



Papal Words at Concert of Moscow Patriarchate

VATICAN CITY, MAY 21, 2010 (**Zenit.org**).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered Thursday on the occasion of the concert sponsored by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow in the Holy Father's honor. The event marked the Pontiff's recent birthday and fifth anniversary of his pontificate, and closed the "Days of Russian Culture and Spirituality in the Vatican."

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"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 great. Thy name, O Lord, endures forever, thy renown, O Lord, throughout the ages. Alleluia."

Venerable Brothers, Illustrious Gentlemen and Ladies, Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We have just heard in a sublime melody the words of Psalm 135, which interpret our sentiments of praise and gratitude to the Lord, as well as our intense interior joy for this moment of meeting and friendship with our beloved brothers of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

On the occasion of my birthday and of the fifth anniversary of my election as Successor of Peter, His Holiness Kirill I, patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, wished to offer me, along with the most appreciated words of his message, this extraordinary musical moment, presented by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, president of the Department for External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, and author of the symphony that has just been performed.

Hence, my profound gratitude goes first of all to His Holiness patriarch Kirill. I address to him my fraternal and cordial greeting, hoping profoundly that praise to the Lord and commitment to the progress of peace and harmony between peoples will increasingly unite us and make us grow in harmony of intentions and actions. Hence, my heartfelt thanks to Metropolitan Hilarion, for the greeting he addressed to me, congratulating him for his artistic creativity, which we have been able to appreciate. With him I greet with profound affection the delegation of the Patriarchate of Moscow and the illustrious representatives of the government of the Russian Federation. I address my cordial greeting to the cardinals and bishops here present, in particular Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and to Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who, with their dicasteries and in close collaboration with the representatives of the

patriarchate, organized the "Days of Russian Culture and Spirituality in the Vatican." Moreover, I greet the illustrious ambassadors, the distinguished authorities and all of you, dear friends, brothers and sisters, particularly the Russian communities present in Rome and in Italy, who are participating in this moment of joy and celebration.

Sealed on this occasion in a truly exceptional and thought-provoking way is the music, the music of Russia yesterday and today, which was proposed to us with great mastery by the National Orchestra of Russia, directed by maestro Carlo Ponti, by the Synodal Choir of Moscow, and by the Horn Capella of St. Petersburg. I am profoundly grateful to all the artists for the talent, commitment and passion with which they present to the whole world the masterpieces of the Russian musical tradition.

Present in a profound way in these works, of which today we have heard significant passages, is the soul of the Russian people, and with it the Christian faith, which find an extraordinary expression precisely in the Divine Liturgy and the liturgical singing that always accompanies it. There is, in fact, a profound original bond, between Russian music and liturgical singing: In the liturgy and from the liturgy is unleashed and begins to a great extent the artistic creativity of Russian musicians to create masterpieces that merit being better known in the Western world. Today we have had the joy of hearing passages of great Russian artists of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. These composers, in particular the latter, have been able to take recourse to the musical-liturgical patrimony of the Russian tradition, elaborating it again and harmonizing it with musical motifs and experiences of the West and closer to modernity. In this line, I believe, should also be situated the work of Metropolitan Hilarion.

In music, therefore, already anticipated and in a certain sense realized is the encounter, the dialogue, the synergy between East and West, as well as between tradition and modernity. The Venerable John Paul II thought in fact of a similar unitarian and harmonious vision of Europe when, in presenting again the image suggested by Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov of the "two lungs" with which Europe must breathe again, he hoped that there would be renewed awareness of the profound and common cultural and religious roots of the European Continent, without which today's Europe would be deprived of a soul and marked by a reductive and partial vision. In fact to reflect these problems better a Symposium was held yesterday, organized by the Patriarchate of Moscow, by the dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and by that of Culture, on the subject "Orthodox and Catholics in Today's Europe. The Christian Roots and Common Cultural Patrimony of East and West."

As I have stated on several occasions, contemporary culture, particularly European culture, runs the risk of amnesia, of forgetfulness and, therefore, of abandonment of the extraordinary patrimony fostered and inspired by the Christian faith, which constitutes the essential vertebral column of European culture, and not only of European culture. The Christian roots of Europe, in fact, are constituted not only by religious

life and the testimony of so many generations of believers, but also by the inestimable cultural and artistic patrimony, pride and precious resource of the peoples and countries in which the Christian faith, in its different manifestations, has dialogued with cultures and art, has animated and inspired them, fostering and promoting as never before the creativity of the human genius.

Today, also, these roots are alive and fecund, in the East and West, and they can, more than that, must inspire a new humanism, a new season of authentic human progress, to respond effectively to the numerous and at times crucial challenges that our Christian communities and our societies must face, beginning with secularization, which not only leads to doing without God and his plan, but which ends by denying human dignity itself, in a society regulated solely by egotistical interests.

Let us make Europe breathe with its two lungs again, let us again give a soul not only to believers but to all peoples of the Continent, let us promote confidence and hope again, rooting them in the age-old experience of the Christian faith! At this moment, the consistent, generous and courageous witness of believers cannot be lacking so that together we can look at our common future, a future in which liberty and the dignity of every man and woman are recognized as a fundamental value and that openness to the Transcendent is valued, the experience of faith as constitutive dimension of the person.

In the passage by Mussorgsky, entitled "The Angel Declared," we have heard the words addressed by the Angel to Mary and, hence, addressed also to us: "Rejoice!" The reason for joy is clear: Christ has resurrected from the sepulcher "and has risen from the dead." Dear brothers and sisters, the joy of the risen Christ animates and encourages us and supports us in our journey of faith and Christian witness to offer authentic joy and solid hope to the world, to offer valid reasons for confidence to humanity, to the peoples of Europe, whom I entrust to the maternal and powerful intercession of the Virgin Mary.

[Speaking in Russian, he said:]

I renew my gratitude to patriarch Kirill, to Metropolitan Hilarion, to the Russian representatives, to the orchestra, to the choirs, to the organizers and to all those present.

[In Italian, he concluded:]

May the Lord's abundant blessings descend on all of you and on your loved ones.