

The President to the readers

Some say that the new millennium began on September 11, 2001. On that day, mankind began a free-fall in space. Others suggest that the attack on the Twin Towers in New York was like the experience of being suddenly exiled; they felt themselves to be in strange and dangerous lands. The political climate became a displacement to the north, to the hostile cold.

The eleventh of September was a rupture. It marked the beginning of wars in the new century. All that preceded it in the year 2000 – the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God, the millions of pilgrims to Rome, the joyous and friendly young *Romei* who descended on the Eternal City in August, the tens of thousands asking and obtaining sacramental forgiveness at the Circus Maximus – all seem distant and ephemeral.

There are two interpretations of the violence against New York City. One is by Samuel Huntington. The attacks on the centre of global capitalism are part of the increasing clashes among the various world-civilizations, in this particular incident, between Islam and the West. Such conflicts, he suggests, will characterize the new century. Huntington asserts that human identity is gained through confrontation: “We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know who we are against.” The various civilizations are natural enemies to one another. He measures them in terms of their military power, political influence and economic wealth. Each state is on notice to refrain from intervening in conflicts in civilizations other than its own.

The other interpretation is advanced by Francis Fukuyama. In his thesis about the “end of history”, he claims that the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of communism represent an inevitable evolution of the world to liberal democracy and economic globalization. The latter two elements will be the hallmarks of the future and represent the final evolution of human development. He argues: “We may be witnessing the end of history as such; that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” In the future there may be remnants of regional conflicts, but global conflict is a thing of the past. However, in light of the events of the eleventh of September, doubts about his thesis have arisen and focus on whether free markets and democracy can survive in non-Western cultures.