



The Holy See

CONCERT IN HONOUR OF THE HOLY FATHER
OFFERED BY H.E. Mr. HORST KÖHLER
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
AND ON THE 20th ANNIVERSARY AFTER THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Sistine Chapel

Friday, 4 December 2009

Dear Friends,

With deep feeling after such touching music what can I say, yet a simple word of welcome and gratitude is perhaps appropriate. I greet all of you who are present here in the Sistine Chapel. I am especially grateful to the Federal President and his gracious wife for honouring us with their presence this evening. Dear Mr Federal President, your visit is a true pleasure for me. With it, you express the closeness and affection of the German People for the Successor of Peter who is their fellow countryman. A heartfelt *Vergelt's Gott* ("May God reward you") also for your courteous words that have deeply moved us and for making this evening possible. Likewise, I warmly thank the *Domkapellmeister*, Mr Reinhard Kammler, the *Augsburger Domsingknaben* and the *Residenz-Kammerorchester München* for their masterful performance of this magnificent Oratorio. Thank you for this marvellous gift!

The occasion this evening is a solemn and, as we have said, a double celebration. On the one hand this year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany with the signing of the Fundamental Law on 23 May 1949; on the other, we are commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, that border of death that divided our homeland for so many years and forcefully separated men, women, families, neighbours and friends. Many then saw the events of 9 November 1989 as an unexpected dawn of freedom after a

long and anguished night of violence and oppression because of a totalitarian regime which, at the very end, led to nihilism, an emptying of souls. In the Communist dictatorship no single action would have been deemed evil and immoral in itself. Whatever served the objectives of the Party was good however inhuman it might have been. Many are wondering today whether the Western social order is much better and more humanitarian. The history of the Federal Republic of Germany, in fact, is a proof of it. And we owe this largely to the Fundamental Law. This Constitution contributed essentially to the peaceful development of Germany in the past six decades; for it urges people to give priority, in responsibility to God the Creator, to human dignity, priority to every legislative state, to respect for marriage and the family as the foundation of every society, as well as to have concern and profound respect for what is sacred to others.

May the citizens of Germany, in fulfilling the duty of spiritual and political renewal after the National Socialism and after the Second World War, as was expressed in the Fundamental Law, be able to continue to collaborate in order to build a free and sociable society.

Dear friends, in looking at our Homeland's history in the past 60 years, we have cause to thank God with all our heart. We are aware that this development is no merit of ours. It was made possible by people who acted with a profound Christian conviction in responsibility before God, thereby initiating processes of reconciliation that have permitted a new mutual and communitarian relationship between the European countries. The history of Europe in the 20th century shows that responsibility before God is of crucial importance for upright political action (cf. Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*). God reunites human beings in a true communion and makes the individual understand that in communion with the other, One who is greater is also present: The One who is the original cause of our life and our being together. This is also manifested to us in a special way in the mystery of Christmas in which this God draws close to us in his love and, as a Child, asks for our love.

A passage in the Christmas Oratorio beautifully illustrates this communion that is based in love and aspires to eternal love: Mary stays beside the manger and listens to the words of the shepherds who have become witnesses and heralds of the Angels' message about that Child. Bach transforms this moment in which she cherishes what has happened, pondering it in her heart (cf. Lk 2: 19), into an invitation to each one of us in his marvellous aria for contralto:

*Keep thou my heart now, this most
blessed Wonder
fast within thy faith always!
And let this Wonder, these godly
achievements
ever as comfort of thy feeble faith
abide!*

Every person, in communion with Jesus Christ, can be for the other a mediator to God. No one believes for himself alone; everyone lives in his own faith also thanks to human mediation. Alone, however, none of them would suffice to build the bridge to God, because no human being can obtain himself an absolute guarantee of the existence and closeness of God. However, in communion with the One who in himself is this closeness, human beings can be and are mediators for one another. As such they will also be capable of inspiring a new way of thinking and of generating new energy at the service of an integral humanism.

My thanks go once again to the organizers of this beautiful evening, to the musicians and to all those, with their generous contribution, who have made possible the realization of this concert. May the splendid music we have heard in the unique context of the Sistine Chapel strengthen our faith and our joy in the Lord, so that we may be his witnesses in the world. I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing to everyone.

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