

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Friday, January 1, 2016*

YEAR C - NEW YEAR'S DAY

Greetings brethren, and Happy New Year! This is a time of renewal. Not a renewal in the same sense as springtime, which is an outer manifestation, but an inner renewal that comes from thoughtful introspection. It is the beginning of the new calendar year, and a time when people reflect over their accomplishments and failings over the previous year. It is the time of resolution-making; that is, when people renew their resolve to succeed at some task or goal that has heretofore eluded them. It is a time when we sense that something has been completed, left in the past, and that something new is beginning. Now, nothing has actually altered the continuity of time, it is merely our perception that changes. But our perception is our reality. As far as our inner, personal, subjective world is concerned, something has ended, and something new is beginning.

Our reading from the Apocalypse of St. John is all about this perceptual shift. But the transition written about here is not merely the passing of the year, but of a whole mindset; the transition from one reality to another. It is the dawning of spiritual enlightenment. Concepts like "spiritual enlightenment" cannot be easily discussed - some would say that they cannot and should not be discussed at all - because they are known only through direct personal experience. But the mystical writers nevertheless want to share what they are able of this experience, and so we end up with apocalyptic imagery, so rich in symbolic expression as to seem, at times, impenetrably dense.

With the apocalyptic writings there are two approaches one may take in attempting to decipher them. The first may be considered the critical or scholarly approach. With this method we may analyze the text critically, attempting to identify themes, particular symbol sets, and so forth. The other method consists of a contemplative and meditative reading, similar to the practice known as *lectio divina*. In this method, one meditates upon the text, awaiting an intuitive revelation. It is believed that such a meditation may even produce the very revelation that first inspired the text.

Both of these methods may yield valuable results, but only the latter contemplative approach can bring us near to the revelation itself. However, it is also entirely possible that the former analytical approach may lead to contemplation and meditation, resulting in a truly gnostic insight. Do not underestimate the power of revealed writings to effect a change of consciousness by their very exposure.

As we emphasize so often, though, a change in consciousness is only valid if it initiates also a change in one's actions. This may seem obvious. But it may in fact be quite difficult to translate the inner experience into an outward projection upon the world of matter. Now, in some cases the inner gnostic experience will be in such contrast to one's previous mode of thinking and acting, that it will constitute a true "conversion" à la St. Paul. But the inner experience is often much more like a slow & subtle unveiling of higher truths than a burst of blinding pneumatic light. In the latter case, and really even in the former, it takes time and much effort to assimilate these new understandings, these new realities. Our animal nature is very habitual & ritualistic. But rather than attempt to stamp out this integral aspect of ourselves, we seek to subdue it, to submit it to the higher faculties, so that our habits are constructive instead of destructive; our rituals exalt ourselves only as a part of humanity, and not to the exclusion of and detriment to humanity. So it is that we pray, celebrate the sacraments, and go out to do good works in the world; not for selfish reward, but in an attempt to align the outer with the inner.