



# The Holy See

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CONCERT ON THE OCCASION OF THE DAYS  
OF RUSSIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE VATICAN,  
PROMOTED BY HIS HOLINESS KIRILL I,  
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Paul VI Audience Hall  
Thursday, 20 May 2010*

(Video)

*Praise the name of the Lord,  
give praise, O servants of the Lord.  
Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good;  
sing to his name, for he is gracious!  
Thy name, O Lord, endures for ever; thy renown,  
O Lord, throughout the ages. Alleluia!*

*Venerable Brethren,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

We have just listened to the words of Psalm 135 [134], set to a sublime melody. They are a fine interpretation of our sentiments of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and likewise of our intense inner joy for this moment of encounter and friendship with our dear Brothers of the Patriarchate of Moscow. On the occasion of my Birthday and the fifth anniversary of my election as the Successor of Peter, His Holiness Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, has offered me, along with the

much appreciated words of His Message, this extraordinary musical event, presented by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, President of the Department of External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, and composer of the Symphony that was just performed.

My profound gratitude, therefore, goes to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. To him I extend my most brotherly and cordial greeting, as I convey my heartfelt wish that our praise of the Lord and commitment to the progress of peace and harmony among peoples can ever increasingly unite us, making us grow in the concordance of our intentions and the harmony of our actions. Thus I also wholeheartedly thank Metropolitan Hilarion, for the greeting he has so kindly wished to address to me, as well as for his constant commitment to ecumenism. I also congratulate him on his artistic genius, which we have just had the opportunity to appreciate. Along with him I warmly greet the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Moscow and the distinguished representatives of the Government of the Russian Federation. I extend a cordial greeting to the Cardinals and Bishops here present, in particular to Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who organized with their Dicasteries and in close collaboration with the representatives of the Patriarchate the "Days of Russian Culture and Spirituality in the Vatican". I greet further the distinguished Ambassadors, respectable Authorities and all of you, dear friends, brothers and sisters, especially the Russian community present in Rome and in Italy, who are participating in this joyful, festive moment.

Music was called upon to set the seal on this occasion in a truly exceptional, evocative way: the music of contemporary and historic Russia, performed for us so masterfully by the Russian National Orchestra, directed by Maestro Carlo Ponti; by the Moscow Synodal Choir and by the St Petersburg Horn Cappella. I offer my warmest thanks to all the artists for the talent, commitment and passion with which they draw the world's attention to the masterpieces of the Russian musical tradition. These works, which today we have heard in a meaningful performance, contain in a profound way the soul of the Russian people, and with it the Christian faith. Both find extraordinary expression precisely in the Divine Liturgy and in the liturgical singing that always accompanies it. There exists, in fact, a tight, fundamental bond between Russian music and liturgical singing. It is in and from the liturgy that a large part of the artistic genius of Russian musicians draws inspiration, as it were: thus giving life to the masterpieces that deserve to be better known in the Western world. Today we had the joy of listening to passages by the great Russian composers of the 1800's and 1900's, like Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. These composers, especially the latter, drew from Russia's rich musical-liturgical patrimony and tradition, reworking and harmonizing it with inspirations and musical experiences from the West, nearer to modernity. I believe that Metropolitan Hilarion's piece follows in this same vein.

So, somehow the music already anticipates and resolves the impact between East and West through dialogue and synergy, and likewise that between tradition and modernity. Venerable John Paul ii imagined an analogous vision of a united and harmonious Europe, when by employing the

same image suggested by Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov of the "two lungs" to which it is necessary to return in order to breathe he expressed the hope for a renewed awareness of the profound, common cultural and religious roots of the European continent. Without them, it would be as if modern Europe lacked a soul, or in any case would be marked by a reductionist and biased view. It was precisely to reflect further on these problematical issues that the Symposium was held yesterday on the theme, "Orthodox and Catholics in Europe Today: The Christian Roots and the Shared Cultural Heritage of East and West", organized jointly by the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and that for Culture.

As I have affirmed many times, contemporary culture particularly that of Europe runs the risk of amnesia, of forgetting and therefore abandoning that extraordinary heritage that the Christian faith has generated and inspired. It constitutes the essential framework of European culture, and not of it alone. Beyond the religious life and the witness of many generations of believers, Europe's Christian roots in fact also encompass its invaluable cultural and artistic patrimony: the boast and precious resource of the peoples and Countries in which the Christian faith in its diverse manifestations has engaged in dialogue with culture and the arts, animating and inspiring them, fostering and promoting creativity and human genius like never before. Those roots are still alive and fruitful today, in both East and West, and they can or rather they must inspire a new humanism, a new season of authentic human progress, in order to respond effectively to the numerous and sometimes crucial challenges which our Christian communities and our societies must face. Above all, the first is that of secularization, which not only tends to disregard God and his design but also ends up denying human dignity itself, with a view to a society regulated solely by selfish interests.

Let us return to the vision of a Europe that breathes with both lungs, to restore the spirit not only of believers, but to all the peoples of the Continent, thus promoting trust and hope by rooting them in the age-old experience of Christian faith! At this time, the consistent, generous and courageous Christian witness of believers cannot be lacking. In this way we will be able to seek a common future together, one in which freedom and dignity may be recognized as fundamental values of every man and woman, in which an openness to the Transcendent may be given worth, and in which the faith experience is considered a constitutive element of the human person.

In the piece by Mussorgsky, entitled *The Angel Proclaimed*, we listened to the words the Angel addressed to Mary and therefore to us, too: "Rejoice, all you people!". The reason for this joy is clear: Christ has risen from the tomb "and he has brought the dead back to life". Dear brothers and sisters, the joy of the Risen Christ is what enlivens us, encourages and sustains us on this our journey of faith and of Christian witness. Hence shall we offer true happiness and concrete hope to the world, so as to give valid reasons to have trust to humanity, to the people of Europe, whom I gladly entrust to the maternal and powerful intercession of the Virgin Mary. I renew my expression of gratitude to Patriarch Kirill, to Metropolitan Hilarion, to the Russian representatives, the orchestra, the choirs, the organizers and all here present. May the Lord's abundant Blessings

descend upon all of you and upon your loved ones.

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