**Do we believe in predictions?**

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The word “prediction” (from the Latin praesagium - literally “foreshadowing”) means knowledge about future events thanks to signs or phenomena, visible or invisible to ordinary people, but always perceived and therefore significant for those who have managed to develop the gift of prophecy. This gift of divine, or, one might say, parapsychological property, has accompanied the history of mankind from the very beginning.

In fear of adversity and in search of happiness, people turned to soothsayers, magicians, astrologers, and mediums in order to somehow try to lift the veil over their future, individual or collective.

Even today, at the end of the 20th century, predictions and prophecies, despite universal skepticism, still have enormous psychological significance.

A few months ago, during my last trip to France, I saw how concerned the people of the city of Lyon were about the Pope's visit. The reason was the prophecy of Nostradamus, which read: “Roman Pontiff, you will approach a city washed by two rivers. Your blood will go down your throat. Both yours and the blood of your people when the rose blooms.”

The fact is that the city of Lyon is washed by two rivers: the Rhone and the Saone, and roses grow in abundance in the city. There was no shortage of those who correlated the mention of the flower with the rose crowning the emblem of the Socialist Party.

At the end of September, when I write these lines, the seventh successor of the holy father in the town of Ars has proven that the prophecy has already been fulfilled and John Paul II will run no more risk in Lyon than the risk of becoming a victim of terrorism that has engulfed all of France. Father Thévenard is referring to Pope Pius VI: he died of pneumonia, which left his throat bleeding, in 1799 in Valence, a town near Lyon bordered by two rivers, in a large house famous for its rose garden.

The mysterious French sage, known to us under the name Nostradamus, lived from 1503 to 1566. His astrological Centuries and other writings, some of which are now considered apocryphal, cover a range of future events—approximately 550 years after his death. His version of these events is so vague that various researchers could not come to a consensus on almost any of the episodes. Therefore, some consider him a real clairvoyant, pointing to events that are inevitably about to happen, while others consider him a hoaxer who uses wordplay, as a result of which the same words can be associated with very different personalities, with very different eras. But on the whole, if we take his words literally and do not add further confusion with our own comments, we can find a number of descriptions of a truly prophetic quality, although their number is small.

For those who are surprised by the fact that a Christian Catholic priest talks about these prophecies as if he really believes in them, I would like to remind you that the entire history of the Roman Church (as well as other branches of Christianity) is full of references to prophecies, and quite a few popes (for example, Sylvester II and Gregory VII) with admirable tenacity devoted many hours to the study of the so-called occult sciences. Only the fine line between “prophecies” emanating from God and “predictions” inspired by the devil saved them and many other priests from the fires of the Inquisition.

The Bible itself mentions nine types of divination:

Meonen, as Moses calls her. This is the so-called judicial, or apotelesmatic, astrology. Her practice consisted of observing and tracking all the stars and natural phenomena in the sky.

Menashech, i.e. divination, according to the Vulgate and almost all other translations.

Meskashef, or sorcery using occult and harmful practices, as qualified by the Vulgate and Septuagint.

Itoberon, or magic, sorcery.

Oracles who questioned the Pythia.

Indeoni, or divination and magic.

Necromancy, or invocation, appeal to the dead.

Rhabdomancy, or divination with sticks, which is mentioned by the prophet Hosea.

Hepatoscopy, or liver fortune telling.

Examples of very widespread beliefs in these phenomena can be found in the most advanced civilizations, from the Egyptians to the Chinese, from the Etruscans to the Mayans. They all believed that it was possible to know the future. And this belief was so strong that during the Roman Empire, after its split into the Western and Eastern parts, and even during the Byzantine Empire, fortune telling about the future of emperors was prohibited under pain of death.

Herodotus, who is called the “father of History,” cites many such facts, such as the story of one ruler from the East, who was predicted by soothsayers that the cause of his death would be a chariot. Having learned about this, he ordered that not a single chariot remain in his domain. He died in his palace during the rebellion, nailed to the throne with a sword... on the hilt of which was an image of a chariot.

This and many other examples make us think about the meaning of the question in the title of this