



The Holy See

CONCERT OFFERED BY "BAYERISCHE STAATSOPER"

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINES BENEDICT XVI
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONCERT***

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 22 October 2011*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Hon. Ministers Dr Heubisch and Dr Spaenle,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

A sincere "thank you" goes to the *Bayerischen Staatsorchester* and to the *Audi-Jugendchorakademie*, to Maestro Kent Nagano and to the soloists for this great gift that they have given us. The splendid performance of two masterpieces by Anton Bruckner, the *Te Deum* and the *Ninth Symphony*, allowed us to become deeply immersed in the music of this great composer. Thank you to the *Bavarian State Orchestra* for offering this beautiful concert, and to all those who made this moment possible.

When on 11 October 1896, Bruckner died, he was still writing his Ninth Symphony, which he had begun nearly 10 years before. He felt, recalling Beethoven and Schubert, that it was his "symphonic testament" and actually — as we know — he never succeeded in completing the fourth movement, leaving his work unfinished. Bruckner's symphonic style breaks with the classical model, as its musical theme is developed by the juxtaposition of large elaborate and complex sections that are not clearly defined, and often linked by simple connecting episodes, as well as by pauses.

Listening to Bruckner's music is like being in a great cathedral, observing its imposing structural framework surrounding and elevating us, which stirs up emotion. There is however an element

that lies at the foundations of Bruckner's music, both the symphonic and the sacred: the simple, solid, genuine faith he professed throughout his life, to the point of wishing to be buried in the Abbey Church of St Florian, in the crypt under the massive organ he had played many times. Comparing him to another exponent of late Romanticism, the great conductor Bruno Walter used to say that: "Mahler always sought after God, whereas Bruckner had found him".

The symphony we have just heard has a very specific title: *Dem lieben Gott* [To the Beloved God], almost as if he had wished to dedicate and entrust the last and most mature fruit of his art to the One in whom he had always believed, the One who had become his only true interlocutor to whom he turned in the last stage of his life.

And one feels a sense of expectation throughout the Symphony we heard: slow *tempi* open and guide us in a hidden, almost timeless dimension; from the first *tempo*, marked by the indication "*Feierlich*-mysteriously" to the adagio that opens grandly with the first violins. It develops rising progressively through a succession of bright moments, sudden silences, isolated timbres, and sonorous notes of the organ, from the chorus, to bursts of sound, melodious tones, until it reaches the *paccata*. The quiet radiant conclusion in E major.

It is significant that in this last *tempo* four notes are inserted in the *miserere* from the *gloria of his Mass in D minor*, and that there are echoes from the *Benedictus* from another *Mass* of his, the one in F minor.

Bruckner asked the good God to let him enter his mystery, to be able to ascend to his heights, so as to praise the Lord in heaven as he had done on earth with his music. *Te Deum laudamus, Te Dominum confitemur*: this great work we have just heard — written at one sitting then reworked over 15 years as if reconsidering how to thank and praise God better — sums up the faith of this great musician, repeated in the final great double *fugue*: *In te, Domine speravi: non confundar in aeternum*.

It is also a reminder for us to open our horizons and think of eternal life, not so as to escape the present, though burdened with problems and difficulties, but to experience it still more intensely, bringing a little light, hope and love into the reality in which we live.

Once again I would like to say a heartfelt *Vergelt's Gott* (May God reward you), to Maestro Kent Nagano, the soloists, the *Bayerischen Staatsorchester* and to the *Audi-Jugendchorakademie* and to their Director, to the *Bayerischen Staatsoper*, to the collaborators and to all of you.

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