



The Holy See

**"RESURREXI" CONCERT SPONSORED
BY THE ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
TO HONOUR THE HOLY FATHER
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

Paul VI Audience Hall
Wednesday, 23 May 2007

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

A few days before the conclusion of the Easter Season - we will celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost this Sunday - we have had this evening a further opportunity to pause to meditate on the wonderful event of Christ's Resurrection.

The occasion has been given to us by the performance of this evocative Oratorio that the Italian Bishops' Conference, gathered at their General Assembly, has wished to offer to me and to my collaborators for my 80th Birthday and as the crowning event of the *ad limina* visit of the Italian Bishops, which took place in the course of this pastoral year in a climate of deep ecclesial communion.

Thank you, venerable and dear Italian Brother Bishops, for this pleasant gift. Together we have listened to evocative music recalling the figures of the Gospel and scenes that lead us again to the central mystery of our faith: the Resurrection of the Lord.

We have been able to enjoy a concerto and poetic composition characterized by an interweaving of artistic expressivity and spiritual symbolism, melody and inspiring passages for meditation. At the end of this beautiful concert, I wish to thank those who have promoted it, carefully prepared it and now masterfully executed it.

Above all, I wish to address my grateful thought to Archbishop Angelo Bagnasco, who for some months now has assumed the leadership as President of the Italian Bishops' Conference. I greet him with affection and I thank him for the cordial words that he addressed to me at the beginning of our meeting, and I assure him of my benevolence accompanied by constant prayer for the lofty duty he is called to assume at the service of the Italian Church.

I greet the Venerable Cardinals, Bishops, priests and Authorities present, and those who have wished to be present for this musical evening. With sincere gratitude I greet the chorus with their Maestro Marco Faelli and the Arena Orchestra of Verona conducted by Maestro Julian Kovatchev.

I thank the "ALIVE" choir of treble voices and their Conductor Paolo Facincani, and also those of the "Benjamin Britten" treble voices conducted by Maestro Marco Tonini.

To each one of you, dear artists and musicians, my cordial thanks for the wonderful performance of this sacred Oratorio, accomplished by Alberto Colla, the composer, and by Roberto Mussapi, who wrote the poetic text: to them goes my lively and grateful appreciation.

At the beginning I said that this musical evening has given us an opportunity to meditate on the central event of our faith: the Resurrection of Christ. The title "*Resurrexi*", "I am risen", taken from the Latin *incipit* of the Easter Mass entrance antiphon, in reality sounds like the self-presentation of Jesus, who in the liturgy identifies himself and makes himself recognizable precisely in his risen state.

The Oratorio helps us to relive the sentiments of wonder and joy felt by those who were the first eye-witnesses of the Resurrection.

Through the five "tableaux", harmoniously linked in a melodic and poetic sequence, the authors of this melodrama have helped us to meditate on the dawn of the third day, suffused with brilliant light, which opened the hearts of the Apostles and permitted them to understand in its full significance the dramatic events of the death and Resurrection of the Divine Teacher, as also his life's previous acts and teachings.

Easter constitutes the heart of Christianity. For every believer and for each Ecclesial Community it is important to meet Jesus Christ crucified and Risen. Without this personal and community experience, without an intimate friendship with Jesus, faith remains superficial and sterile. I very much hope that this Oratorio too, which we have followed with religious attention and participation, will help us to grow in our faith.

Christ's Easter anticipates the new life of the risen world: consequently, if we are firmly convinced of it, the more conscious and ardent with apostolic zeal will our evangelical witness be. May the Holy Spirit, who came down abundantly at Pentecost upon the nascent Church, obtain this gift for us.

With these sentiments, while I renew, also in the name of those present, a cordial "thank you" to those who organized the evening and also to the talented maestri, musicians and singers, I heartily impart to all a special Apostolic Blessing.

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