The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE AWARD CEREMONY FOR MONS. GEORG RATZINGER
WHO RECEIVED THE "FIRST-CLASS AUSTRIAN CROSS
OF HONOUR FOR SCIENCE AND CULTURE"

Paul VI Audience Hall
Thursday, 19 May 2005

Dear Georg,
Esteemed Ambassador Botschafter,
Esteemed President Schambeck,
Esteemed Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It seems strange for me to speak now. As I was coming down here, the Secretary rightly told me: "Now, dear Holy Father, your brother is the most important person". There is no doubt about this. I find it wonderfully appropriate that my brother, who for 30 years worked so diligently in sacred music in the Cathedral of Ratisbon and in the rest of the world, is receiving recognition from such competent persons.

When I speak, regardless of my own incompetence, I feel like the spokesperson, so to speak, of those gathered here and who rejoice and are full of gratitude and satisfaction for this moment and time. My brother has already said: "Austria is, in a very special way, a Land of music". Those who think of Austria, think first of all of the beauty of creation that the Lord has given to this nearby Country. One thinks of the beautiful buildings, the cordiality of the people, but also and above all of the music, whose great composers have already been mentioned, and also of the musical tradition: Weiner Sängerknaben, Weiner Philharmoniker, Salzburger Festspiele, etc.

For this reason, the fact that our beloved neighbour, Austria, confers this award upon my brother assumes a very special value. I too express my heartfelt gratitude.

I imagine that also for the new generation of Cathedral cantors, guided by the Chapel Master, the recognition of 30 years of work is a reason to rejoice and to be encouraged; it can help them in this time when we especially need to pay homage to the message of the good God and to lead men and women to joy with renewed ardour and enthusiasm. Thank you.