



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
"PUERI CANTORES"**

Friday, 31 December 1999

Dear Children,

I am pleased to welcome you, with your families and many representatives of the *International Federation of Pueri Cantores*, whose President, Mr Buys, I greet together with Mons. Valentin Miserachs, President of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music. Your presence is a call for the Church to live the Great Jubilee in song and thanksgiving.

1. You have come from all over the world, but you are at home here, since it is in Rome that Pope Gregory the Great founded the first school of singers specialized in sacred song. It was through his impetus that a whole repertory of liturgical music was created. Schools later opened throughout Europe where children from all backgrounds could learn to sing. These schools of song were at the origin of the Church's musical tradition, a priceless treasure which you have inherited today and which, as faithful witnesses, you must preserve and hand down.

2. You thus have an important role to play in the Church's life. You are the little messengers of *beauty*. The world needs your singing, for the language of beauty moves hearts and contributes to the encounter with God. The joy that fills you when you sing must radiate around you and spark contagious enthusiasm. Be just as determined to sing well as the young Mozart was to play his scales: one day, when he was a child, he was asked: "Why do you practise so much?", and he answered: "Because I am looking for two notes that love each other!". You who love music, work on singing better and better! The Gospel will more deeply penetrate your souls and those of the people you help to pray. Thus you will be the messengers of God's peace and love.

3. You are also messengers of *faith*, for it is not enough that the quality of your singing should lead those who hear you to prayer and recollection. Sacred music and song are an integral part of *the Church's liturgy* and your singing helps the faithful to turn to God, especially during the celebration of the Eucharist. In singing God's glory you are the servants and precious helpers of the Eucharist. "In song, faith is experienced as vibrant joy, love and confident expectation of the saving intervention of God" (*Letter to Artists*, n. 12). May your singing always be *new*, because, in singing for God, you are singing the *newness of God's grace*, the inexhaustible source of joy and peace. Yes, "Sing to the Lord a *new song*" (*Ps* 96 [95]: 1)!

4. Dear "little singers", may your singing help you to make your life a song of praise to God. "May he who lives for God sing to God" (St Augustine, *Enn. in Ps*, 67, 5). With your voices, with your youth, with your lives, you proclaim Jesus, the Saviour.

Dear children, I encourage you to sing for the Lord.

I give you all my Apostolic Blessing.