

□ Reading time: 8 min.

Solemn Prophecy: The Future of Paris, Rome, and the Church: A Warning and Encouragement to the Supreme Pontiff. On January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany, or the manifestation of the Lord, the second session of the [First Vatican] Council took place, during which the Fathers, according to the rite, one after another, and first among them the Supreme Pontiff, made the solemn profession of faith. On the eve of that memorable solemnity, Don Bosco saw in a dream what we [Giovanni Lemoyne] report here: it is the Servant of God himself who wrote down what he saw and heard.

God alone is almighty, all-knowing, all-seeing. God has neither past nor future; everything is present to Him, everything at a single point of time. Nothing eludes God. No person, no place is distant from Him. In His infinite mercy and for His glory He alone can unveil the future to man.

On the vigil of the Epiphany of this year, 1870, all material things in my room disappeared, and I found myself contemplating supernatural matters. It was only a matter of an instant, but I saw a great deal. Although what I witnessed was sensibly present, I find it extremely difficult to communicate it to others intelligibly, as one may realize by what follows. This is the Word of God in human parlance:

“War will come from the south, peace from the north.

“The laws of France no longer recognize the Creator. The Creator will reveal Himself by visiting her three times with the scourge of his wrath. The first time he will destroy her pride by defeat, pillage, and destruction of crops, cattle, and men. On His second visit the great whore of Babylon, whom the faithful grievously call Europe’s brothel, shall lose her leader and fall prey to chaos.

“Paris! Paris! Instead of fortifying yourself with the Lord’s name, you surround yourself with houses of ill repute. You yourself shall destroy them; your idol, the *Pantheon*, will be razed to the ground, so that it may truthfully be said that ‘iniquity has lied to itself.’ [Ps. 26, 12] Your enemies will plunge you into anguish, famine, terror, and the contempt of nations. But woe unto you if you do not recognize the

hand which smites you! I want to punish your immorality, your desertion, your contempt for My law, says the Lord.

“On My third visit, you shall fall under the foreign yoke. From afar your enemies will see your palaces in flames, your homes in ruins, soaked in the blood of your heroes who are no more.

“But behold a great warrior from the north appears, a banner in his right hand, his arm bearing this inscription: ‘Irresistible is the hand of the Lord.’ At that moment the Venerable Old Man of Rome went forward to meet him, wielding a flaming torch. The banner then grew larger and its blackness became white as snow; in its center stood out the name of the Almighty in golden letters.

“The warrior and his followers bowed profoundly to the Venerable Old Man and joined hands with him.

“Now the voice of Heaven is addressed to the Shepherd of Shepherds. You are in solemn conference with your co-workers, but the enemy of good never stands idle. He cunningly plots and sets all his wiles against you. He will sow discord among your helpers and will rear enemies among My sons. The powers of the world shall vomit fire. They would love to smother My words in the throats of the guardians of My law, but they shall not succeed. They shall do much harm, but only to themselves. Hurry! If knots cannot be untied, sever them. Do not halt in the face of difficulties, but go forth until the hydra of error has been beheaded. At this blow earth and hell shall tremble, but the world will be saved and the faithful shall exult. Gather around you only two co-workers, yet wherever you go, carry on the task entrusted to you and bring it to completion. Days go by swiftly and your years are reaching their appointed number, but the great Queen shall always assist you, and, as in the past, She shall always be *magnum et singulare in Ecclesia praesidium* [the powerful, prodigious defense of the Church].

“But you, O Italy, land of blessings, who has plunged you into desolation? Not your enemies, but your own friends. Do you not hear your children begging for the bread of faith, unable to find one to break it for them? What shall I do? I shall strike the shepherds and scatter the sheep so that those who sit upon the chair of Moses may seek better pastures and their flock may gently listen and be fed.

“But My hand shall be heavy upon both flock and shepherds. Famine, plague, and war shall cause mothers to mourn the blood of their sons and husbands shed on

foreign soil.

“What shall befall you, ungrateful, effeminate, proud Rome? You have reached a point when you seek and admire naught in your sovereign but luxury, forgetting that both your glory and his lies on Golgotha. Now he is old, frail, defenseless, and dispossessed. Nevertheless, though captive, his words cause the whole world to tremble.

“O Rome! Four times shall I come to you! The first time I shall smite your regions and its people. The second time I shall bring slaughter and destruction to your very gates. Should not that make you open your eyes? A third time shall I come, and I will demolish your defenses and defenders. At My Father’s command, terror, dismay, and desolation will reign.

“My wise followers flee, but My law is still trod underfoot. Therefore, I shall come a fourth time. Woe to you if My law again shall go unheeded. There shall be defections among both learned and ignorant. Your blood and that of your children shall wipe out your transgressions.

“War, plague, and famine are the scourges to smite human pride and malice. Where are your magnificent villas and palaces, you people of wealth? They have turned into the litter of squares and streets!

“And you, priests, why are you not prostrate between the vestibule and the altar, weeping and praying that the scourge cease? Why do you not take up the shield of faith and preach My word from the rooftops, in the houses, streets, and squares, and even in inaccessible places? Do

you not know that this is the terrible two-edged sword which smites My enemies and placates the wrath of God and man?

“These things shall inexorably come to pass, all in succession.

“Things follow too slowly upon each other, but the great Queen of Heaven is at hand, and the Lord’s power is Hers. Like mist She shall scatter Her enemies. She shall vest the Venerable Old Man with all his former garments.

