



The Holy See

CONCERT "YOUTH AGAINST WAR"
OF *INTERREGIONALES JUGENDSINFONIEORCHESTER (IRO)*
FOR THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Auditorium on the Via della Conciliazione
Thursday, 8 October 2009

Mr President of the Italian Republic,
Your Eminences, Venerable Synod Fathers,
Mr Ambassadors, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I accepted with pleasure your invitation to the concert: "*Youth against war concert 70 years from the beginning of the Second World War*", sponsored jointly by the [Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity](#), the [Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews](#), the Embassy of Germany to the Holy See and the *Europäisches KulturForum Mainau*, with the patronage of the *International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations*. My heartfelt gratitude goes to all the sponsors and organizers; I thank in particular Cardinal Walter Kasper for interpreting your common sentiments. Grateful for their presence, I address a respectful thought to the President of the Italian Republic and to his distinguished wife. By using the universal language of music, this initiative intends to encourage young people to build the future of the world together, inspired by the values of peace and human brotherhood. I greet the Cardinals, the Synod Fathers, the distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, the *sponsors* and everyone present.

I warmly thank the young musicians from 15 regions who play in the Inter-Regionalen Jugend-Sinfonieorchester, with their Conductors Prof. Wolfgang Gönnerwein and Jochem Hochstenbach for their exceptional performance. Likewise, I thank the soloist Michelle Breedt for her expressive singing and Prof. Klaus Maria Brandauer for his lively interpretation of the texts. My gratitude

extends to all those who made this evening possible: the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) as a sponsor of the concert and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the German Embassy to the Holy See and the Europäische KulturForum Mainau as organizers.

Dear friends, this evening the tragedy of the Second World War returns to our minds, that inhuman page of history of combined violence and brutality which caused the death of millions, leaving the winners divided and Europe to be rebuilt. The war, desired by National Socialism, involved many innocent peoples of Europe and on other continents, while with the tragedy of the Shoah it targeted in particular the Jewish people who were the object of programmed extermination. Yet invitations to reasonableness and peace were extended on many sides. Here in Rome, the distressed voice of my venerable Predecessor Pius XII still echoes. In his *Radio Message of 24 August 1939 just before the outbreak of the war* he proclaimed with determination: "Nothing is lost with peace. All can be lost with war" (cf. *AAS XXXI*, 1939, p. 334). Unfortunately no one succeeded in preventing that terrible catastrophe; the logic of egoism and violence inexorably prevailed. May the remembrance of those grievous events be a warning, especially to the new generations, never again to give in to the temptation of war.

As Cardinal Kasper recalled, this year we are commemorating another important anniversary: the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, an eloquent symbol of the end of the totalitarian Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. "*The collapse of the wall*" John Paul II wrote, "*and the fall of dangerous idols and of ideologies which enslave people have shown that basic freedoms which give meaning to human life cannot be suffocated or repressed for long*" (*Message for "Katholikentag"*, 23 May 1990; *L'Osservatore Romano English edition*, [ORE], 11 June 1990, p. 10). Europe and the whole world are thirsting for freedom and peace! It is necessary to build together a true civilization which is not based on force but is "the fruit of a victory over ourselves, over the powers of injustice, selfishness and hatred which can go so far as to disfigure man himself!" (John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War*, n. 12; *ORE*, 4 September 1989, p. 3). The ecumenical movement which found a catalyser in the Second World War, as Cardinal Kasper appropriately emphasized, can contribute to building this true civilization, working together with Jews and all believers. May God bless us and grant to humanity the gift of his peace. Dear friends, thank you again for coming.

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