



The Holy See

CONCERT TO COMMEMORATE THE ELECTION OF THE HOLY FATHER
ON OCCASION OF THE 2759th ANNIVERSARY OF THE "BIRTH OF ROME"

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

'Auditorium-Parco della Musica'

Friday, 21 April 2006

Mr President of the Republic and Distinguished Authorities,
Mr Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I accepted with great joy the invitation to come to this concert in the new Auditorium and I feel duty bound to address warm thanks to Mr Mayor, who promoted the initiative. As I offer him my cordial greetings, I also express sincere gratitude to him for the respectful words he has addressed to me on behalf of all those present. My cordial greetings then go to the President of the Italian Republic, who has honoured me by his presence, together with the other Authorities who are gathered here.

Lastly, I address special thanks to Prof. Bruno Cagli, Director of the National Academy of St Cecilia, to the orchestra and choir conducted by Maestro Vladimir Jurowski, and to Laura Aikin, the soprano, who have performed famous passages and arias by that musical genius, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

I very gladly accepted the invitation to be present at this evening's performance. Various reasons have combined to make it a solemn but at the same time a family celebration.

On this very day the Birth of Rome is celebrated in memory of the traditional anniversary of the City's foundation, a historical event which, thinking back to the origins of the City, becomes a favourable opportunity for a better understanding of Rome's vocation to be the beacon of civilization and spirituality for the entire world.

Thanks to the convergence of its traditions with Christianity, Rome has fulfilled a special mission

down the centuries and still today continues to be an important reference point for the many visitors who are attracted by its rich artistic heritage, closely associated with the City's Christian history.

The concert this evening is also intended to commemorate the first anniversary of my Pontificate. One year ago, after the death of the beloved and unforgettable John Paul II, the Catholic community of Rome was entrusted by divine Providence, surprisingly I must say, to my pastoral care.

At my first Meeting with the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square on the evening of 19 April last year, I personally experienced how generous, open and welcoming the Roman People are. Other occasions have subsequently brought me further encounters with this special human and spiritual warmth.

How can I fail to recall, for example, the embrace with so many people that is renewed every Sunday at the traditional Midday Meeting for Prayer? I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the warmth by which I am surrounded and which I gladly reciprocate.

This evening I want to address a heartfelt "thank you" to the community of the City which has desired to combine the commemoration of Rome's Birthday with the anniversary of my election as Bishop of Rome. Thank you for this gesture, which I deeply appreciate.

Thank you too for selecting a musical programme taken from the works of Mozart, a great composer who left an indelible mark on history. This year is the 250th anniversary of his birth, and various initiatives have accordingly been planned throughout 2006, which has also rightly been named the "Mozartian year".

The compositions performed by the orchestra and choir of the National Academy of St Cecilia are marvellous passages by Mozart which are very famous, including some of remarkable religious inspiration. The Ave Verum, for example, which is often sung at liturgical celebrations, is a motet with deeply theological words and a musical accompaniment that moves the heart and invites us to prayer.

Thus, by raising the soul to contemplation, music also helps us grasp the most intimate nuances of human genius, in which is reflected something of the incomparable beauty of the Creator of the universe.

I once again thank those who in various capacities have made possible today's event of high artistic value, in particular the performers and musicians and those who work in this Auditorium. I assure each one of my remembrance in prayer, strengthened by a special Blessing which I now gladly impart to you all, extending it to the whole of the beloved City of Rome.

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