



# The Holy See

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CONCERT OFFERED BY THE ENSEMBLE "NEW SEASONS"  
IN HONOUR OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI AND HIS BROTHER,  
MSGR. GEORG RATZINGER, ON THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTHOOD

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
AT THE END OF THE CONCERT***

*Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace, Castel Gandolfo  
Tuesday, 9 August 2011*

*Your Eminences,  
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,  
Reverend Dean, Esteemed Musicians,  
Dear Friends,*

There is certainly nothing that can be added to the wonderful music that is still resounding within us.

Nevertheless I must extend a word of thanks to those who made possible and organized this concert here at Castel Gandolfo. I warmly thank the Dean for his opening address, and especially the musicians, Maestro Albrecht Mayer, the conductor and oboist, Arabella Steinbacher, the violinist, and the New Seasons Ensemble for their splendid performance that uplifted our hearts.

It also makes me particularly happy that you wanted to offer this concert on the occasion of the 60th priestly jubilee that my brother and I, with divine grace, were able to celebrate together a little while ago. Moreover, Mr Mayer, you dedicated this concert to the theme: "Whatever God does, is well done"; thus you have offered a concert of heartfelt thanksgiving and believing trust. I am infinitely grateful to you for this gift!

This evening we have been able to meet two really important exponents of 16th-century music:

Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach, the *maestro of maestros*.

The two works by Vivaldi that have resounded this evening are part of the so-called “full orchestra” pieces, composed for an orchestra of strings and basso continuo, many of which had a didactic aim, especially when Vivaldi taught at the “Pietà” [Ospedale della Pietà], one of the four orphanages-conservatories for girls in Venice.

The structure of the three movements with a brief central *adagio* is typical of the great Italian composer. However, this architectural uniformity is never monotonous because — as we have heard, the tone treatment, the orchestral colour, the dynamic of the musical subject, the blend of harmonies, the art of counterpoint and echoing, make Vivaldi concertos an example of luminosity and beauty that conveys serenity and joy. And I think that this stemmed from his faith. Vivaldi was a Catholic priest, faithful to his Breviary and to his devotional practices. In listening to his opus of sacred music his profoundly religious heart is revealed.

This is a feature that puts him on an equal footing with Johann Sebastian Bach, a Lutheran, and an admirer of Vivaldi, several of whose concertos he studied and transcribed. “*Soli Deo gloria*”: This phrase appears as a refrain in Bach’s manuscripts — a *leitmotif* of Bach's cantatas as the programme says — and constitutes a central element for understanding the music of the great German composer. Deep devotion was an essential element of his character and his solid faith sustained and illuminated him throughout his life.

On the cover of the “*Kleines Orgelbüchlein*” these two lines can be read: “*Dem höchsten Gott allein zu Ehren, Dem Nächsten draus sich zu belehren*” [To God Most High to honour him, to others to teach them].

Bach had a deeply religious conception of music: honouring God and recreating the human spirit. Listening to his music in its overall harmonious unity somehow reminds one of a bubbling brook, or rather of a great architectural project, in which all is harmoniously pieced together in an attempt to reproduce that perfect harmony which God impressed on his creation. Bach is a splendid “architect of music” whose counterpoint has never been equalled. He is an architect guided by a tenacious *esprit de géométrie*, a symbol of order and wisdom, a reflection of God and hence pure rationality become music in the loftiest and purest sense, resplendent beauty.

This evening we have been able to admire Bach’s spirit in the initial passages from the monumental works of faith which his Cantatas are, in that pure, crystalline music of Partita n. 2 in D minor for solo violin and in the loveliest Concerto, BWV 1060, proposed in a version which in all likelihood corresponds to the oldest.

Thanks once again, also on behalf of my brother, to the Dean, to Maestro Mayer, to the violinist Arabella Steinbacher and to the New Seasons Ensemble. I wish you all a heartfelt “*Vergelt’s Gott*”

[may God reward you]. I gladly impart to you and to everyone present my Apostolic Blessing.

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