there shall be ... distress of nations, with perplexity, ... men's hearts failing them for fear (Luke 21:25-26).

Never before has mankind witnessed the development of such diabolical means of destruction: chemical warheads, bacterial warfare, nuclear bombs — utterly unimagined before our time!

At the beginning of this encyclical, I mentioned that this is not simply the post-Christian era in which we are living: it is an anti-Christian era. Who, indeed, could have imagined a society — from which the demons of paganism had once been exorcised — now promoting the killing of innocents (abortion), defending infanticide, supporting euthanasia, upholding same-sex "marriages", contributing to the promiscuity of the young and teaching sexual perversity in public schools, while the protests and outcries of indignation against these violations of the law of God are labeled "hate speech", or are even forbidden as "politically incorrect", and that these enormities would presently be promoted and legislated in formerly civilized Christian societies!

In the span of a hundred years, the spilling of innocent blood and the destruction of human lives by the hundreds of millions has taken place, and continues throughout the world today through the pandemic of AIDS — which presents a new phenomenon in itself: a politically protected, primarily sexually transmitted disease spread by our world's newly-discovered promiscuity "rights". In Africa, life expectancy has, on the average, dropped from 60-65 years to 35-40 years, thanks chiefly to mankind's new-found freedom from the law of God. Two world wars, endless civil wars, revolutions, and political conflagrations confirm what our Saints have foretold and even what Nietzsche foresaw.

As author R. J. Rummel writes in "Death by Government" (*The Schwarz Report*, April 2001):

In total, during the first eighty-eight years of the twentieth century, almost 170 million men, women and children have been shot, beaten, tortured, knifed, burned, starved, frozen, crushed, or worked to death; buried alive, drowned, hung, bombed, or killed in any other of the myriad ways governments have inflicted death on the unarmed,

helpless citizens and foreigners. The dead could conceivably be nearly 360 million people. It is as though our species has been devastated by a modern Black Plague. And indeed it has, but a Plague of Power, not germs.

We have entered the third millennium witnessing the enslavement, persecution and death of thousands of people in the Sudan, Egypt, the Middle East, the Far East, China and elsewhere, merely because many of these peoples call themselves Christians. One recent newspaper article notes that "Americans thought of the year 2000 as a year of peace; but seven million people worldwide fled their homes to escape the wars;" yet another article laments how "in war-torn Africa, doctors are fighting a losing battle":

Millions of people on this Earth, particularly refugees and displaced persons in Africa, have begun the new millennium living in conditions...similar to those that existed *a full millennium earlier* — in huts or exposed to the elements, without adequate clothing, sanitation, or health care, preyed upon by their fellow men, and effectively unprotected by the rule of law.

*(The Boston Globe, February 20, 2001)*

Some 140 years ago, during the time of the civil war in the United States of America, President Abraham Lincoln — taking the repentance of Nineveh of the Old Testament as an example — declared by a presidential decree that there should be a day of general fasting and prayer for repentance, to draw God's mercy upon the divided and suffering nation. Some 100 years later, in 1962, prayer in public schools was prohibited by the United States Supreme Court, and, the result of that decision, by implication, was the abandonment of a basic principle expressed by the founding fathers of the United States in their correspondence among themselves (America's "unwritten tradition"). And what was that basic principle? That the laws of the newly formed United States should be based on the Holy Scriptures. After the 1962 Supreme Court decision, man — not God — effectively became the standard of what is right or wrong, true or false, moral or immoral in the "free world's" most powerful country.

My beloved Orthodox Christians, this encyclical is addressed to you not as a message of despondency and doom, to plunge you into despair. It is written, rather, to make all of us conscious that we are living in the end times, in a time of great apostasy. As Orthodox Christians, we are neither optimists nor pessimists. We are realists, and this is the reality of our times. When we look around us, what we see does not inspire hope. But when we lift up our heads and look to the Heavens, we are filled with hope and joy. As our Saviour tells us in the Gospel of Saint Luke:

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

*(Luke 21:28)*

This, and this alone, is our true and lasting salvation. The promises of peace, prosperity, security and health in this world are all false. As Saint Paul warns the Thessalonians:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them.

*(I Thessalonians 5:3)*

Without Christ our Redeemer there can be no true and lasting peace and safety. There are indeed many false prophets in the world, and their promises are consistently false; they promise us ends which cannot be realized. It is only in the teachings left to us by our Saviour, His Prophets, Apostles and Holy Fathers that our purpose in life comes into clear focus. Therefore, it is needful for us to continue reading and searching the Holy Scriptures and the sacred texts of our Holy Church concerning the end times. More than any other time before us, it is necessary for us to do the work of the Lord more diligently and with greater urgency, to keep the holy fasts, to pray earnestly and partake often of the Holy Mysteries, that we be deemed worthy of redemption. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, our Saviour says: "For wheresoever the body is, there also will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28). The "body" is our Saviour Himself, Whom we receive in the Holy Eucharist, and the eagles, as Saint John Chrysostom explains, are "the multitude of the angels, of the martyrs, of all the saints" (*Homily 76 on Matthew*, 3).

Looking steadfastly upon our Saviour and not removing our eyes from Him, we shall be able, not only to be rescued from foundering in the sea of this fallen world, but even to walk upon the tempestuous waves that surround us and to trample underfoot all the evil temptations and to withstand the various winds of doctrines that our spiritual enemy sends upon us.

In these times of turmoil, it is needful for us to hearken to our Saviour Who teaches us to "flee unto the mountains" (cf. Matthew 24:16). And what are those mountains that will be our refuge? St. Barsanuphius answers:

"Concerning those mountains, and what they are, let us understand them to be the holy Mary the Theotokos, and the other saints who shall be living during those times, and who will certainly bear the seal of God. For the sake of these saints, God will save many" (*Questions and Answers*, #156).

My beloved Orthodox Christians, let us not deceive ourselves. It is much later than we think, but our salvation is nigh at hand.

But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.... Ye are not in darkness, brethren, that the day should overcome you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.  
(I Thessalonians 5:1-6)

Your unworthy supplicant before God,

✠Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston

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