



Waiting for "Petrus Romanus" - The Last Pope !

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While the world is holding its breath waiting for the next pope to be announced, we would like to take a moment and give these historical times a little bit of an orthodox flavor. Although it may not seem as something concerning orthodoxy, it is important for an orthodox Christian to understand why what is happening in the world is really happening. If you have read St Seraphim's "Orthodox Survival Course" (which we made available on our site) you would have seen right from the beginning how important this attitude is.

It is no secret that the whole catholic world is conscious of the fact that they are now waiting to see their last pope, according to their own prophecy of Malachy. And they themselves are not trying to hide this either - it is like they want for this to be known - there have been even documentaries made about it. We as Orthodox Christians need to pay attention to this even if we do not consider catholic prophecies as genuine - and this is exactly the reason why! If you have read St Seraphim's "Orthodox Survival Course" you may have come across Joachim of Floris' theory of the "three ages" which has been adopted in the catholic church soon after the great schism from the Orthodox Church - at about the same time Malachy made his prophecy !

This catholic doctrine talks about the 3 ages, the "Age of the Father" corresponding to the Old Testament, the "Age of the Son" corresponding to the New Testament and the "Age of the Holy Spirit" (also referred to as the "New Age" - sounds familiar?). Although Joachim of Floris' theory went so far off as to call Frederick II (1260) the antichrist, which of course is ridiculous, the idea of the third age is flourishing today in various forms. St Seraphim Rose in his book "Orthodoxy and the religion of the future" shows this as being the origin of the "Charismatic Revival" we see today.

In the "Orthodox Survival Course" (pages 11-12) you may find a detailed explanation of the significance of these deviations. We will only extract a small fragment to illustrate the idea:

"On the basis of the simple belief in the inspired character of the Scripture, Joachim could extract from it a strictly religious understanding of history and, on the one hand, discover in actual history the hidden presence of purely religious categories. This attempt to explain history religiously and the Revelation of St. John historically is no more and no less than an intricate elaboration of the Christian presupposition that the church is the body of Christ and that therefore her history is intrinsically religious and not merely a department of the history of the world. And, since the history after Christ is still on its way and yet revealed as having an end, the fullness of time is not to be conceived traditionally as a unique event of the past but as something to be worked out in future, in the perspective of which the church, from Christ until now, is not an everlasting foundation but an imperfect prefiguration. The interpretation of history thus necessarily becomes prophecy, and the



*right understanding of the past depends on the proper perspective for the future, in which the preceding significations come to their end. This consummation does not occur beyond historical time, at the end of the world, but in a last historical epoch. Joachim's eschatological scheme consists neither in a simple millennium nor in the mere expectation of the end of the world but in a twofold eschaton: an ultimate historical phase of the history of salvation, preceding the transcendent eschaton of the new aeon, ushered in by the second coming of Christ. **The Kingdom of the Spirit is the last revelation of God's purpose on earth and in time. Consequently, the institution of the papacy and clerical hierarchy is limited to the second epoch. This implies a radical revision of the Catholic doctrine of succession from St. Peter to the end of the world. The existing church, though founded on Christ, will have to yield to the coming church of the Spirit, when the history of salvation has reached its plenitude. This ultimate transition also implies the liquidation of preaching and sacraments, the mediating power of which becomes obsolete when the spiritual order is realized which possesses knowledge of God by direct vision and contemplation. The real signification of the sacraments is not, as with Augustine, the signification of a transcendent reality but the indication of a potentiality which becomes realized within the framework of history.***

So the whole idea of a last pope and the turmoil and scandals in the catholic church today (which will likely only grow and lead to a crisis situation), give the perfect context in which the church will have to "renew" and "will have to yield to the coming church of the Spirit" which everybody will embrace as a natural transition !