



The Holy See

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ARTISTS OF THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

*Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 16 December 2023*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I offer a warm welcome to all of you, the artists who will take part in this afternoon's Christmas Concert, and I thank Bishop Paul Tighe and the organizers of this event, which is sponsored by the Pontifical Foundation *Gravissimum Educationis* – Culture for Education.

Popular songs are an integral part of every culture. From the earliest times, people have handed down stories and prayers in the form of song. This is still the case today, especially among some native peoples. Yet we also see it in modern societies. We need but think of all those teenagers who sing the songs of their favourite artists by heart, because those words and music combine to evoke in them a powerful blend of emotions and associations.

Christmas is perhaps the holiday richest in popular songs. In Italy, we have one Christmas carol that everyone knows. In its simplicity, it is a masterpiece of theology and harmony, and is known not only in Italy but all over the world: "*Tu scendi dalle stelle*". It brings to mind many songs of Saint Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori, and it was he, the great "poet" of Christmas, who composed it.

You, too, in your own way, are a part of this tradition. You lend your voices to these celebrated Christmas melodies, and each of you brings to them your own individuality, your own "timbre." There is something beautiful about this. We have a message, ancient yet ever new, that of the birth of Jesus, the Saviour, and different voices, from all over the world, that come together to make it heard. They do this in a variety of styles, reflecting a diversity of cultures and languages.

Precisely because the Good News of Christmas is unique, it cannot be sung in just one way. In our technocratic societies, everything tends to become uniform, homogenized. Yet art is something different, and Christmas carols are to be sung with that art that comes from the heart. Sad to say, as we all know, the celebration of Christmas has been overcome by commercialisation and consumerism. Help us to protect it from this abuse, so that at least Christmas carols may preserve the poetry and spontaneity that gives them so much life.

Dear friends, I know that today, as you sing, you will also be thinking of all those who are presently living in sorrow and fear on account of war. So many wars! Tragically, even in the land of Jesus. For this, too, I thank you and I offer you my blessing. Have a good concert! May you and your loved ones have a blessed Christmas! I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.