



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE END OF THE PERFORMANCE
OF HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"
GIVEN BY THE RTÉ CONCERT ORCHESTRA
AND OUR LADY'S CHORAL SOCIETY OF DUBLIN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 80th ANNIVERSARY
OF VATICAN CITY STATE**

Paul VI Audience Hall

Thursday, 12 February 2009

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the end of this beautiful evening, I am glad to address a cordial greeting to all of you who have come to the concert organized on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of [Vatican City State](#). I greet the religious, civil and military authorities and the distinguished figures, with a special thought for the Prelates of the Roman Curia and those who collaborate with the various offices of the [Governorate of the Vatican](#) who, with this very initiative, have gathered here to commemorate this most important event. I would like above all to express my deep gratitude to Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, to whom I am also grateful for his words of affection and devotion at the beginning of the concert. I extend my greeting to the General Secretary, Bishop Renato Boccardo and to the other directors of the Governorate and, naturally, I express my gratitude to all who have cooperated in various ways in the organization and realization of this musical event.

Certain of interpreting the sentiments of all who are present, I wish to address a special word of thanks and appreciation to the RTÉ Concert Orchestra (the Orchestra of the Irish Radio and Television), to the singers of Our Lady's Choral Society of Dublin, to the conductor, Proinnsias Ó Duinn, to the choirmaster, Paul Ward, and to the soloists. I would like to offer a special greeting to

the many faithful from Dublin who have accompanied their city's Choir.

We have been offered a performance of passages from George Frideric Handel's well-known Oratorio, the "Messiah", that is capable of creating an absorbing spiritual atmosphere thanks to its rich anthology of the sacred texts of the Old and New Testaments, which constitute, as it were, the support of the entire musical score. The orchestra and choir likewise succeeded in wonderfully evoking the figure of the Messiah, of Christ, in the light of the Old Testament prophecies. The wealth of musical counterpoint and the harmony of the singing thus helped us to contemplate the intense and arcane mystery of the Christian faith. It is once again clear that music and song, skilfully interwoven with faith, can acquire a lofty pedagogical value in the religious context. As an art music can be a particularly important way of proclaiming Christ because it succeeds in making his mystery perceptible with an eloquence all its own.

This concert, with which it is desired to commemorate a significant anniversary for [Vatican City State](#), is part of the programme of the Congress organized for this occasion on the theme: "A small territory for a great mission". This is not, of course, the moment for a discourse on this historic event; various experts are contributing their competence on many aspects of it at the Congress. Moreover I shall have the opportunity to meet with and speak to those taking part in these study days next Saturday. On this occasion too, I wish to thank everyone who has contributed to solemnizing an event that is so important for the Catholic Church. In commemorating the 80th anniversary of *Civitas Vaticana*, the need is felt to acknowledge all those who were and are the protagonists of these eight decades of history of a small piece of land. In the first place I would like to remember the first person to play a lead role, my venerable Predecessor [Pius XI](#). In announcing the signing of the Lateran Pacts and above all in establishing [Vatican City State](#), he chose to mention St Francis of Assisi. He said that the new sovereign reality was for the Church, as it was for the *Poverello*, "enough body, to keep body and soul together" (cf. *Address*, 11 February 1929). Let us ask the Lord, who firmly guides the destiny of the "Barque of Peter" through the events of history that are not always tranquil, to continue to watch over this little State. Let us ask him above all to help the man at the helm of the Barque, the Successor of Peter, with the power of his Spirit so that he may carry out his ministry faithfully and effectively as a foundation of the unity of the Catholic Church which extends to the ends of the earth and whose visible centre is the Vatican. I entrust this prayer to the intercession of Mary, the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of the Church and, as I repeat on behalf of all who are present a cordial "thank you" to those who planned this evening, to the talented members of the orchestra, to the singers and particularly to the soloists, I assure each one of my remembrance in prayer and implore God's Blessing upon all.

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