

Where Are You, O Happy Ones?

New Year's Thoughts*

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The day folds into evening. The bright sun is ready to hide behind the hills and leaves the darkness of evening upon everything living. *And what is in that darkness?...*

The days of the old year draw to a close, the clock strikes its last hours, and before us is left a burning question: *what lies ahead?...*

The new year...In the greetings of the New Year we hear: "*and [we wish you] new happiness!*" It is heard everywhere. In kings' palaces the rulers of this world are greeted by their faithful servants without fear in this way; in the poorest dwelling the most impoverished soul, with hope in a better future, pronounces these words of comfort.

Each thirsts for "new happiness." But what is this new happiness? Is it not that which a man chases all of his life, seeks fervently, and all the same in the end, receives the hopeless response: "*Respond! Where are you, happy ones; where are you satisfied ones?*"

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Running after happiness, seeking for it – and the reward of it is a soul, empty and a heart heavy. And here today is the open door to the New Year and today we hear, “new happiness” and we, with hope, open our gaze and see about us – total unhappiness.

Faith wavers, preying wolves appear in sheep’s clothing, drawing closer they began mercilessly poison the innocent sheep... In the holy place of the True Lord they have erected a golden calf, and with orgies and dancing, they have begun to worship it. They were promised the fat of the land, but they have drawn many to the path of untruth and evil, and incited them to scorn heavenly blessings. They have laughed at the commandments of the Mother Church; they have laughed at and scorned them, carried them to the place of the unnecessary and the superfluous, and planted in hearts – coldness and boorish disrespect.

Hope fades. From all directions temptation comes, there are no defenders, all have fallen away, made worthless; “there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 13: 3/Psalm 14:3). All have put forth their hands to greet approaching, roaring lion so the eyes looking for hope are closed with approaching fear and dark clouds.

Love fades. Everywhere there is a lack, or a complete absence of love, in today’s extraordinary circumstances... Yet here by the Lord’s bidding, we are to cross the threshold of the New Year with weapons in our hands, fashioned, to be used against the cowardly pagan enemy... And what? Our suffering defenders of faith and fatherland instead of receiving love and support from their brothers often receive the cold, empty words: “*there is no need for battle.*” Others, instead of placing their love on the altar of their fatherland and proving the higher commandment of Christ to those near at hand, forecast that “*this will end badly.*”

And so where are we to cast a wise eye? Where do we seek new happiness?

Christ came to earth and preached "the acceptable year" [ref. St. Luke: 4: 19] – a New Year of happiness. Thus it is so, that if we follow Christ we will find this new happiness, not fleeting and unsubstantial, the type that our soul can witness to "in quiet we wish for storm and in storm we seek the quiet," but another true happiness.

Let us gather carefully the last rays of faith and set our path toward the new heaven and the new earth; let us take as wings even the weakest rays of hope still remaining and walk soberly on the uneven, thorny path; let us revive the coals of dying love and return them to a blaze, burning up the tares sown by the enemy and burn all obstacles on the path.

And then, quickly shall the light of faith reveal to us a new heaven and a new earth, open to us the door of the sheep fold, where the flock is one and the Shepherd One...where blessedness is fixed not on earthly treasures and riches, but in spiritual;; where food and drink consists of the satisfaction the righteousness brings; where recompense for a pure heart is contemplation of God, where those persecuted and mistreated for Christ's sake rejoice with an eternal rejoicing. The rays of grace-filled hope give wings to the tired soul and heart, give them an anchor made from patience and humility and drive away the clouds of this earthly life. The fire of love will enflame our stale heart and teach us to understand that our happiness is found in the happiness of others.

It is not known to us, whether beyond this, a door of another new year will open for us, or will the days that lie ahead bring our end, or maybe the Book of Life close for us...and in this it is not for earthly happiness we seek. Rather let us deeply incline toward the words of St. Paul: "*See then that you walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, for the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5: 15 -16).