



The Holy See

CONCERT OFFERED BY THE WEST-EASTERN DIVAN ORCHESTRA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 11 July 2012

[[Video](#)]

*Mr President,
Venerable Brothers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We have experienced a moment of listening that was truly intense and spiritually enriching and let us give thanks to God for it. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Maestro Daniel Barenboim and to all the musicians of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra who have kindly wished to offer me this concert during their summer tour on the day of the Feast of St Benedict. They have thereby not only enabled me to enjoy their excellent performance in person, but also to share more directly in their journey which your yourself began, Maestro, 13 years ago, together with the late Mr Edward Said.

I cordially greet Hon. Mr Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, whom I thank for his presence and for having encouraged this project. My thanks also go to Cardinal Ravasi who introduced the concert with three beautiful and significant quotes. I extend my greeting to the other Authorities and to all of you, dear friends.

You can imagine how glad I am to welcome an orchestra like this one that was born from the conviction, indeed, from the experience that music unites people over and above any division; for music is a harmonization of differences, as occurs at the beginning of every concert with the “rite” of tuning up. A symphony can emerge from the tones of the different instruments. However, this

does not happen by magic or automatically! It is only achieved with the hard work of the conductor and of every individual musician. It is a patient, demanding commitment that requires time and sacrifices in the effort to hear each other, avoiding excessive protagonism and giving due priority to the successful performance of the orchestra as a whole.

While I express these thoughts I recall the great symphony of peace among people which has never been entirely achieved. My generation, like that of Maestro Barenboim's parents, lived through the tragedy of the Second World War and that of the Shoah. It is certainly significant, Maestro, that having attained a musician's highest goals you should choose to give life to a project such as the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra: a group in which musicians play together who come from Israel, Palestine and from other Arab countries, individuals of Jewish, Muslim and Christian conviction.

The many awards with which you and this Orchestra have been decorated show simultaneously both your professional excellence and your ethical and spiritual commitment. We heard it this evening as well, as we listened to Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies.

In this choice too, in this juxtaposition, we can also see a meaning we find interesting. These two extremely famous Symphonies express two aspects of life: drama and peace, from the human struggle against adverse destiny to the reassuring immersion in the bucolic environment. Beethoven elaborated these two works almost at the same time, especially when he was nearing their completion. Indeed they were performed for the first time together — like this evening — at the memorable concert of 22 December 1808 in Vienna. The message I would like to draw from this today is the following: to achieve peace it is necessary to be engaged, putting violence and weapons aside, to commit oneself with personal and community conversion, through dialogue and the patient search for possible agreement.

Let us therefore warmly thank Maestro Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra for having given us evidence of this path. To each and every one I express the wish and the prayer that they will continue to sow the hope of peace in the world through the universal language of music.

Thank you and good evening to you all!