



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MILAN
AND 7th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES
(1-3 JUNE 2012)

**CONCERT IN HONOR OF THE HOLY FATHER
AND THE OFFICIAL DELEGATIONS
FOR THE WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

*La Scala Theater in Milan
Friday, 1st June 2012*

[Video]

*Dear Cardinals,
Distinguished Authorities,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Delegations of the Seventh World Meeting of Families,*

In this historic place I would like first of all to remember an event. It was 11 May 1946 and Arturo Toscanini raised his baton to conduct a memorable concert at La Scala, rebuilt after the horrors of the war. It is said that the great Maestro, having just arrived here in Milan, went straight to this theatre and in the centre of the hall began clapping his hands to test whether the proverbial acoustics had been preserved and, finding them perfect, he exclaimed: "It's La Scala, it's still my Scala!". These words "It's La Scala!" evoke the significance of this place, the Temple of Opera, a musical and cultural reference point not only for Milan and Italy but for the whole world.

La Scala is deeply bound to Milan, it is one of its greatest glories and I wanted to recall that date in May 1946, because the rebuilding of La Scala was a sign of hope for the revival of the entire city's

life following the destruction of the war. So, it is an honour for me to be here with all of you and to have experienced, by way of this splendid concert, a momentary uplifting of our thoughts. I thank Hon. Mr Giuliano Pisapia, the Mayor, and Dr Stéphane Lissner, the Superintendent, for having introduced the evening, and in particular, I thank the Orchestra and Choir of La Scala, the four soloists and the conductor, Maestro Daniel Barenboim, for the intense and engaging interpretation of one of the absolute masterpieces in the history of music. The composition of Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was long and complex, but from the famous first sixteen bars of the first movement an expectation of something grandiose is created and the expectation is not disappointed.

While essentially following the traditional forms and language of the classical symphony, Beethoven leads us to notice something new, unprecedented in all the opera's movements and which is confirmed in the final part. It is introduced by a terrible dissonance from which stands out the recitative with the famous words "O friends, not these sounds! But let us strike up more pleasant sounds and more joyful words" that in a certain sense "turn the page" and introduce the central theme of the *Ode to Joy*.

What Beethoven portrays with his music is an ideal vision of humanity: "living joy in brotherhood and in mutual love, under God's paternal gaze" (Luigi Della Croce). What Beethoven praises is not really Christian joy, yet it is the joy of the fraternal coexistence of peoples, of victory over selfishness, and it expresses the wish that humanity's journey may be marked by love. It is, as it were, an invitation to everyone, beyond every barrier and belief.

A shadow is cast over this concert — which should have been a joyous celebration on the occasion of the convergence of people from almost all the nations in the world — by the earthquake which brought great suffering to many people in our country. The words taken from Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, sound empty to us; indeed, they do not seem true.

We have no experience at all of the divine sparks of Elysium. We are not drunk with fire but rather paralyzed with the pain of so much incomprehensible destruction which has taken human lives, has swept away the houses and dwellings of many. Even the hypothesis that a good father must live above the starry firmament seems to us to be disputable. Is the good father to be found only above the starry firmament? Does his goodness not reach down to us? We seek a God that does not reign from a distance but enters our life and our suffering.

At this time we would almost like Beethoven's words, "Friends, not these sounds..." to refer to Schiller's. Not these sounds. We are not in need of an unreal discourse by a distant God, or of a brotherhood which is not challenging. We seek a God who is close. We seek a brotherhood which sustains others in the midst of suffering and thereby helps them journey on.

After this concert many will go to the Eucharistic Adoration, to the God who immersed himself in

our suffering and continues to do so, to the God who suffers with us and for us and thus made men and women capable of sharing the suffering of the other and transforming it into love. It is precisely to this that we feel called by this concert.

Thanks, therefore, once again to the Orchestra and Choir of La Scala, to the soloists and to those who made this event possible. Thanks to Maestro Daniel Barenboim, also because, with the choice of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, he has enabled us to send a message through music which affirms the fundamental values of solidarity, brotherhood and peace.

I think this message is also precious for the family, because it is in the family that we experience for the first time that the human person is not created to live withdrawn into him- or herself but in a relationship with others. It is in the family that we understand how self-fulfilment is not found in making ourselves the centre, driven by selfishness, but rather in giving ourselves. It is in the family that we begin to kindle in our hearts the light of peace, so that it may illuminate this world of ours. I thank you all for this moment we have spent together. My heartfelt thanks!

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