“There shall yet come a violent hurricane. Iniquity is at an end, sin shall cease, and before two full moons shall have shone in the month of flowers, the rainbow of peace shall appear on the earth.

“The great Minister shall see the Bride of his King clothed in glory.

“Throughout the world a sun so bright shall shine as was never seen since the flames of the Cenacle until today, nor shall it be seen again until the end of time.”

Don Bosco had Father Julius Barberis transcribe the original and took this copy with him to Rome. Some few weeks later he had another copy made by Father Joachim Berto, who made the following entry in his diary: “Don Bosco showed me a written prophecy which began with these words: ‘God alone is almighty, all-knowing, all-seeing.’ He cautioned me to keep it a perfect secret and never to reveal the writer’s identity. Among other things, this prophecy concerned war between France and Prussia, the Church’s condition, and the desolation which threatened Italy, as he explained when I asked him about it. He had me make a copy of it to send to a prelate in Rome.”

Civiltà Cattolica mentioned the above prophecy in 1872, quoting several passages verbatim and prefacing them with this authoritative statement: “We are pleased to recall a most recent, never published, and generally unknown prophecy which was sent from northern Italy to someone in Rome on February 12, 1870. We do not know the sender, but we can prove that we had it in our hands prior to the German bombardment of Paris and the burning of that city by the communists. We must admit our astonishment at finding the fall of Rome predicted as well, for at that time it was not seen as either imminent or likely.”

We have several copies of this prophecy, the most authoritative in Father Berto’s handwriting. At the top of the page appears this note: “Sent to the Holy Father on February 12, 1870.” The manuscript has several marginal notes in Don Bosco’s own hand and at the end a few “Clarifications” evidently written or previously dictated and then revised by Don Bosco. The marginal notes and clarifications shed light on and pinpointed the predicted events which, to a large extent, as we shall see, took place shortly afterward, though a few, at the time of writing [1917], have still to occur. Seemingly, according to Don Bosco, these were to take place about the year 1874, “unless,” as he wrote in his own hand, “new iniquities further provoke God.” We must add that, when questioned later about the fulfillment of these events, Don Bosco said frankly that they might not take place, for in His mercy the Lord sometimes points out to men the path they should follow in one circumstance or another in order to get out of some difficulty, and nothing more. If the directions

given are not followed, it is obvious that what has been foretold [and is contingent upon them] will not occur either. Father Berto's manuscript contained a second prophecy (of which we also have the original), bearing the date May 24 — June 24, 1873, as well as a prophetic letter dated May 24, 1873 — June 24, 1873 with some pieces of advice which Don Bosco gave to Pope Leo XIII, under the title:

(MB IT IX, 779-784 / MB EN IX, 373-378)

Preliminary Summary of What Is Most Needed by the Church

May 24 — June 24, 1873

It was a dark night, and men could no longer find the way back to their own countries. Suddenly a most brilliant light shone in the sky, illuminating their way as at high noon. At that moment from the Vatican came forth, as in procession, a multitude of men and women, young children, monks, nuns, and priests, and at their head the Pope.

But a furious storm then broke out, somewhat dimming that light, as if light and darkness were locked in battle. Meanwhile the long procession reached a small square littered with dead and wounded, many of whom cried for help.

The ranks of the procession thinned considerably. After a two-hundred-day march, all realized that they were no longer in Rome. In dismay they swarmed about the Pontiff to protect him and minister to him in his needs.

At that moment two angels appeared, bearing a banner which they presented to the Supreme Pontiff, saying: "Take the banner of Her who battles and routs the most powerful armies on earth. Your enemies have vanished; with tears and sighs your children plead for your return."

One side of the banner bore the inscription: *Regina sine labe concepta* [Queen conceived without sin], and the other side read: *Auxilium Christianorum* [Help of Christians].

The Pontiff accepted the banner gladly, but he became very distressed to see how few were his followers.

But the two angels went on: "Go now, comfort your children. Write to your brothers scattered throughout the world that men must reform their lives. This cannot be achieved unless the bread of the Divine Word is broken to the peoples. Teach children their catechism and preach detachment from earthly things. The time has come," the two angels concluded, "when the poor will evangelize the world. Priests shall be sought among those who wield the hoe, the spade, and the hammer, as David prophesied: 'God lifted the poor man from the fields to place him on the throne of the princes of His people.'"

On hearing this, the Pontiff moved on, and the ranks began to swell. Upon reaching the Holy City, the Pontiff wept at the sight of its desolate citizens, for many of them were no longer. He then entered St. Peter's and intoned the *Te Deum*, to which a chorus of angels responded, singing: *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* [Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will].

When the song was over, all darkness vanished and a blazing sun shone. The population had declined greatly in the cities and in the countryside; the land was mangled as if by a hurricane and hailstorm, and people sought each other, deeply moved and saying: *Est Deus in Israel* [There is God in Israel].

From the start of the exile until the intoning of the *Te Deum*, the sun rose two hundred times. All the events described covered a period of four hundred days.

At this time too Don Bosco was compiling a report on the state of the Salesian Congregation to submit to the Holy See. He was also anxious to point out to the diocesan authorities that his philosophy students were studying. In the previous year, the diocesan examiners had been unduly severe with them. Naturally the latter had complained, but Don Bosco did not allow them to withdraw from the midterm examinations when the time came.

(MB IT IX, 999-1000 / MB EN IX, 377-378)