

FOR THE ASE'S NEXT 100 YEAR: CU MULT DRAG

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If we lived in Renaissance times, on 6 April, we would ask Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) to tell us what the ASE would be doing in the next hundred years. And if we lived in China, we would ask a Daoist Astrologer to determine which animal is the guide to understanding the ASE's past and future. But seeing we are neither in China nor in Renaissance times, we may have to find an Orthodox saint who shares the ASE's birthday.

Marsilio Ficino would have told us that the ASE is a Ram. That means it's active, demanding, determined, effective and ambitious. It's been like that for a hundred years. Why would it want to change? Why would anyone want to change it? When Ficino was pushed, he became more explicit about what it means to be an institution that's under the sign of the Ram:

It's an institution with a sense of adventure, enthusiasm, confidence and quick-wittedness. It goes in head first and pioneers the trail. Because Aries is a fire sign, the institution is action oriented and assertive. Because it's a cardinal sign, the institution is flexible and adaptable. Because Aries is ruled by the planet Mars, the god of warriors, the institution has energy and strength. As well as facilitating communication, its people like to extend and expand its influence.

So what did the Daoist Astrologer say about the ASE? It's an Ox. That means that it and its people have traits such as dependability, strength and determination. They believe that the road to success involves hard work and scrupulous behaviour; they don't believe in taking shortcuts. Although they are capable of trusting others and listening to their opinions with an open mind, Oxen prefer making decisions that are based on their own research. And they prefer strong, life-long alliances to casual acquaintances. Whether they are individuals or institutions, Oxen born in 1913 are Water Oxen. This means that they value flexibility. They go with the flow. Because of this, they are sincere, patient and quick-thinking. And so, other individuals and institutions enjoy working with them.

Those are pagan perspectives and none the worse for that. But which Orthodox saints watch over the ASE and its people? But first, what does it mean to invoke

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the saints? The best person to answer this question is a saint, like Saint John of Kronstadt (1829 to 1908):

The daily invocation of the saints signifies that God's saints live, and are near us, ever ready to help us, by the grace of God. With them, we live in the house of our Heavenly Father, only in different parts of it. We live in the earthly half, they in the heavenly half; but we can converse with them, and they with us. God's saints are near to the believing heart, and are ready in a moment to help those who call upon them with faith and love.

Like every other individual and institution in Romania, the holy and right-believing Prince, Saint Stefan the Great (Dreptcredinciosul Voievod Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt), watches over the ASE and its people. His feast day is 2 July and he is comfortable with the values and ideals associated with the Ram; in particular, the ideals of being energetic and strong, and of thinking strategically. In addition, 6 April is the feast day of Saint Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople (512 to 582). He is celebrated for his resistance to Imperial interference in the life of the church. He brings to the ASE the ideal of holding to its values; and, in particular, the values associated with self-governance and autonomy. The Apolytikion or Dismissal Hymn for his feast balances the martial values of Saint Stefan:

O God of our Fathers, ever dealing with us according to Thy gentleness: take not Thy mercy from us, but by their entreaties guide our life in peace.

Where will the ASE be a 100 years from now? When I asked that question, one of Edgar Allan Poe's moods overcame me. It was the mood he captured in some lines of *The Raven*:

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before

That's when I turned to Marsilio Ficino, to the Daoist Astrologer, and to Saints Stefan the Great and Saint Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople. And through their words they enabled Dame Julian of Norwich (1341 to 1415) to speak to me:

All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.

James Moulder is a Gemini and an Ox. He's an Australian who enjoys visiting the ASE. He shares its values and enjoys working with its people.