



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE END OF THE CONCERT PERFORMED
BY THE "BRANDENBURGISCHES STAATSORCHESTER"***

Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I address my cordial greeting to the Authorities present and in particular to the President of the Italian Republic, to the other Italian Authorities, to the Grand Master of the Order of Malta and to all of you who have taken part in this evening's event, dedicated to listening to classical music played by the *Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester* from Frankfurt, conducted for this occasion by Maestro Inma Shara. I would like to express to her and to the orchestra members our common appreciation of the skill and effectiveness with which they have performed these evocative musical excerpts. I thank the [Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace](#) and the "St Matthew Foundation in memory of Cardinal Francis Xavier Van Thuan" for having sponsored the concert. It was preceded by a commemoration in honour of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the presentation of the Cardinal Van Thuan 2008 award to Mr Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the Committee of the International Red Cross, and the presentation of "*Solidarity and development*" awards to Fr Pedro Opeka, a missionary in Madagascar; to Fr José Raul Matte, a missionary among the victims of Hansen's disease in the Amazon; to the consignors of the *Gulunap* Project, for the realization of a medical faculty in North Uganda, and to those in charge of the *Ercolini Village* project for the integration of Gypsy children and youth in Rome. I also address my grateful gesture to all those who contributed to the realization of this concert and to RAI, which has broadcast it expanding, so to speak, the audience of those who have been able to benefit from it.

Sixty years ago, on 10 December, the General Assembly of the United Nations, meeting in Paris, adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which still today constitutes a highly respected

reference point in the intercultural dialogue on human rights and freedom. Every person's dignity is only truly guaranteed when all of his fundamental rights are recognized, protected and promoted. The Church has always reasserted that fundamental rights over and above the different ways in which they are formulated and the different degrees of importance they may have in various cultural contexts are a universal fact because they are inherent in human nature itself. The natural law, engraved by God in the human conscience, is a common denominator of all men and all peoples. It is a universal guide that all can recognize and on the basis of which all can understand one another. Human rights, therefore, are ultimately founded in God the Creator, who has endowed everyone with intelligence and freedom. If this solid ethical basis is ignored, human rights remain fragile because they are deprived of a sound foundation.

The celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Declaration thus constitutes an opportunity to ascertain the extent to which the ideals accepted by the majority of national communities in 1948 have been respected in the different national legislations and even more, in the consciences of individuals and communities. We have undoubtedly come a long way already, but there is still a long way to go; hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters still see their rights to life, to freedom and to security threatened. Neither the equality of all nor the dignity of each person is always respected, while new barriers are raised for reasons linked to race, religion, political opinion or other convictions. Therefore, may the common commitment to promote and better define human rights not slacken and may it intensify efforts to guarantee their respect. I accompany these wishes with prayers that God, Father of all people, may grant us to build a world in which every human being feels welcomed with full dignity, and where relations among individuals and peoples are governed by respect, dialogue and solidarity. My Blessing to you all.

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