



III INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF CHOIRS IN THE VATICAN



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ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Paul VI Audience Hall

Saturday, 24 November 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Your presence in this Hall has permitted the resonance of music and song which somehow have gone beyond the walls: you have awakened the Vatican! It is lovely to hear your melodies and perceive the joy and seriousness with which you, all together, give voice to the beauty of our prayers. I thank Msgr Rino Fisichella for his creativity and for his words and for the initiative that enables us to experience the many paths of evangelization.

In recent days, as you know, the Synod of Bishops dedicated to young people took place, and a theme that was addressed with interest was precisely that of music: "Music is of particular importance, representing an authentic environment in which young people are constantly immersed, as well as a culture and a language able to evoke emotions and shape identity. The language of music is also a pastoral resource, which in particular invites discussion of the liturgy and its renewal (cf. *Final Document*, 47).

Your music and your song are a true instrument of evangelization to the measure in which you bear witness to the depth of the Word of God which touches people's hearts and allows a celebration of the sacraments, in particular of the Holy Eucharist, which enables one to perceive the beauty of Paradise. Never cease in this task so important for the life of our communities; in this way, through song, you give voice to the emotions that are deep in each person's heart. In moments of joy and in sadness, the Church is called to always be close to people, to offer them the companionship of faith. How often music and song make these moments unique in people's lives, because they preserve them as a precious memory that has marked their existence.

In formulating the renewal of the liturgy, the Second Vatican Council emphasized that "the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value" (Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112). Indeed it is. I think, in particular, of the many traditions in our communities scattered throughout the world, which bring out the forms most rooted in popular culture, and which also become genuine prayer. That popular piety which knows how to pray creatively, which knows how to sing creatively; that popular piety which, as an Italian bishop said, is the 'immune system' of the Church. And song carries this piety forward. Through this music and song, voice is also given to prayer and in this way an international choir is formed, where in unison all the praise and glory of the Father's people rise up to him.

Your presence, while highlighting the internationality of your respective countries, allows the universality of the Church and her diverse traditions to be welcomed. Your song and your music, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, make clear that we are one Body and we sing our unique faith with one voice. Even if we speak different languages, everyone can understand the music we sing with, the faith we profess, and the hope that awaits us.

You study and prepare in order to make your song a melody that favours prayer and liturgical celebration. However, do not fall into the temptation of a protagonism that eclipses your commitment and demeans people's active participation in prayer. Please, do not act as 'prima donnas'. May you invigorate the singing of the entire assembly and not substitute for it yourselves, depriving the People of God of singing with you and of bearing witness to an ecclesial and communitary prayer. At times it saddens me when, in some ceremonies, one sings so well but the people cannot sing those songs.... May you, who understand more deeply the importance of song and of music, not underestimate the other expressions of popular spirituality: the feasts of patron saints, the processions, the dances and religious songs of our people are also a true patrimony of religiosity that deserves to be appreciated and supported because it too is always an action of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Church. The Spirit in song helps us to go forward.

Thus, may music be an instrument of unity to make the Gospel effective in today's world, through the beauty that still fascinates and enables one to believe, entrusting oneself to the Father's love.

I accompany you with my blessing and I entrust you to Saint Cecilia, your Patroness, but above all I ask you not to forget to pray for me; pray for me with your song too! Thank you!



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