



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONCERT
DEDICATED TO THE THEME OF RECONCILIATION
AMONG JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS***

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 17 January 2004*

1. I have taken part with deep emotion in this evening's concert dedicated to the theme of reconciliation among Jews, Christians and Muslims. With deep participation I listened to the splendid musical performance that gave us all an opportunity for reflection and prayer. I greet and cordially thank the sponsors of this initiative and everyone who helped to organize it.

I greet the Presidents and the members of the Pontifical Councils that sponsored this very important event. I greet the well-known figures and representatives of various Jewish International Organizations, of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of Islam; they have made our meeting even more evocative with their participation. A special "thank you" goes to the Knights of Columbus who gave the concert their concrete support, and to RAI (Italian Radio and Television), represented here by the directors who have ensured its proper broadcast.

I then extend my greeting to the distinguished conductor, Maestro Gilbert Levine, the members of the "Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra" and the choirs from Ankara, Kraków, London and Pittsburgh. The choice of pieces for this evening has brought to our attention two important points which, despite the different treatment they are given by the respective sacred texts, bind together in a certain way all those who refer to Judaism, Islam and Christianity. These two points are: veneration for the Patriarch Abraham and the resurrection of the dead. We have heard the masterly comment in the sacred motet "Abraham" by John Harbison, and in Gustav Mahler's Symphony N. 2 that was inspired by the dramatic poem "Dziady" [celebration of death] written by Adam Mickiewicz, the distinguished Polish playwright.

2. The history of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims is marked by patches of light and shadow and has unfortunately known some painful moments. Today we are aware of the pressing need for sincere reconciliation among believers in the one God.

This evening we are gathered here to give concrete expression to this commitment to reconciliation, entrusting ourselves to the universal message of music. We have been reminded of the recommendation "*I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless*" (Gn 17: 1). Every human being hears these words echoing within him: he knows that one day he will have to account to that God who observes his pilgrimage on earth from on High.

The unanimous hope that we express is that people may be purified of the hatred and evil that threaten peace continuously, and be able to extend to one another hands that have never been stained by violence but are ready to offer help and comfort to those in need.

3. Jews honour the Almighty as *protector of the human person* and the God of the *promises of life*. Christians know that love is the reason why God enters into relations with human beings and that love is the response he demands of them. For Muslims, God is good and can fill the believer with his mercies. Nourished by these convictions, Jews, Christians and Muslims cannot accept that the earth be afflicted by hatred or that humanity be overwhelmed by endless wars.

Yes! We must find within us the courage for peace. We must implore from on High the gift of peace. And this peace will spread like a soothing balm if we travel non-stop on the road to reconciliation. Then the wilderness will become a garden in which justice will flourish, and the effect of justice will be peace (cf. Is 32: 15-16).

Omnia vincit amor!